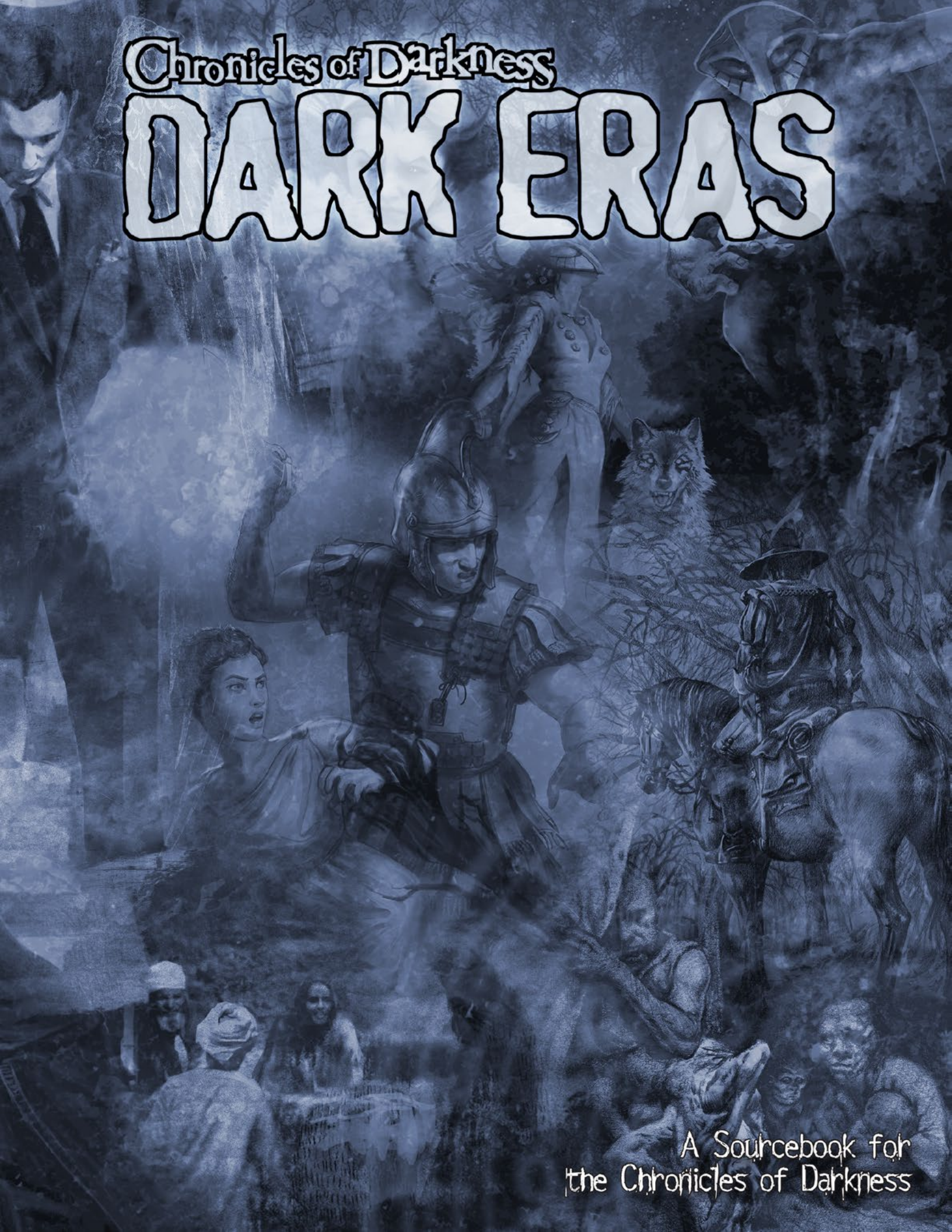
Chronicles of Darkness

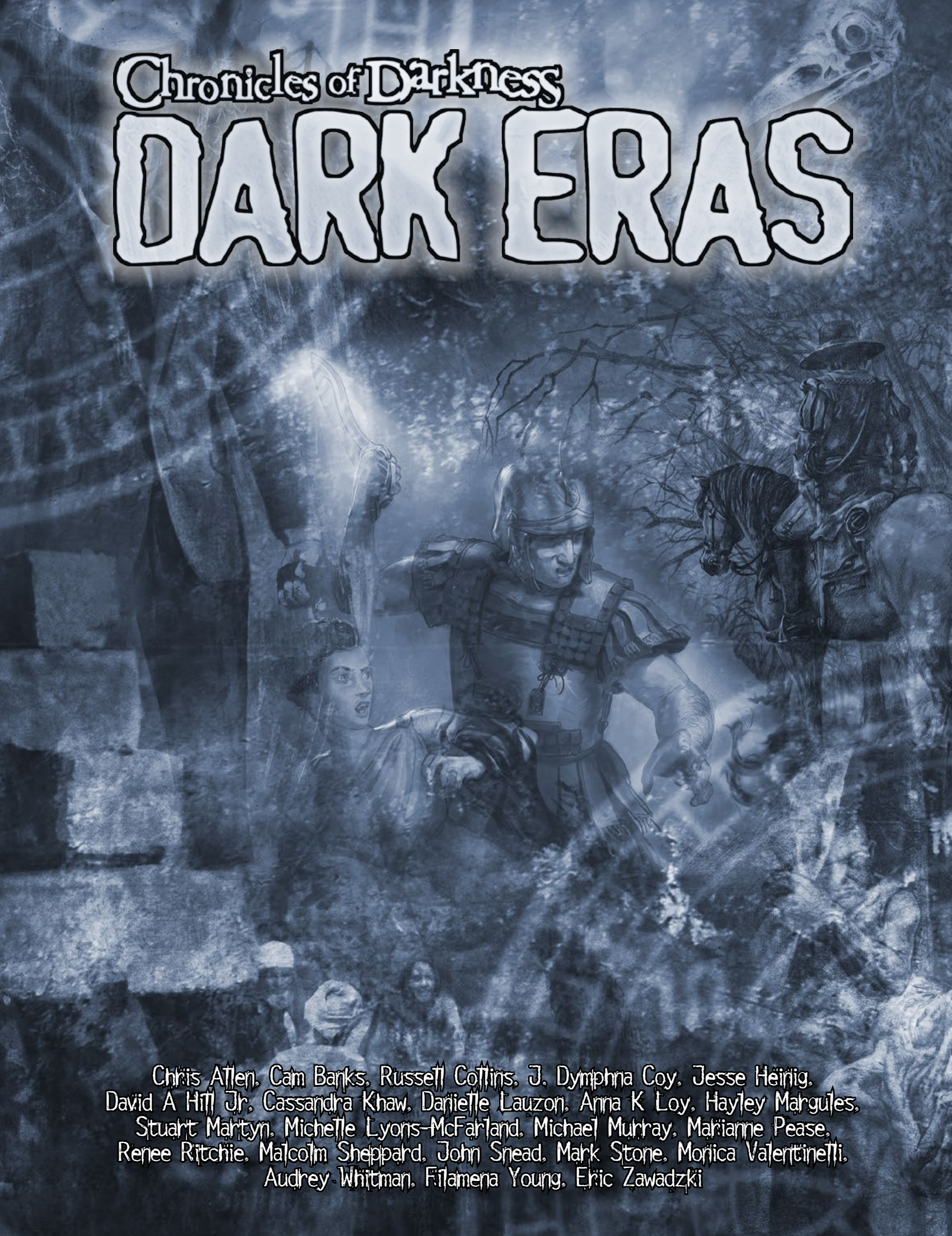
DARK ERAS



A Sourcebook for
the Chronicles of Darkness

Chronicles of Darkness

DARK ERAS



Chris Allen, Cam Banks, Russell Collins, J. Dymphna Coy, Jesse Heinig,
David A Hill Jr, Cassandra Khaw, Danielle Lauzon, Anna K Loy, Hayley Margules,
Stuart Martyn, Michelle Lyons-McFarland, Michael Murray, Marianne Pease,
Renee Ritchie, Malcolm Sheppard, John Snead, Mark Stone, Monica Valentinelli,
Audrey Whitman, Filamena Young, Eric Zawadzki

The Lessons of History

Piedmont, California, 2010

The table is only half a table, and the dining room is only half a room. A mirror runs right down the middle of it, presenting reality with an illusion of itself. On one side — the real side — a man is having dinner facing the mirror. He devours mousse de foie gras, steak of bob veal, caramelized pears, and spinach salad, occasionally pausing to pat his face with a silk napkin or sip deep red wine from a crystal glass.

"You aren't enjoying the meal?" Basil asks his reflection around a mouthful of delicately braised, pale ivory flesh. He is Caucasian, tall and slim, with sandy blond hair and green eyes.

It's true. Basil's image in the glass has barely touched his food, only picked at it and moved it around his plate.

"When will this be over?" the man in the mirror asks.

Basil sighs. "Christ almighty, Basil, why are you such a drag? If I'd known you would be so painfully dull, I'd have just let you die."

"I wish you had."

Basil, choosing to ignore his reflection, continues. "Well, Basil, you are young and relatively healthy. I expect that with a little help I could squeeze another seventy or eighty years out of your mortal frame, and then it's on to new digs for me and down into oblivion for you. Will that make you happy, Basil?"

"As long as it means that it's over."

Basil rolls his eyes at his reflection. "You are such a fucking drama queen, do you know that? Live a little, why don't you? I feed you the most exquisite foods imaginable, find the most gorgeous examples of humanity to share your bed, and do you ever thank me? Of course not. It's always 'please go away' and 'please let me die' or 'when will this be over?' You do know that I could torment you if I wanted to, don't you? I could spend all day shoving needles under my fingernails. I could make you watch as I chopped off bits that I don't really need. This could be a much less pleasant arrangement, Basil. It has been, in the past, with others."

The man in the mirror doesn't say anything. Basil sighs again.

"You do know you could fight me, don't you? It's been years — I'm sure you've figured that out by now. I mean, I may be as a god to you pitiful mortal

creatures, but humans have always had a talent for punching above their weight class. You could inconvenience me, and then I would have to hurt you…but you're too fucking scared. You remember what happened to the last person who got in my way."

Basil pauses, picks up what's left of his dinner, and shoves it unceremoniously into his mouth. He chews, swallows, and washes it down with the dregs of his wine, leaving greasy streaks on the glass. Then he strides to the bookshelf and fetches a block of clear acrylic, which he slams into the center of the table. A pair of eyes — golden brown irises, red muscle and pink nerve tissue still clinging to the sides and rear — stare out. The reflection stands, but Basil moves his hand and the glass seems to pulse. The reflection sits down again.

"You are nothing but a passenger, and you may as well start enjoying it. Eat your dinner." Basil walks out of the room, leaving his reflection to sit and stare at the disembodied eyes.

• • •

"I shouldn't be meeting with you," he says. His rough and phlegmy voice may conceal a tiny hint of an accent. "I could be killed for this, you know."

He is nothing but a hunched shadow in the driver's seat. Whenever a car passes by on the freeway above, the reflected light reveals flashes of an ashen gray face, gray hands clutching the steering wheel.

"Are you afraid of the other bloodsuckers, or are you afraid of the Parasite?" Tajea asks. Sitting in the passenger's side, she is illuminated by the streetlights. She is a dark-skinned woman in her late twenties or early thirties, wearing a dark leather jacket. Dark glasses hide her eyes.

His laugh is almost a cough. "The Parasite doesn't care about me. He doesn't care about anything. My kind have laws against ordinary people like you even knowing that we exist."

"I don't think that I count as ordinary."

"Yeah — I'd like to see you explain that to some people I know. I'm sure you could convince them with a couple of your neat tricks."

"Ok, then. Why are you here? You didn't have to agree to meet me. I've got nothing on you."

"I want to see the Parasite suffer."

"Yeah, me too."

The hulking shape in the driver's seat turns towards her. Tajea turns her head in his direction and removes her glasses, revealing the scarred-over pits where her eyes used to be.

"Oh, man. You really pissed him off."

She replaces her glasses. "What do you know?"

He shifts again in the driver's seat, getting comfortable, and tells her.

BATH, ENGLAND, 1846

The night was dark and lonely, and the snow falling outside was gray with soot, but inside the Saracen's Head it was bright and warm. The guest of honor had yet to reveal his name, but he was very generous with his money. Several women competed for his attention, but he was primarily occupied with describing his bloody exploits doing the Queen's work in Australia.

From time to time he glanced across the room to one of windows. With all the light inside and nothing but dark and snow outside, the windows were dim mirrors. In the glass, the spendthrift traveler could see that while he sat and flirted and held forth, his reflection stood watching him, silent and reproachful. From time to time, he grinned and raised a glass to his reflection; the image did not return the gesture.

He was so preoccupied with the adoration of the crowd — or at least with their adoration for his tales of adventure and the drinks he bought for anyone who cared to listen — that he didn't notice the figures who lurked in the corners of the room. He didn't notice the signals they passed to each other.



Without warning tables and chairs were kicked over and skins of kerosene splashed about the room. Flames raced up the walls. Patrons ran for the door, but the doors were barred from the outside.

But the wealthy stranger was no ordinary man. Moments later, he came bursting through the window and onto the snowy street, shattered glass falling all about him. There were men waiting for him there. They closed in, knives flashing in the light of the burning pub.

The first attacker died, his blood boiling and bursting through his skin. The second shrieked as his knife melted in his hands, searing his flesh and dripping, molten, into the snow. The third and fourth assailants succeeded, driving their knives again and again into the man's belly. They didn't get to enjoy their victory for long — even as their victim fell, their bodies exploded into tongues of colorless fire.

Their work was done, however. The stranger fell to the snowy ground. Other pub patrons who had tried to flee through the window lay around him, gasping through smoke-clogged lungs.

A pale woman walked into the alleyway to survey the evening's work. She prodded the stranger's body with the toe of one boot. The man twitched and began trying to crawl towards the burning pub.

"This is *le Parasite*?" she asked.

The surviving attacker — a gray-skinned man with unusually sharp features and a sharklike grin — cradled his burned hand and nodded.

"Why is he doing that?"

The gray-skinned knifeman looked down to see that the stranger — the Parasite — was dragging himself towards the smoldering pub.

The knifeman laughed. "He's cold, I guess."

The Parasite stretched one bloody hand up and into the flaming wreck of the inn. Then his body slumped down and lay still.

The gray man and the Frenchwoman watched. Then they heard the laughter and looked up. A man-shaped figure, trailing flame and smoke from his burning clothes, jumped through the crumbling timbers of the pub's front door. He paused in the street, gestured rudely at the Frenchwoman, and then ran off into the night. The gray man moved to follow him, but the woman delayed him with a gesture.

"Let him go."

"But you wanted me to —"

"We have learned something today. He is not limited to his body, and can claim another when it is destroyed. Interesting."

"Maybe he can't —"

"It is not worth it. We have learned more about our foe, and *le Parasite* has learned a lesson about how badly we want him to leave our domain. Perhaps if you exist as long as I have, you will learn patience. Go now. You will still be paid."

Foster City, California, 2010

"And this drive contains…"

"Everything I know about what I am. The ghosts. The Underworld. Everything."

The archivist — he has told her to call him "Horus," but the name is so obviously fake that she can't bring herself to take it seriously — lifts the flash drive experimentally. He narrows his eyes at it, as though he has some way of reading the information without a computer. Horus is a tall and thin man, his corduroy pants and suit jacket at odds with his lumberjack's build and five o'clock shadow.

To Tajea's surprise, Horus utters a satisfied grunt, as though he *had* read the contents of the flash drive, and pockets it. Then he glances up at her.

"You can drop the act, you know. I know that you can see me."

"It's not seeing, exactly."

He waves his hand dismissively. "Close enough. In return for this, you want, what again?"

She sighs. "We talked about this."

"A good bargainer always makes sure that both parties are satisfied. I am a very good bargainer. Remind me, please, what you want."

"I want to know everything you can tell me about the Parasite. You know what I'm talking about. It lives up in Piedmont, in the East Bay."

"Ah, yes. After many deaths, our Hierarch — sorry, our leader — placed the Parasite under interdiction. We are prevented from meddling in its affairs, however much we might like to. I assume you're planning to kill it?"

"If I can."

"Good. The thing that you call 'the Parasite' is more accurately 'minyonyaji.' No, don't try to remember that name — it is in a cursed language, and will escape your mind as soon as you stop thinking about it. Not *the* minyonyaji, *a* minyonyaji. One of many. The one you are trying to kill is hopefully the last. I don't know much about the minyonyaji you call the Parasite, but I can tell you about how one of them was ended permanently. Maybe there's something you can use in the story."

OUTSIDE OF TYRE, EMPIRE OF PHOENICIA, 320 BCE

The rain howled outside, battering the oiled cloth walls of the tent. The two men here were the only humans for miles.

The older man was ancient. He was called Uragesh, and this name, itself not his real name, but a false name that protected him from the wrath of his enemies, was followed by many titles: the Hawk of Tyre, the Wolf-Killer, the Unbroken Arrow. His dark skin was deeply scored by time and the sun; and his hair and beard, white with age, were intricately plated and woven with golden charms. Uragesh sat cross-legged in the center of the tent, surrounded by five braziers, lifted from the carpeted floor by brass tripods, each of them burning a different pungent herb. His eyes were closed and his hands folded into a complex pattern in his lap. He had tattoos, some abstract, some depicting warriors or dancers, covering his arms, legs, and naked torso.

The younger man appeared at the tent flap, shaking his head to displace the water that had gathered there. Eregen was, in many ways, a younger version of his mentor: the same dark skin, similar features, the same plaited hair, and some of the same charms and tattoos. Unlike the older man, however, the younger wore a coat of silver scales over linen tunic and short skirt. He was armed as well, with a sturdy bronze sword strapped to his waist.

"Master," Eregen said with a small bow, "I have done as you requested. The merchants have been redirected and will find their way to the caravansary. We are alone again in the valley."

"Good," Uragesh replied. He opened his eyes and looked the younger man up and down. His gaze was piercing, but there was deep sadness in his old eyes. "Sit a while. We have much to discuss."

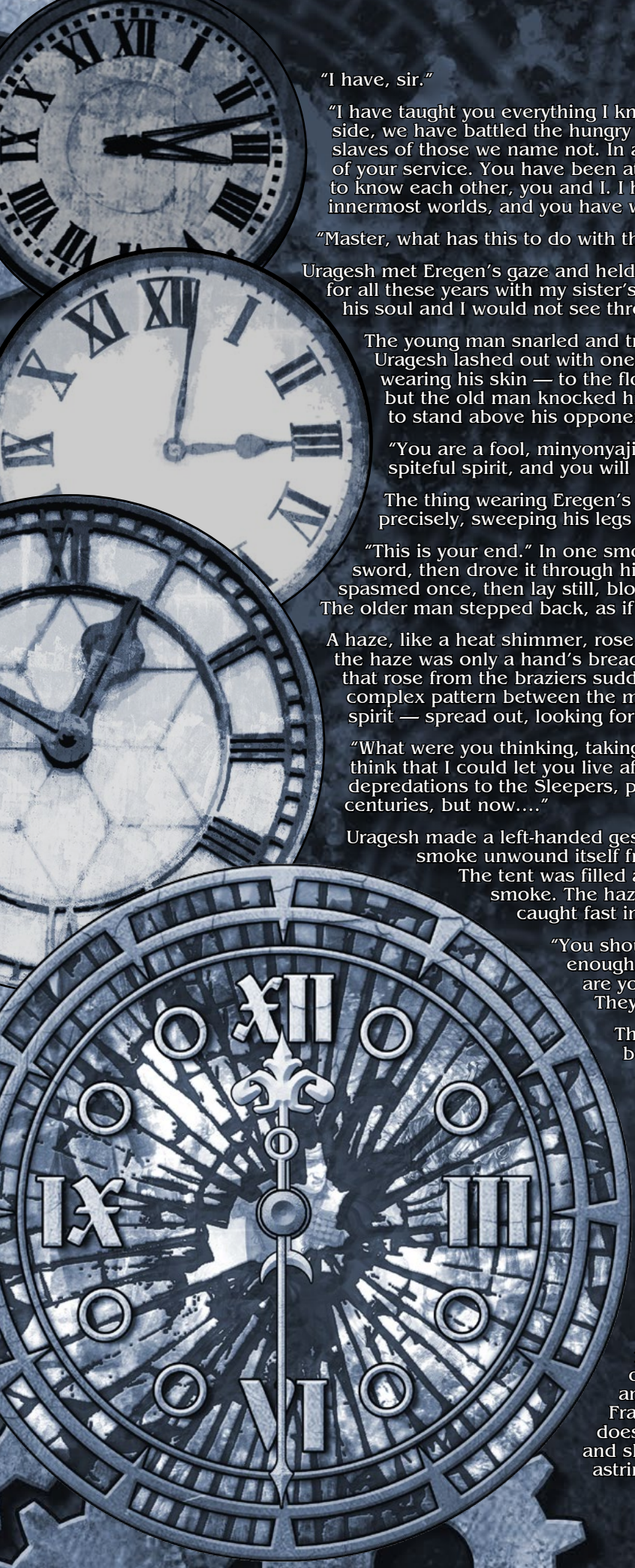
The younger man did as he was asked, sitting on the thick carpets across from his elder.

"Master, I don't understand. How will this help us to defeat the minyonyaji?"

"Peace. How long have you served me?"

"Fifteen years. Ever since you claimed me from my father's people."

"Fifteen years." The old man sighed. "And you have served faithfully all these years."



"I have, sir."

"I have taught you everything I know about the enlightened way of war. Side by side, we have battled the hungry dead, the bastards of the higher world, and the slaves of those we name not. In all that time, I have never had reason to complain of your service. You have been attentive, obedient, and loyal. We have come to know each other, you and I. I have walked in your dreams, even unto your innermost worlds, and you have walked in mine."

"Master, what has this to do with the minyonyaji?"

Uragesh met Eregen's gaze and held it, fierce hatred replacing sadness. "I have walked for all these years with my sister's daughter's son…and you thought you could eat his soul and I would not see through your deception?"

The young man snarled and tried to draw his sword while rising to his feet. Uragesh lashed out with one leg, knocking the young man — or the thing wearing his skin — to the floor of the tent. The young man tried to rise again, but the old man knocked him down again, all the while slowly rising, himself, to stand above his opponent.

"You are a fool, minyonyaji, like all your kind. You are a hungry, hollow, spiteful spirit, and you will always be undone by your own greed."

The thing wearing Eregen's flesh tried to rise again. The old man kicked out precisely, sweeping his legs out from under him a final time.

"This is your end." In one smooth motion, the older man retrieved Eregesh's sword, then drove it through his chest, pinning him to the ground. The body spasmed once, then lay still, blood soaking the carpeted tent floor around him. The older man stepped back, as if to survey his work.

A haze, like a heat shimmer, rose off the body and drifted towards Uragesh. When the haze was only a hand's breadth away from his face, the thin lines of smoke that rose from the braziers suddenly shifted in the air, weaving itself into a complex pattern between the man and the mirage. The haze — the disembodied spirit — spread out, looking for a way in.

"What were you thinking, taking one of the enlightened as your host? Did you think that I could let you live after such an insult? If you had constrained your depredations to the Sleepers, perhaps I could have ignored you for another few centuries, but now…."

Uragesh made a left-handed gesture and spoke four unintelligible words. The smoke unwound itself from about him and coiled around the haze. The tent was filled an unearthly keening and faces appeared in the smoke. The haze writhed among the swirling faces, but it was caught fast in the spell and could not escape.

"You should know this spell — you saw me use it often enough. Are the faces familiar to you, minyonyaji? These are your dead. They will do what no mortal man can do. They will shred you."

The haze diminished, the smoke swirled faster, until both vanished with a final shriek.

The braziers had all but gone out, leaving the tent cold and dark. The old man would wait until the rain stopped, and then he would bury his apprentice's body, and then he would move on.

San Francisco, CA, 2010

"Thanks," he says, hefting the wrapped sandwich. He slides over on the bench, making room for his guest. He is a big man with a knotted, uneven build — one shoulder is several inches higher than the other — wearing layers of coats and pants, a nearly worn-out knit cap, and mismatched boots. He looks like one of San Francisco's many homeless people, but oddly he doesn't smell like one. All the dirt on his clothes and skin is ground in, and he smells just a little bit astringent.

"Normal people don't usually weigh their food," she points out.

He smiles. "Thanks." Then he frowns, thinking. "Why not?"

"We're more interested in what it's going to taste like or what's in it than how much mass it has. Most people's insides don't work like yours."

He nods, still thoughtful. "I don't suppose normal people eat the paper, either."

"Nope."

"That's too bad. I'm going to eat it anyway. I hope you don't mind."

She shrugs. "I've seen worse."

He gets the joke, and laughs, and she laughs with him.

"Did you want some help with something?" he asks around a mouthful of sandwich. "I still owe you, after you helped me with…the thing." He gestures vaguely with his left hand. The hand is noticeably different from the rest of him — darker skinned, with more delicate bones.

"No, not today. I've been making deals and begging for favors all up and down the whole damn bay today, and I just wanted to share a sandwich and figure a few things out."

He looks at what is left of his sandwich — far less than half — with a stricken expression on his face. He is relieved when she pulls a second sandwich out of her messenger bag and begins to eat.

"What's troubling you?" he asks.

She tells him.

OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA, 2007

"What I want to know," he asked the weeping girl, "is how the hell did you find me?" When she didn't answer right away, he kicked her in the belly. She jerked on the floor, her hands still clasped over the bleeding holes in her head where her eyes used to be.

She howled something that might have been "please" and "don't know."

"For fuck's sake, we were done. I used you up and I moved on. You got what you wanted." He began to rant, his attention wandering away from the young woman bleeding at his feet. "You mortals are all the same. You whine and you complain about me, but you don't ever actually *do* anything about me. And eventually your stupid mortal bodies give out…why the hell would you come back?"

He laughed. "Speaking of which…" and followed her to where she had dragged herself, grabbed the back of her belt, and pulled her back to the center of the room.

"There are a couple of options here," he said conversationally. He punctuated his list with blows to her back whenever he thought she might be losing consciousness.

"I could take your body. It's a pretty nice one, but…" he clicked his tongue, disappointed. "I've already gone and ruined it. Basil, Basil, Basil, you never think ahead, do you? Anyway, option two is that I could kill you, but given that we're having this conversation, I doubt that it would help. You'd just come back to bother me again. Whatever you are, death isn't the solution. The last option is that I let you go, and you go have a long and happy mortal life somewhere far away from me.

"I think I'll try three. If all else fails, I can always try option two later."

She heard a slightly wet noise — her blood squelching against the concrete floor — as he knelt to pick something up off the floor. "And I'll keep these, I think. They'll look nice in my library."

He laughed. "'Look nice.' Do you get it?"

He kept on laughing as he walked away, leaving her lying in her own blood.

San Francisco, California, 2010

"I never did find out where he thought he knew me from," she muses. Without looking, she passes the rest of her sandwich to her companion, who wraps it up and stows it away in his enormous backpack.

"Maybe he did."

"Then why don't I remember him?"

"Maybe he knows part of you."

She sighs. "We're not like that, Charlie. We don't…" She trails off, considering his words.

"That's not what I meant." He rolls his eyes, a gesture he picked up long ago by watching the people talk as they walked back and forth along the paths in his park. "I know that normal people aren't made of cast-off parts and can't stitch new parts on. What I meant was—"

"I know what you meant. I think you're right. Part of me."

Tajea stands. "Thank you, Charlie. I think I'm ready to finish this."

Oakland, California, 2010

Schaefer's Meat and Cold Storage on D Street in downtown Oakland is a concrete cube from the outside. Inside, there are offices, rooms full of tools and supplies, and enormous freezers.

Luring the Parasite to the business after hours wasn't hard — for all his blasй attitude, he hadn't lasted as long as he had by ignoring threats. For a girl with a ghost inside her, a girl for whom every house was haunted, it wasn't much harder to trick him into one of the huge freezers, and then to cut the lights.

He turns, trying to find her by the sound of her footsteps. Her voice echoes off the metal walls and is absorbed by the hanging carcasses — it's a lost cause. He knows it's her. He's heard her voice, taunting him, driving him from room to room until he found himself locked in this freezer with her.

He hears the blow coming before it is near enough to strike him. What is it — one of the hanging animal cadavers, designed to stun him and knock him off his feet? He smiles as he begins to twist himself away to avoid it. His body protests against the speed and agility he is forcing from its mortal fibers, but he ignores the discomfort.

Then something else protests as well — a will that he hasn't encountered in years. The man who used to own this body suddenly comes to life, throwing all his years of pent-up frustration and humiliation against the interloper's power. The body is frozen in place, struck by the swinging meat, and knocked sprawling to the floor.

"Basil!" the Parasite screams, "you fucking bastard. Oh, are you going to suffer for that!"

Tajea lands on his back. She has a hatchet — a tool, stolen from an emergency supply kit here in the building — and she hacks at him again and again. It takes a long time for him to stop struggling, and she hits him a few more times to be on the safe side. She doesn't stop until the axe clatters off the concrete floor instead of thudding on flesh.

She sits up, still straddling the Parasite's rent body.

For a moment, she wonders if she's done something wrong. Then it hits her, a cloying heat that tries to creep into her nostrils. It's like the worst sinus infection she ever had, pain and pressure, combined with a horrible sense of violation. She hears

something laughing as it infiltrates her body, but there's a desperate edge to that laughter.

Then Tajea hears another voice — an old voice, a dry and dusty voice that she has lived with for a long time.

"Not yours. Mine."

And then, a moment later. "Wait…I know you. I remember you."

And then there is nothing but screaming inside her. It takes a long time for the screaming to stop.

• • •

Tajea sits on the roof of an apartment building a few blocks away, watching the police lights glitter in the streets outside Schaefer's Meat and Cold Storage. In what she uses instead of sight, the red and blue of the lights are equally pale, colorless, and cold. Six squad cars full of Oakland cops eager to do anything that doesn't involve actually patrolling the ghetto have showed up to protect the crime scene. Tajea isn't afraid that they'll catch her — the magician called Horus promised to use his influence to confound the investigation — and she wonders how the news will report it. A man hacked to bits in a cooler in a meat storage warehouse is pretty unusual.

Something dry and snaky stirs and uncoils within her. A spike of migraine pain jolts her brain and her vision blurs as the thing that lives inside Tajea Jones makes its displeasure known to her.

"What's your problem?" Tajea asks out loud. "You weren't happy when he took my eyes, either."

"You let it in," the dusty voice replies. It sounds even more tired than usual.

"I let it in because I knew you could handle it. You heard the story the wizard told us — the miy…the…" she frowns, trying to remember the word Horus had used, then shrugs and gives up. "The Parasite can be killed by its own dead. You. You're one of the Parasite's dead. He took your body a long time ago. That's why you became a ghost when he finally let you go."

"How could you be sure?"

"The things he said when he was beating me three years ago. And why else would he have come after me in the first place?"

"If you had been wrong, we would both be in Hell."

"Yeah, well, you weren't exactly very helpful. You could have made this whole thing a hell of a lot easier if you'd just *told* me you knew the Parasite. If it hadn't been for Charlie, I might not have figured it out. Tell me again why I have to rely on a stitched-together dead guy to tell me this sort of thing? I have the laziest goddamn geist I've ever heard of."

"And why did we kill it in a meat locker?"

"The vampire's story. The Parasite doesn't like the cold. I think it limited how far it could get without a body. I needed to be sure it went after me."

The dry thing inside Tajea doesn't respond, but Tajea feels it radiate grudging admiration, and she smiles.

"We have a bargain," the voice insists.

"I know, I know. I do all the work in this relationship. I'll make it up to you."

"You will."

"You would find a way to make me pay for helping you out, wouldn't you?" Tajea sighs, pulls herself up to her feet, and makes her way to the fire escape. She knows that she had better start now if she wants to get home before dawn. Tajea doesn't expect her passenger to respond to that last dig — and it doesn't.

A few blocks away at Schaefer's Meat and Cold Storage, baffled police scrape up a hatchet-marred body with a strangely serene expression on its face. Tajea makes her way home through the night, her passenger coiled up tight inside her, weary from its work.



Credits

Writers: Chris Allen, Cam Banks, Russell Collins, J. Dymphna Coy, Jesse Heinig, David A Hill Jr, Cassandra Khaw, Danielle Lauzon, Anna K Loy, Hayley Margules, Stuart Martyn, Michelle Lyons-McFarland, Michael Murray, Marianne Pease, Renee Ritchie, Malcolm Sheppard, John Snead, Mark Stone, Monica Valentinelli, Audrey Whitman, Filamena Young, Eric Zawadzki

Developers: Rose Bailey, Dave Brookshaw, David A Hill Jr, Michelle Lyons-McFarland, Matt M McElroy, Matthew McFarland, Ethan Skemp, Travis Stout, C. A. Suleiman, Pete Woodworth, Eric Zawadzki

Project Coordinator: Matthew McFarland

Editor: Ellen P. Kiley

Artists:Brian Leblanc, Alex Sheikman, Gunship Revolution Studios, Leonardo Albieri, Chris Huth, Tiago Silverio, Cathy Wilkins, Jeff Laubenstein, Andrew Trabbold, Mark Kelly, Sam Araya, Dugnation, Ken Meyer Jr., Michael Gaydos, Andy Hepworth, Richard Thomas, James Stowe, Mike Chaney

Art Direction and Design: Mike Chaney

Creative Director: Richard Thomas

© 2016 White Wolf Publishing AB. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of White Wolf Publishing AB. Reproduction prohibitions do not apply to the character sheets contained in this book when reproduced for personal use. White Wolf, Vampire and Chronicles of Darkness are registered trademarks of White Wolf Publishing AB. All rights reserved. Night Horrors: Unbidden, Vampire the Requiem, Werewolf the Forsaken, Mage the Awakening, Storytelling System, and Ancient Bloodlines are trademarks of White Wolf Publishing AB.. All rights reserved. All characters, names, places and text herein are copyrighted by White Wolf Publishing AB.

The mention of or reference to any company or product in these pages is not a challenge to the trademark or copyright concerned.

This book uses the supernatural for settings, characters and themes. All mystical and supernatural elements are fiction and intended for entertainment purposes only. Reader discretion is advised.

Check out White Wolf online at http://www.white-wolf.com

Check out the Onyx Path at http://www.theonyxpath.com

Chronicles of Darkness
DARK ERAS

Introduction 20

Theme and Mood 20

What's In This Book 21

- Death and Tragedy 22
- Man's Inhumanity to Man 23

Skills 23

- Archery For Firearms 24
- Ride for Drive 25
- Ride 26
- Enigmas for Computers 26
- Other Skills 28

The Sundered World 34

- Theme: An Untamed World 35
- Mood: Alien and Familiar 35

The Neolithic World 35

- The Time Before 35
- Life Among the People 36
- Industry and Artifice 41
- Islands of Civilization 43
- Survival 43
- What Has Yet to Come 46

The Wise 47

- Creating a Neolithic Wise Character 47
- The Paths 48
- Neolithic Awakenings 50
- The Practice of Magic 51
- The Realms of Magic 52
- The Omphalos Stones 53
- The Traditions of Magic 54

Blood of the Wolf 56

- The Border Marches 56
- Native Predators 59
- The Father, The Firstborn, and the First Pack 60
- The Warden Moon 61
- The Changing World 61

Story Seeds 62

- Citadel of the Moon 62
- The Babbling Tower 63
- War's Lonely Children 64
- Unstoppable Souls 64

Inspirations 65

To the Strongest 68

- Theme and Mood 68
- An Iron Age 68
- Beliefs and Darshanas 69
- Nations and Cults 69
- Awakened Demographics 70
- Alexander: Mage, Hero, or Mere Mortal? 70

What Has Come Before 70

Timeline 72
Cultures of the Empire 72
Magic and the Supernatural 73
Material Culture 73
Economics 73
Military Technology 73
What Will Come 75
Timeline 75
The Magical World 77
The Way of Oracles and Furies 77
Witchcraft, Religion, and Philosophy 77
Forms of Magic 78
Oracular Awakening 78
The Elemental Paths 81
Ancient Worlds 84
Darshanas: Philosophies of Magic 86
The Great Cults 90
The Arcadian Mysteries 90
Karpani 92
Mantra Sadhaki 93
Weret-Hekau 94
Barbarians and Enemy Witches 96
Legacy: The Nagaraja 99
Origins 100
Doctrine 100
Sorcery 100
Attainments 101
Adventures in the Classical World 101
Abydos, City of the Dead 101
The Lost Gathas 102
Naga Temple 104
The Death of Alexander 105
River Wardens 107
Bearing Gifts 107
The Diadochi Wars 109
Inspirations 111
Non-Fiction 111
Fiction 111

Three Kingdoms of Darkness 114

Theme: Mandate of Heaven 114
Theme: Heroes in the War 114
Theme: I Would Rather Betray the World 115
Mood: War on an Epic Scale 115
The Demise of an Era: History and Legend 115
Rise of the Warlords 116
The Battle of Red Cliffs 117
The Hungry Dead 121
Courts of Chaos — Changeling: The Lost 124
Directional Courts 124
Warring Freeholds 125
Threats at the Edge of War 125
Court of the Black Tortoise 126
Court of the Vermillion Bird 127
Court of the Azure Serpent 127
Court of the White Tiger 128
Court of the Yellow Dragon 130
Contracts of the Directional Courts 131
When Night Falls the Monsters Come — Geist: The Sin-Eaters 133
A Familiar Role 134
Ghosts in the Three Kingdoms Era 135
Diyù (The Underworld) 136
Storytelling 138

The Wolf and the Raven 144

Viking Fact and Fiction 144
Inspirations 145
The Wolves of the Sea 146
Raiding & Trading 146
Exploration and Settlement 148
New Frontiers 148
Towns 149
Warfare 150
Trade 150
Society 150
Religion 151
The Battle of Clontarf 151
Hunting Ground: Early 11th-Century Dublin 152
Good Friday 152
Aftermath 153
Integration 153
Auspices 154
Cahalith 154
Elodoth 154
Rahu 155
Irraka 155
Ithaeur 155
Blood Talons 155
Bone Shadows 156
Hunters in Darkness 158

Iron Masters 159
Storm Lords 160
Others 161
Spirits 161
The Hosts 161
The Pure 162
The Restless Dead 162
Playing the Game 163
Viking Era Totems 163
New Merit 163
New Blood 163
New Fetishes 164
New Rite 164
New Gifts 165
New Lodge 166
The Hanged Man and the Cross 168
Viking Sin-Eaters 168
An Era Apart 169
New Ceremonies 170
The Underworld 172
Underworld Domains 172
Sin-Eaters at the Battle of Clontarf 174

After The Fall 178
Theme: Rebuilding 179
Mood: Possibility 179
What Has Come Before 179
The Siege 180
The Aftermath 182
Istanbul Today 182
Games of Succession 183
Kostantiniyye the Beautiful 183
Phanariotes, Jews, and Millets 184
Daily Life 184
Landmarks 185
Rumors 185
What Is To Come 186
The Voivode of Wallachia 186
Ottoman Consolidation 190
The Lesser Judgment Day 190
The Reign of the Soldiers 191
The Golden Age 191
The Supernatural 192
Agendas 192
Factions 197
Angels 199
Playing the Game 202
Foundations 202
The Calligrapher 202
The Returned 203
Through the Gate 203
The Hospital 205
Inspiration 205

Beneath the Skin 208
Theme: Identity 208
Mood: High Strangeness 208
How to Use This Supplement 209
Telpochcalli: What Has Come Before 209
In the Beginning 209
The Exodus 211
Before Tenochtitlan 212
Rise to Power 214
Calpulli: Where We Are 214
Daily Life 214
Warfare 217
Economy 217
Cosmology 218
Current Events 219
Tonalpohualli: What is to Come 220
Motecuhzoma II 220
Arrival of Cortés 221
Resistance 223
Tecuani: The Supernatural 224
Servants of the Empire 224
Cryptids and Other Things 232
Infrastructure 235
Oddities 242
Bygones 245
Patolli: Playing the Game 245
Demons in Mesoamerica 245
Aztec Weapons 247
Notes on Existing Merits 247
New Fighting Merits 247
New Supernatural Merits 247
New Social Merits 249
Inspirations 250

Requiem for Regina 254
Theme and Mood 255



What Has Come Before 255
Groans of the Britons: The Saxon Period (30-1043 AD) 255
Miracle Plays and Feast Days: The High Medieval Period (1066-1450) 256
Boars and Dragons: The War(s) of The Roses (1450-1490) 257
The Book of Common Prayer: The Tudors (1500-1590) 257
What is to Come 259
War, Restoration, and Fate 260
A More Secular View 261
London Tonight 263
The Food 263
The Folks 264
The Faith 264
The Fun 264
The Fighting 265
The Covenants 266
The Gallows Post 266
The Invictus 266
The Lancea et Sanctum 268
The Weihan Cynn 270
Britannia's Finest 272
Kindred of Power: The Queen's Court 272
Kindred of Quality: Lords and Ladies of the Chamber 273
Kindred of Character: Fleet Street 274
Kindred of Notoriety: Bridewell and Gatehouse 274
Playing the Game 275
Rotten Fruit 275
That Damned Poet Marlowe 276
The Faerie Queene 277
A Church Divided 278
Inspiration 280
The Rose Courts of London 280
What Has Come Before 280
The Courtiers 284
The City 284
The Rose Courts: Londontown Freehold 286
Playing the Game 290

Fallen Blossoms 294
Introduction 294
Growling Legends in the Bones of the Dead 295
Theme 295
Mood 295
How We Arrived Here 296
The Veil of Tonight 296
Customs and Culture 296
The Vigil 301
What is to Come 303
Under Your Skin 303
New Compacts and Conspiracies 308
Ama-San 309
Azusa Miko 311
Bijin 313
The Hototogisu 315
Otodo 317
New Endowments 319
Setto 319
Seitokuken 319
Storytelling in the Edo Jidai 322
Find Anchor Points 322
Using the Future 322

Lily, Sabre and Thorn 326
How to Use This Chapter 326
Themes 327
Mood: Baroque Heroism 329
France in Le Grande Siecle 329
Paris 330
Other Places 332
Daily Life 335
The Seasonal Courts 336
Holidays and Festivals 338
Grand Intrigues 339
The Empress of the North Star 339
Rennes, Summer, 1683 341
Character Creation 344
Skills 344
Merits 348
Contracts of Blades 348
New Tokens 350
The Knights of St. Collen 353
Privileges 355
Inspirations 355
Fiction 355
Non-Fiction 355

Doubting Souls 358

Theme: Challenged Beliefs 358
A Charred Past 358
Outer Demon, Inner Witch 360
Naumkeag 363

A Murky Future 367

Salem Town 368
Salem Village 370
Ipswich 371
Boston 373

The Supernatural 377

Shadow Court 377
The Scarlet Watch 379
Les Voyageurs 381
Keepers of the Weave 383
Protectors of the Light 385

New Tactics 387

Cross-Examine 387
Flintlock Reload 387

Wandering Monsters 388

Story Hooks 391

Hunter Civil War 391
Truth on Trial 392
Suffering Innocents 392

Inspirations 393

A Grimm Dark Era 396

Theme & Mood 397

Inspirational Media 397

Literature 397
Film 398
Television 398
Video Games 398

What Has Come Before 398

How Might Changelings React? 399
Story Hooks 399

What Is to Come 400

The Great Escape 401
Court Reactions 401
Rural Fear & The Black Forest 402
Preparation And Training 403
Experiments 404

The Lost 405

Timing And Allegiances 406

The Freehold Of Golden Creation 407

The Courts 407

The Stuff of Stories 409

New Trifles 410
New Tokens 410

Contracts 412

The Grimms 414
Companions of the Resigned 416
Privileges 417
The Order of the Story Heroes 418

Playing the Game 420

Setting 421
Creating the Faerie Tale Mood 422

The Ruins of Empire 426

Theme: Unlife Among the Ruins 426
Mood: Curses Great and Small 427
What This Is...and Is Not 427

Settings — The Western Empires 427

Britain: The Victorian and Edwardian Eras 428
British Africa 429
France: A Colonial Empire 432
The Ottoman Empire: The Sick Man of Europe 434
Egypt — The Old Home 437
Mesopotamia — Conflicts Old and New 440
The Great War and Its Players 441

The Deathless — Guilds During the Fall 443

Maa-Kep: Building Downward 443
Mesen-Nebu: Transforming Economies 445
Sesha-Hebsu: Recording the End of Divinity 446
Su-Menent: The Surgeon Generals 447
Tef-Aabhi: A Djed to the Heavens 448

Character Creation 450

Skills in the Era 450
Merits 451
Affinities 453
New Utterances 454

Chronicles of Ruins 455

Building Your Pyramid 455
Allies and Adversaries 456
Personalities of Note 457
Archetypes of the Era 462

Quick Story Generator 463
Sample Tomb 464
Inspirations 466

A Handful of Dust 470

Hope and Despair 470
Wasteland 471
The Long Road 471
Come Look at the Freaks 472
What Has Come Before 473
Life in These Hard Times 473
The Long Struggle 475
The Great Depression 477
What Comes After 478
World War II and the New Deal 478
The Rains Come 479
The Supernatural 479
Pilgrims in the Time of Dust 479
Chronicle Seeds 483
"Come One, Come All, Witness the Created Man!" 483
The Hollow 488
Hunger 489
Dust Devils 490
The Traveling Salesmen 493
Inspirations 495
Literature 495
Movies 495
Television 495

God's OwnCountry 498

Themes 498
Mood 499
What Has Come Before 500
A Nation of Conflict 500
A Nation of Progress 501
Where We Are 501
Population 501
Geography 502
Culture 502
Government 504
Economics 505
Notable Locations 505
What is to Come 507
The Supernatural 508
Kauwaka: The Bound 510
Atua 510
Whanau 511
Tohunga: Experts of the Sacred 515
Taniwha: Mighty Spirit Guardians 517
Tapu: The Sacred Law 518
Patupaiarehe and Ponaturi: Spirit Folk of New Zealand 519
Patupaiarehe 519
Ponaturi 520
Kahukahu 520
Playing the Game 521
Who Are You? 521
The Prelude 521
Archetypes and Thresholds 522
Sin-Eater Traits 523
A Second Chance at Life, and What It's Like 524
Setting Stories in God's Own Country 525
Story Hook: Opening the Floodgates 525
Chronicle Hook: Ending the Maelstrom of Awhawhiro 525
Story Hook: Abmortal Beloved 526
Inspirations 526

Into the Cold 530

What Has Come Before 531
Eyes Everywhere 533
Living the Post-War Dream 533
West Berlin 534
East Berlin 534
What Is to Come 539
The Supernatural 543
Agendas 543
Berlin Personalities 551
Infrastructure 553
Playing the Game 556
Ghost Numbers 557
The Sewer Troll 557
Herr Arger's Confession 559
Radio Free Hell 560
The Church of Reconciliation 561
Bad Blood 562
Inspirations 563

The Bowery Dogs 566

Theme and Mood:
When All You Got's A Little... 566

- The 1970s 566
- New York City 566
- Gangs 567
- Drugs 567
- Atmosphere: A TV Culture 568

What Has Come Before 568

- Ancient History 568
- Labor Movements 568
- Civil Unrest 569
- Vietnam 569
- Stonewall 571

What is to Come 571

- Game Evolution 572
- The Privileged 572
- The Downtrodden 572
- Territories 572
- Burning Down 573
- Rebuilding 576

The World Beneath 577

- Courts 578
- Unique Manifestations 579

Running The Game 580

- The Punk Generation 580
- Drugs 581
- Betrayal 583

Events 584

- Storyteller Characters 587

Inspirations 590





Stephan urged his horse forward. It whinnied softly, clearly disturbed, and stepped sideways instead. Stephan whispered soothing words and repeated his command, flicking the reins across the beast's neck and squeezing its flanks with his thighs.

The ambushers struck at once. Footmen swinging clubs and rusty blades raced out of the undergrowth. Stephan heard a musket's report and braced himself, but if a ball of lead imbedded itself in his flesh, he was too busy directing his horse through the flow of the battle and lashing out with his cavalry sabre to notice. Horse and rider moved among the attackers, striking with iron-shod hooves and edged steel whenever anyone got too close.

The battle was over as soon as it began. Stephan had suffered a few cuts and bruises to his legs. His horse was limping, and a knife hilt stuck out of the beast's shoulder; Stephan could vaguely remember decapitating the man who put it there.

Stephan heard the sound of the hammer of a flintlock being pulled back. His eyes followed the sound to a tall man in a long, elegant coat standing at the edge of the clearing. The man's face looked like it had been carved out of alabaster, too perfect to be real; but as Stephan watched, one corner of the thin-lipped mouth twitched up into an impossible smile. It was the eyes, though, that gave the man away. They were perfectly blank, devoid of anything human. Stephan knew those eyes, though the last time he had seen them they had not gazed at him out of a human face.

"Hello, Stephan," the man said genially, the barrel of the musket pointed at Stephan's chest.

"Hello, monster," Stephan replied. He gestured at the dead and dying men around him. "Did I break some of your toys?"

"We will attend to that matter when you and I return home. Do you remember home, Stephan?"

"I will never go back with you," Stephan spat.

The monster clad in human form shrugged and pulled the trigger. The musket ball sped towards Stephan's chest, but Stephan was faster. He had no power over lead, but he had sworn binding oaths with the essence of the air. He invoked those oaths, and the wind blew across the clearing, knocking the musket ball off course so that it buried itself in a nearby tree instead of Stephan's flesh.

The monster's smile widened. "You have learned a few tricks."

"More than a few, you old beast," Stephan replied. He invoked more of the pacts and oaths he had sworn. Horse and rider swelled. Bits of wood and bracken flew up off the ground and wove itself into thorny armor around both of them. As the armor of vines and thorns engulfed his hand, Stephan raised his blade. A glint of green light ran down the edge, leaving an emerald glow behind it.

"I will not go back with you," Stephan said coolly. "I will cut you down, and you won't hurt me or anyone else ever again."

Stephan commanded his horse to charge. This time, it did without hesitation, thundering across the trampled mud of the clearing.

On the far side, the monster merely smiled and raised its hands.



Introduction

The vampire calls himself Peter, though he no longer remembers his original name. He keeps a silver locket with him, always. The portrait inside has long since faded to near-total obscurity, but he cannot bear to part with it. He does not know why.

It has been almost a hundred years since a wild and wandering mad thing imbued a corpse with the divine fire, and the thing that calls itself Birch was born. Birch has seen eras rise and fall, but has never found the path to humanity. Now Birch can feel, with bitter disappointment, the divine fire ebbing within him, and he knows that he does not have much more time.

The ancient journal has been passed from parent to child for ten generations, following the family from the streets of St. Petersburg to suburban Pennsylvania. It details the Warner family's encounters with the thing that has stalked them through the ages. Cathleen Warner stands over her newborn baby's cradle. The book is on the table beside her. In one hand she has a revolver, in the other she has an iron crowbar. One way or another, it ends tonight.

History is a pack of lies about events that never happened told by people who weren't there.

–George Santayana

The Chronicles of Darkness are strange and terrible stories. There may be ancient bloodsucking monsters that take the forms of swarms of owls, a cult that steals the eyes of frogs to take their shapes, and at least one secret society of racist magical hermaphrodites, to name a few possibilities. The Chronicles of Darkness are deeply strange, often dangerous, and sometimes beautiful.

This strangeness stretches all the way back to the beginning of human history, and possibly further. Some individual entities in the Chronicles of Darkness are very old, with stories that span eras of human history. Although they sometimes include details — or at least hints — of these secret histories, most Chronicles of Darkness books are written to facilitate games set in the modern day.

Have you ever wanted to go back and take part in those ancient, secret histories? Have you ever wondered how the near collapse of America in the 1930s affected the Prometheans struggling towards humanity in its dusty wastelands and abandoned towns? Have you ever considered what it must have been like for the mages of the second or third generation after the fall of Atlantis, as they slowly became aware of the enormity of what had happened? Do you ever think about the possibilities inherent in combining the story of any Chronicles of Darkness game with the style of other eras of human history?

If so, then this book will interest you.

Dark Eras provides the details you need to tell stories in a variety of historical eras, from the ancient Near East to the 1970s and '80s. Each era is an encapsulated setting, with everything you need to begin your exploration of the strange history of the Chronicles of Darkness.

Theme and Mood

The goal of this book is to provide just enough historical accuracy to be useful to players and Storytellers. For a chapter about the Dust Bowl to be useful, it needs to include enough historically accurate details to feel like the Dust Bowl. At the same time, the point of this book is not historical minutiae. This is a roleplaying supplement; history books cover that sort of thing.

The history presented here has a definite Chronicles of Darkness twist. The authors have stressed those historical details that are most likely to produce good Chronicles of Darkness stories. Where such details don't exist, the authors have been happy to create them.

Ultimately, **Dark Eras** takes the attitude that history deserves just as much respect as any other element for your game — which is to say, as much as makes for a good story. In a game set in the Chronicles of Darkness, the Storyteller is free to emphasize, de-emphasize, change, or ignore altogether anything found in any Chronicles of Darkness sourcebook. Historical detail is no exception.

What's In This Book

Dark Eras consists of 16 sections, at least one for each of the Chronicles of Darkness game lines. They are presented in chronological order, beginning with the oldest. The eras are:

- **Mage: The Awakening/Werewolf: The Forsaken** — *The Sundered World* (5500 - 5000 BCE): At the birth of civilization, in the shadow of the Fall, the Awakened stand as champions and protectors of the agricultural villages spread across the Balkans. In a world without a Gauntlet, where Shadow and flesh mingle, the steady taming of the world by humanity conflicts with the half-spirit children of Father Wolf.

- **Mage: The Awakening** — *To the Strongest* (330–320 BCE): In the rise and fall of Alexander the Great's Empire, armies marched and cultures clashed. In the birth pangs of Hellenistic civilization, Awakened sorcerers all over the ancient world met, fought, and joined together. In the chaos of Alexander's assassination and the wars that followed, Cults became Orders amid conflicts still burning in the present day.

- **Geist: The Sin-Eaters/Changeling: The Lost**— *Three Kingdoms of Darkness* (220-280): Famine weakens the empire, and war splits it apart. It is an age of ambition and strife, where the hungry dead walk the earth in great numbers, and the Lost must rely on their own kingdoms. Warlords and commoners, ghost-speakers and orphans ~ who truly serves the Mandate of Heaven?

- **Werewolf: The Forsaken/Geist: The Sin-Eaters** — *Wolves of the Sea* (700-1100): The Viking expansion across Europe comes at a pivotal time in history, as new faiths rose to challenge the old and new ways threatened to sweep ancient tradition aside. The Forsaken sail with raiders and explorers, seeking new lands to claim and new spirits to conquer, while Sin-Eaters walk the battlefields bringing the honored dead to their final rewards. The world grows larger and more dangerous by the day, but there are great rewards for those brave enough to fight for them.

- **Demon: The Descent** — *After the Fall* (1453-1458): The Ottoman conquest shatters Constantinople... and also the God-Machine's grip on it. Unchained flock from all over the world to seek their fortunes in rebuilding the city. But is the Machine really gone, and if it is, can the Unchained face the horrors it drove into the shadows?

- **Skinchangers/Demon: The Descent** — *Beneath the Skin* (1486-1502): Ahuitzotl sits on the throne at the height of the Aztec Empire, overseeing his sorcerer-priests' sacrifices and the endless flower wars his jaguar and eagle warriors carry out in his name to keep the altars well-supplied with victims. The gears of the Aztec Empire turn smoothly and inexorably, but not everything is what it pretends to be. Skinchangers take the shapes of animals to run the wilds or bring down human prey, the Unchained cobble together identities from stolen lives, and stranger things still lurk in the deserts and jungles beyond the walls of Tenochtitlan.

- **Vampire: The Requiem** — *Requiem for Regina* (1593): Elizabeth I cemented her grip on newly Protestant England. Carefully balancing demands from those with Catholic and Lutheran sympathies, she forged a police state. Yet London emerged as a thriving cultural center, and from the crucible emerged a Kindred society forever changed. This section also includes a look at the sharply divided changeling society of this era.

- **Hunter: The Vigil** — *Fallen Blossoms* (1640-1660): Japan is moving into the Edo Period. New laws and new ways of thinking wash over the land, and with a new order come new threats to humanity. Take a look at the Vigil in a time where samurai transition from warlords to bureaucrats, Japan massively and lethally rejects outside influence, and when Edo rapidly grows into a world power.

- **Changeling: The Lost** — *Lily, Sabre, and Thorn* (1600s–early 1700s): In the Age of Reason under the reign of Louis XIV, enlightenment went hand-in-hand with court intrigues. The Sun King's court influenced a time when changeling freeholds gained increasing unity and communication. It is a time of adventure, deception, betrayal, and passion — the roar of cannon, the rustle of silk, the ring of steel. The joys and sorrows and outrageous fortunes of the swashbuckler — these are all too well-known to the Lost.

- **Hunter: The Vigil** — *Doubting Souls* (1690–1695): Immigrants and tribes struggled to co-exist on the Eastern Seaboard in the ever-expanding Colonies.





Violent clashes, supernatural beliefs, and demonic influences spelled disaster for Salem Village and its surrounding towns, while others fought werewolves and vampires on the frontier. With so much at risk, only god-fearing men and women were deemed innocent — and those were few indeed.

- **Changeling: The Lost** — *A Grimm Dark Era* (1812-1820): With the publication of Grimm's Fairy Tales, the Lost find themselves subject to the strength of stories, to a degree never before seen. As numerous stories reach greater audiences, the power of tales redefine what it means to be a changeling. Here, we explore a shift in the veil between fiction and reality, and find changelings who escaped by embracing the odd rules of the fantastic.

- **Mummy: The Curse** — *The Ruins of Empire* (1893–1924): Perhaps the quintessential era of the mummy in the mind of Westerners, this period saw the decline of the two greatest empires of the age: British and Ottoman. Walk with the Arisen as they bear witness to the death of the Victorian age, to pivotal mortal discoveries in Egypt, and to the horrors of the Great War.

- **Promethean: The Created** — A *Handful of Dust* (1933–1940): The Great Depression and the black blizzards of the 1930s turned the American Midwest into a wasteland. For the better part of a decade, thousands of people experienced deprivation and alienation right alongside the Created. They also clung to the faint promise of hope, that the rains would come and restore the land.

- **Geist: The Sin-Eaters** — *God's Own Country* (1950s): World War II is over and a new age of technology is coming, but a hidden storm threatens to overwhelm both the Maori and the European New Zealanders, flooding the world with the restless dead. The Bound are the last line of defense between a spirit-world gone mad and a sleepy island nation concerned with the advent of rock and roll and mourning their lost soldiers.

- **Demon: The Descent** — *Into the Cold* (1961): East Germany erects a wall against its Western counterpart, turning West Berlin into an island within its own country. As the Cold War heats up, demons find themselves the targets of increasing human scrutiny, and begin to realize that the God-Machine's plans didn't end with the War.

- **Werewolf: The Forsaken** — *The Bowery Dogs* (1969–1979): New York City in the 1970s. Crime. Drugs. Gang violence. Vast economic disparity. And werewolves. It's a lean, ugly time to be alive, and the lone wolf doesn't stand a chance out there. In the end, all you really have is family.

Death and Tragedy

Natural disasters kill and uproot indiscriminately, and even worse are the outrages performed upon humans by other humans. The Earth has seen murder, torture, genocide, and other atrocities. Huge swaths of human history are defined by who was eating and who wasn't; who could have helped, but didn't; and who was winning, who was losing, and what the consequences were.

These sorts of events don't always make for good storytelling. All kinds of things can happen during a game session that might be hard or intense, but a Storyteller probably doesn't want to leave her players in a state of shock. At least, not unless the Storyteller and players have all agreed ahead of time that they want to have that kind of game.

More importantly, natural (and unnatural) disasters tend to be deprotagonizing. Players like to feel as though their in-character decisions matter; placing them in a position where they can do nothing is a good way to leave them frustrated. It's one thing to have characters facing any of their many implacable foes, but facing down an army, or an erupting volcano, or an untreatable disease is something else entirely. A rag-tag group of Pentacle mages can fight off an offensive by Seers of the Throne to claim dominion over their city, but they can't do quite as much against an earthquake. Powerlessness is a spice that should be used very sparingly in the creation of a game session. It may be a part of life, but for a lot of players it makes for a negative experience of the game.

Death and tragedy can also provide great hooks for stories. Extremity brings out the best and the worst in a lot of people. Some of history's worst times are also some of its most interesting. To the extent that **Dark Eras** can be about the past of the Chronicles of Darkness, feuds and alliances can have their origins in the darkest parts of human history. This is true of families and organizations, and sometimes even more true of long-lived or immortal entities like vampires and mages.

A Storyteller also needs to be aware that the wounds left by some historical events might still be a little tender for some of his players. One of the chapters in this book focuses on New York in the 1970s. The Son of Sam killings of 1976 were only 37 years ago at the time of this writing. A group of players could very well include someone who lost a loved one or was otherwise deeply affected by those events. Bigger events cast shadows that can cross generations. Storytellers should tread carefully when they set their stories in times of war and genocide. As with any other story of death and tragedy, however, that doesn't mean that a Storyteller shouldn't try — it just means that she should be aware of the feelings and histories of her players.

Above all, when it comes to historical games, communication is key. Nobody knows better than the players what would push their buttons in a good way, what would push their buttons in a bad way, and what themes and challenges would interest them the most.

Man's Inhumanity to Man

In 1787, the Scottish poet Robert Burns coined the phrase "man's inhumanity to man" in *Man was Made to Mourn: A Dirge*. Since then, this phrase has been quoted in reference to the status of women, the enslavement of Africans in North America and their treatment after they were freed, and the general shape of Western history in the 20th century.

It would be foolish to pretend that the modern world is perfect, but humanity has certainly progressed. Slavery is rarer in most of the world than it once was. The rights of groups that nobody used to be willing to admit even existed are now being debated in public. Even though science and technology have created their share of new ills, they have also provided humanity with solutions to many of the problems that once cut lives short.

When you run a game set in a historical era, on the other hand, you will often find yourself diving head-first into prejudice and injustice.

First and foremost, talk to your players. People come to roleplaying for a wide variety of reasons and with a wide variety of expectations. Some players are looking for catharsis; they want their characters to be tried and abused. Some are just looking for a fun time with lots of explosions, and for the good guys to win in the end with nominal hardship and sacrifice. Some want something in-between.

Even the players who want to take the story to a realistic, dark place don't want to be stymied at every turn. It's one thing to have a player deal with frustrating prejudice, it's something else to take away all his choices or force him into a purely reactive role.

Take the role of women in 1930s in America, for example. In that era, women had a very sharply delineated place within society. (For that matter, so did men, but their roles were more public, less limited, and more conducive to dramatic stories.) Women who stepped outside of that place were shunned and more likely to be the target of violence.

Whether or not it's *accurate* for an independent-minded female character to be harassed at every turn and occasionally threatened with rape or assault, it certainly isn't *fun*. The same is true of African-American characters at many times in America's history, or characters of various other backgrounds and creeds in other parts of the world, at other times.

In other words, the guiding principle of any historical game should be playability, rather than accuracy. Where historical facts present more opportunities for storytelling, they should be embraced whole-heartedly. When they get in the way of a good story, they should be ignored.

When dealing with humanity's history of unfairness, it's better to limit the character's surroundings rather than to limit the character. Don't tell a player that she can't portray a well-educated black man in the 1930s, for example. Feel free to portray the world around this character as ignorant, prejudiced, and unwilling to accept his intelligence — as long as this portrayal doesn't get in the way of the character being the protagonist of his story, of course — but don't limit the player.

For that matter, people have always existed who broke the mold of their times. During World War II, for example, one of Russia's most feared snipers was a woman, and the British intelligence agencies employed female pilots and radio operators. Many of America's black intellectuals managed to find both education and outlets for their ideas long before the civil rights movement forced mainstream universities to accept their applications. Chronicles of Darkness characters are already extraordinary: They have attracted the attention of an immortal monster, or escaped from wicked faeries, or thrown off the shackles of sleep and opened their eyes to eternal truths, and so on. Ordinary mortals could and did surpass the limitations of their times. Supernatural characters should not be any more limited.

Players and Storytellers also need to be sensitive in their portrayal of characters with beliefs that we, today, find deplorable. Storytellers are practically required to portray bigoted and wrong-headed beliefs in a historical game, and players may find it an interesting challenge.

When this comes up, the troupe needs to remember that while context is important, it isn't everything. Knowing that your fellow player doesn't mean it when he uses hurtful words isn't necessarily going to take the sting out of them. As always, communication is key. Each player should know exactly how far she can push her portrayal of a character who is racist, sexist, homophobic, or whatever, and be open to having the rules changed if someone at the table has an unexpected reaction.

Alternately, it's possible to throw all this out the window. Historical accuracy — like everything else about roleplaying and Storytelling — is just another tool, which players and Storytellers are free to use or discard at will. If an issue is too heavy or too raw for your group, just de-emphasize it. Your game is not required to include every terrible person or event to stain our history, and doing so doesn't make your game "better" or "more realistic."

Skills

As humanity adapts to the world it creates, the basic competencies required — the Skill list — has changed as well. The Computer Skill is a prime example. In the year 2014, some degree of the Computer Skill is almost ubiquitous. As late as the 1970s, however, this Skill was almost unheard of, except among a few isolated experts. The same is true of Firearms and Drive, both Skills related to technologies that didn't exist until a specific point in human history.

Other Skills, however, have remained the same. Techniques may rise and fall, but the basic principles of harming other humans in hand-to-hand combat have not changed. Therefore, no matter what era you set your game in, the Brawl and Melee Skills act the same. Similarly, while the content and mores may have changed, human interaction

has followed the same principles ever since our first ancestors began the long process of inventing language. As a result, Social Skills are unchanged.

Below is the complete list of alternate Skills, as well as guidelines for when these substitutions should take place.

Archery For Firearms

The first firearms were a crude combination of lance, flamethrower, and shrapnel launcher used in the early and mid-1100s in China. This weapon probably was not widely used, however. Over the years, and in many different parts of the world, crude personal firearms gradually evolved into refined and reliable artillery pieces. The first true guns — hand-held weapons usable by a single person — didn't exist until the 1500s. These weapons remained quite rare until the late 1700s, when men stopped carrying rapiers and started carrying pistols instead. They were still highly unreliable until the introduction of standardized and mass-produced guns and ammunition in the 1830s.

Archery, on the other hand, has been with humankind since the end of the Upper Paleolithic Age — also called the Late or High Stone Age — about 10,000 years ago. Bows and other forms of assisted throwing were among the most popular methods of dealing death at range until they were supplanted by guns. Archery remained in use outside Europe and the Middle East for many years after the invention of the firearm.

The Firearms Skill does not exist in any game set before the 1500s. If a character wants to use a crude firearm or artillery skill before then, she should use the Athletics Skill, though her player can certainly chose a specialty in "Guns" or "Artillery." Between the 1500s and the 1800s, both Archery and Firearms existed side by side, the former waning and the latter waxing. The advent of cheap and reliable guns in 1836 was the death knell for the Archery Skill, which was gradually folded into the Firearms Skill, where it remains for games set in the modern day. In games set outside of Europe or North America, Archery remained the king of ranged combat until guns arrived on the scene, usually in the hands of foreign conquerors. Although many native peoples continued to train in the use of their traditional weapons, most were also very happy to learn how to use firearms — and the Firearms Skill — once it became obvious how much more powerful these weapons were.

Unlike guns, bows are almost impossible to conceal. As a result, the Archery Skill was never as popular in its time as the Firearms Skill is now. Carrying a bow meant lugging around up to 10 pounds of wood, horn, and metal. Twenty arrows weighed more than a pound and had to be carried in a quiver, usually slung over the shoulder. Although an expert could fire a bow about as quickly as a modern rifleman can make an accurate shot, there was no reliable equivalent to a handgun's portability and concealability, or a machine gun's high rate of fire.

As a result, nobody learned archery for self-defense. A sturdy knife, spear, or sword was far better for that purpose. Archers were generally hunters or soldiers, prepared to shoot with support to protect them from the chaos of the battlefield, or hunters, trained to shoot in the relatively controlled circumstances of the hunt.



In terms of the eras described in this book, troupes should use the Firearms Skill for *A Grimm Dark Era*, *The Bowery Dogs*, *Handful of Dust*, *God's Own Country*, *The Ruins of Empire*, and *Into the Cold*. Before After the Fall, Archery is the appropriate Skill. *Requiem for Regina*, *Lily, Sabre, and Thorn*, *Fallen Blossoms*, and *Doubting Souls* fall into the in-between period. Some characters in these times might use Archery, some might use Firearms, and some might be trained in both.

Archery

Archery allows your character to shoot, identify, and repair any kind of weapon that mechanically assists in firing a projectile. This can include bows and their variants — including pellet bows — as well as spear-throwers and other



similar weapons. The Archery Skill can be used to represent anyone from a hunter who shoots to eat, to a soldier who shoots to kill, to a sportsman who shoots for fun.

Because guns, if they exist at all, are rare in any time period that uses the Archery Skill, it does not apply to Firearms. Using a crude firearm is more a matter of brawn and luck, and uses the Athletics Skill instead.

Possessed by: Hunters, soldiers, sportsmen

Specialties: European Bow, Japanese Bow, Longbow, Pellet Bow, Poor Visibility, Short Bow, Trick Shot, Wind and Weather

Roll Results

Archery operates almost identically to the Firearms Skill described in the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**. Dramatic failures work a little differently, however.

Dramatic Failure: Bows can fail in a wide variety of ways, from snapped strings to damage to the bow itself. Restringing a bow takes about as long as clearing a jam in a gun — one turn — but damage to the bow makes it useless until it can be repaired. Alternately, the archer might hit a different target. If the Storyteller has opted to represent ammunition narratively, rather than keep track of each missile, a dramatic failure could also indicate that your character has run out of arrows.

Ride for Drive

In all but the most choked urban centers, learning to drive is a rite of passage. In most First World nations, the population of cars almost equals the population of humans. Even in poorer countries, it isn't at all unusual to encounter a car owned by a community or the rare wealthy individual.

The first steam-powered automobiles appeared in the late 1700s. However, these automobiles were nothing more than toys for the wealthy and eccentric. Automobile technology continued to develop throughout the 1800s, finally becoming profitable in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

In Europe and North America, cars remained luxuries until the post-World War II era, when advances in assembly line technology made cars faster and easier to produce. Although the industry has risen and fallen since then, cars have been almost ubiquitous ever since.

Horses were probably domesticated around 2000 BCE. Paleontologists still aren't clear on when and where horses were first ridden. Some cultures — the ancient Egyptians, for example — never even considered riding on the horse's back, preferring chariots. The Ride Skill, however, applies equally to horses that are ridden or driven.

Even in ancient times, horse ownership was far from universal. Not only were horses expensive to maintain, that maintenance required its own skill set. While a car can go months without maintenance without any serious ill effects, a horse will die if not fed, kept at the right temperature, frequently checked for injuries, and so on. While most Americans today know how to drive, most people in antiquity never learned how to ride or care for a horse. When automobile culture was born, it penetrated far deeper than equestrian culture ever had.

The Ride Skill is most appropriate for all of the Eras before *The Ruins of Empire*, while Drive is most appropriate for the later eras. *The Ruins of Empire* straddles the line between Drive and Ride, with the aristocracy often learning both Skills, while the common people sometimes learned how to ride or drive horses or donkeys if it was important to their livelihoods.

Ride

In addition to riding a horse or operating a horse-drawn vehicle, the Ride Skill is useful for performing basic veterinary medicine on commonly ridden animals. Ride can also be used to build and maintain a working relationship with such animals.

Possessed by: Farmers, hostlers and teamsters, cavalry soldiers, the idle rich

Specialties: Jumping, Particular Breeds (ie. Arabians), Riding in Combat, Tricks, Tailing, Unfamiliar Horses

Roll Results

The Ride Skill is almost identical to the Drive Skill. Much like cars, animals have Handling scores. As a rough guideline, an animal's starting Handling score is its Wits rating. This score can rise through good treatment and successive Manipulation + Ride rolls, or fall with maltreatment and neglect.

Unlike Drive, Ride operates with Social Attributes rather than Physical Attributes. Driving a car has a lot to do with how deftly one can handle the wheel, but riding is more about communicating across the gap between species. Ridden Pursuit, for example, uses Manipulation + Ride + Handling. Getting an animal to perform a jump or another dangerous trick uses Presence + Ride + Handling. Ridden Tailing, however, still uses Wits + Ride + Handling, because it relies more on the rider's judgment than her relationship with her animal.

Dramatic Failure: Dramatic failure with a horse almost always involves either an injury to the horse, or the animal adopting an unhelpful attitude — simply refusing to perform or even rearing up and throwing its rider. It's also possible, though unlikely, for the rider to just fall off.

Enigmas for Computers

Computers are a staple of life in the First World, but this was not always the case. Although humans have had machines that assisted in quickly adding and subtracting — like the abacus — for a long time, the first true mechanical calculator appeared in the mid-1600s. The technology stalled for another 200 years until the invention of the first reliable and commercially viable calculator in 1851. Computers continued to become more reliable and versatile from that point, but remained highly specialized pieces of equipment. This changed in the 1980s, with the first home computers. Since then, computers have continued to spread into other technologies, until now many common devices contain computers and require some degree of the Computer Skill to operate.

In a Chronicles of Darkness game, the Computer Skill is usually used to manipulate information, whether it's researching a database, hacking into a protected system, or hiding a paper trail. Before the invention and proliferation of computers, characters used the Enigmas Skill to solve — and create — puzzles. Enigmas is useful for creating or decoding cyphers or codes, and navigating or manipulating complex systems (including bureaucracies). In those time periods where computers were beginning to come into existence, but weren't widespread enough to justify the Computer Skill, characters should use the Crafts or Science Skills to manipulate this burgeoning technology.

The Computer Skill doesn't exist until the 1980s. As a result, it isn't really appropriate to *any* of the eras described in this book. Every era in this book uses the Enigmas Skill instead.

Enigmas

Enigmas is the Skill for finding patterns in chaos. It is particularly useful for unravelling codes and cyphers, navigating complex systems — like arcane peerages or unwieldy bureaucracies — and cross-referencing large amounts of disparate information.

Possessed by: Occultists, scholars, spies

Specialties: Bureaucracies, Codes, Conspiracies, Research, Social Networks

Not the Omni-Tool

The Enigmas Skill is not intended as a replacement for interaction, problem solving, or the other fun tasks of participating in a roleplaying game. If you ever find yourself in a situation where a player can use the Enigmas Skill to "solve" the plot with a single dice roll, then either the plot is too simplistic or you have misunderstood the scope of the Enigmas Skill.

The best way to think of the Enigmas Skill is as another source of information. In the same way that the Empathy Skill might help a character to realize that another character is lying, but not communicate the truth, the Enigmas Skill answers specific questions. Characters can use it to decode cyphers, puzzle out complex bureaucracies, or create ways to confuse and deceive others. They cannot use it to understand others' motivations or learn things they have no way of knowing.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Your character fails to accurately decipher the information but is convinced that she succeeded. The Storyteller should provide a dramatically appropriate misinterpretation. Alternately, if the character is attempting to hide information, the effort is hopelessly transparent.

Failure: Your character's efforts fail, but at least she knows it. She can try again with a –1 penalty.

Success: The attempt is successful. Either your character decodes the information or she obscures it.

Exceptional Success: If your character was trying to decode information, she gets more than she hoped she would. Perhaps she is able to intuit someone's motivations, or discovers something she wasn't even looking for. If she is trying to hide something, then the information is exceptionally well hidden.

Decoding Ciphers

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Enigmas

Action: Extended (5–20 successes; each roll represents one hour of work).

People have been using codes to obscure information for as long as there has been written language. At first, when literacy was vanishingly rare, simply writing the information down could *be* the code. As literacy became more common, the codes became more complex. Codes and ciphers are many and varied, from simple substitution codes, which replace each letter with another letter of the same alphabet, to extremely complex substitution codes in which each letter changes the meaning of subsequent letters. Other codes involve inventing entirely new alphabets which, presumably, only the target understands.

However, no code is perfect. With enough work, any code can be broken.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character makes some kind of terrible mistake. If there is a trap in the code — a false message layered on top of the real one — then he mistakenly decodes that message. Alternately, he manages to decode just enough of the message to misunderstand something critical.

Failure: No successes are added to the total.

Success: The character makes progress toward breaking the code. If the player reaches the requisite number of successes, the Storyteller should provide the text of the message, if she has it available, or at least a summary of what the message contained.

Exceptional Success: Not only does the character decode the message, he masters this code completely. Make a note of this code's name and qualities on your character sheet. He can now decode any message that uses the same code with a simple Intelligence + Enigmas roll, gains 9-again on all dice rolls to unravel related codes, and gains the Rote Action quality on all rolls to use this code himself.

Possible Penalties: Distracting surroundings (–1), tension and time limitations (–1), extraordinarily complex code (–1 to –3), forced to decipher mentally – no paper, pencils, etc. (–3)

Encoding Information

Dice Pool: Wits + Enigmas + equipment

Action: Instant (decoding a message takes between a few minutes and a few hours, depending on the length of the message and the complexity of the code, but it is represented by a single roll).

Alternately, the character might want to use a code to make something unreadable to others.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character believes that the information is encoded, but it is actually painfully obvious. Anyone with basic training in cryptography (at least a single dot of Enigmas) can unravel this "code" with an instant action (Intelligence + Enigmas).

Failure: The character fails to encode the information, but at least he knows that his efforts have been in vain.

Success: The information is encoded and must be decoded using the action described above.

Exceptional Success: The character uses a particularly devious code, or uses a deceptively simple code in a particularly devious way. The message counts as an

extraordinarily complex code and imposes a –3 penalty on anyone who tries to decode it.

Mastering Complex Systems

Dice Pool: Wits + Enigmas

Action: Extended (10+ successes; each roll represents three hours of interaction or observation).

Enigmas can also be used to understand or exert one's will over all sorts of complex systems, from bureaucracies to hierarchies to tangled webs of relationships and enmities. Doing so can involve days of careful observation and interaction, feeling out the ties that bind and sever. This action is appropriate if a character is trying to understand or manipulate a large social group, like a family, a court, or an office.

This use of Enigmas is very similar to some uses of the Socialize Skill. The distinction is a matter of scale. If a character is trying to make his way through a dozen people at a party, he would use the Socialize Skill. If he is trying to influence the actions and attitudes of a hundred people over the course of a week, he is using the Enigmas Skill.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: If the character is gathering information, she might develop an embarrassing, or potentially even life-threatening, misunderstanding about the situation. She might mistake the nature of a relationship, believing that an insistent secretary is actually the superior, or that two affectionate friends are actually lovers. On the other hand, if the character is trying to manipulate an organization, she might manage to produce the opposite of the effect she was going for.

Alternately, the character might make a dangerous mistake in the course of gathering information. At best, she might lose the social capital that made her a part of the situation she was trying to manipulate: Her invitation is revoked and she is asked to leave, she loses her job or is demoted, or people stop talking to her. At worst, she might attract more dangerous attention from people who disapprove of her prying....

Failure: No successes are added to the total. The character's time and effort are wasted — she can't make heads or tails of this situation.

Success: The character gains information and influence over the situation. The benefits of this roll are usually narrative, but the Storyteller might want to describe the relationships or even sketch out a quick relationship map. If the Storyteller prefers to abstract the results of this roll, the character can instead add her dots of Enigmas to appropriate Social rolls until the social situation shifts (usually a month or two). If the character was more interested in influence than information, the Storyteller might grant the player a few dots of temporary Merits — some appropriate Merits include Allies, Contacts, and Resources — for a month or two.

Exceptional Success: In addition to enjoying the benefits of success, the character enjoys some ancillary benefit. Perhaps her efforts are particularly successful (as described by the Storyteller). If the Storyteller had intended to grant the character temporary Merit dots or bonuses to Social rolls, she might grant more points ordice, or have them last longer. If the character was trying to be subtle, her manipulations or investigations could go completely uncommented upon.

Possible Penalties: The character is extremely unfamiliar with the situation he is trying to understand or manipulate (e.g., A European infiltrating an Asian corporation) (–3).

Gaining Merit Dots

Using the Enigmas Skill to understand and manipulate organizations can grant a character temporary Merit dots. One possible outcome of an exceptional success could be that the character gains those Merit dots permanently. Depending on how the troupe wants to handle changing Merits, there are a couple of different ways you could handle this.

The first is that the player should still spend experience points to make the Merit dots permanent. This is the best option for troupes that are interested in keeping things fair and making sure that every character advances at the same speed. In this case, the advantage isn't that the dots are free, but that the player has the opportunity to buy them for the character without the character having to spend valuable time, energy, and resources performing the legwork that is usually necessary to buy these kinds of Social Merits.

The second option is that Merits aren't part of the character in the same way as Skills and Attributes and can be more easily added (or subtracted!). In this case, the Merit points are just added.

However your troupe wants to handle this is fine, but make sure that you are consistent. Very few things bug players more than feeling like they are getting a raw deal.

Other Skills

As society changes and technology advances, familiar Skills change in subtle ways.

Academics

At its most basic level, the Academics Skill refers to the knowledge that a society views as important enough to pass on to the next generation. As a result, the scope of Academics varies depending on the time and place. For example, in modern America, literacy is viewed as a

basic skill. Even a character with no dots in Academics can probably read; illiteracy is probably best represented with a Flaw or a Persistent Condition (depending on whether or not the troupe is using the **God-Machine Chronicle**). The same thing is not true of medieval Europe, for example. A reasonably well-educated person might still be only semi-literate, or even completely illiterate. At the same time, in modern America, the idea of scholarly languages has fallen almost completely by the wayside; in medieval Europe, a highly educated person (Academics ••• or more) would have some familiarity with written Latin and Greek, even without buying the Language Merit.

The Bowery Dogs, *God's Own Country*, and *Into the Cold* use a more or less modern interpretation of the Academics Skill. The Academics Skill in *Handful of Dust* is almost modern, in that the expectations are the same. Although literacy is widespread, it is still less universal than it is in our own time.

For the most part, the eras before *Doubting Souls* take place in pre-literate societies. In those time periods, most of the Academics Skill's content is passed down orally. Literacy is more common in *Doubting Souls*, largely because of the Protestant belief that adults should be literate in order to read and interpret the Bible for themselves. Illiteracy was still common, however, and many adults who were literate enough to read the Bible lacked the skills, the opportunity, or the interest to read much of anything else.

Ruins of Empire sits somewhere between the other two camps. Literacy was definitely expected among the aristocracy, and many members of the middle class aspired to it. However, it was still rare among common people.

Larceny

Thieves have preyed on their fellow men and women for as long as there has been private property. Wherever thieves and intruders lurk, others do what they can to protect what they have. The Larceny Skill is born out of that conflict.

Locks are almost as ancient as civilization itself. The earliest locks were discovered in the ruins of ancient Assyria. Locks have improved significantly since then, but the principle remains the same. The best locks in the past, though, were nothing compared to today's technology. As a result, locks should present less of a significant obstacle the further a game is set in the past.

Home security systems are exclusively a thing of the modern day. However, different societies have tried a wide variety of things to protect their homes and property, from tricks as complex as intentionally squeaky floorboards to keeping loud dogs as pets. Before the advent of the modern security system, most forms of home security were evaded with Stealth (or, rarely Animal Ken) rather than Larceny.

Medicine

Medical science has been through incredible changes throughout human history. Modern doctors are horrified by the things done by the physicians of the past: crude trepanning and lobotomies, bloodletting, toxic chemicals like mercury used as cure-alls. Doctors of the future will probably look back on the practices of the present with similar horror. Doctors didn't even start washing their hands until 1847.

From a game perspective, however, it's important not to deny players the satisfaction of seeing their characters' Skill points being used to good effect. No player wants to be told that even though she succeeded at her Intelligence + Medicine roll to treat an important Storyteller character's fever, her character's patient is going to die anyway because mercury is toxic and cupping doesn't actually do any good.

At the same time, medicine is one of those things that has changed a lot over the years, and the changes in medical science can provide a lot of drama and historical color. For example, until the invention of penicillin in the 1930s, sepsis was so deadly that even a relatively minor wound could be a death sentence. Putting characters in a situation where they must help someone survive an infection can put them into the period, as well as being a deadly serious challenge.

One way to handle this from a game perspective is to penalize a character's dice pool based on the effectiveness of medicine in their time. As a rough guideline, medical science has always been pretty effective at helping the body to do things that it can more or less manage on its own (with the exception of childbirth, which physicians have botched for years and are still arguing about). For example, although they didn't know about germ theory, humans have known enough to bind wounds and keep them dry and clean. Humans have been stitching serious wounds shut for more than 5,000 years.

Surgery, on the other hand, is more difficult. Archeological evidence suggests surgeries taking place as early as 350 BCE. Many early surgeons had a fairly good idea of anatomy and could lance abscesses and remove tumors. However, the lack of any kind of antibiotics or a reliable way to treat pain during convalescence made surgery an unattractive prospect. Until the 20th century and the advent of reliable painkillers and antibiotics, many patients chose a clean death rather than a painful procedure which might result in nothing more than a lingering and agonizing demise by sepsis.

Infection has been the hardest thing for human medicine to deal with. Before the invention of antibiotics in the 1930s, a physician could do little but keep any wound clean, keep the patient as comfortable as possible, and hope for the best. If the patient's body was able to overcome the infection, she would live; if it wasn't, she would die.

The Bowery Dogs, *Into the Cold*, and *God's Own Country* all take place after the invention of antibiotics — arguably the biggest quantum leap in modern medicine. As a result, in all of these settings the Medicine Skill operates in a more or less modern way. It's important to note that although antibiotics existed, access to antibiotics was anything but universal.

Handful of Dust straddles the line between the pre- and post-antibiotics eras. The first antibacterial agent — a dye

used to treat leather — was discovered in the late 1920s, but it was unreliable and many people were allergic to it. The first reliable and relatively safe antibiotics made from penicillin were not approved for human use until the 1940s.

Lily, Sabre, and Thorn, *Doubting Souls*, *A Grimm Dark Era*, *Fallen Blossoms*, and *The Ruins of Empire* all take place in an in-between period. Although medicine had begun to operate scientifically, physicians still lacked the tools to deal with infection. Any Medicine roll involving surgery or treating a serious wound is at –4 dice. Dramatic failures almost inevitably involve infection.

The Sundered World, *To the Strongest*, *Three Kingdoms of Darkness*, and *Wolves of the Sea* are all set in medicine's distant past. Anything beyond relatively simple surgery or treating basic and minor wounds is at –6 dice. A dramatic failure certainly involves infection, or could indicate that the physician has used a completely ineffective or actively harmful treatment, like bleeding or mercury.

In *Lily, Sabre, and Thorn*, *Doubting Souls*, *The Ruins of Empire*, and *To The Strongest*, treating infection uses a slightly different system than it does in more modern games. Instead of the physician's player rolling to treat the infection, the patient's player is rolling to *survive* the infection.

Surviving an infection is an extended Stamina + Resolve roll with a –0 to –6 penalty based on the circumstances (–0 for resting comfortably in a warm bed with plenty of food; –6 for huddling in a filthy cave, in winter, with insufficient food and water). The severity of the infection is reflected by the number of successes the player needs for her character to survive (between 10 and 25). The player should roll once per day. The physician's efforts to help his patient survive are reflected using the Teamwork rules found on p. 72 of the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**, using Intelligence + Medicine to add dice to the patient's Stamina + Resolve dice pools.

Example: *Patience Whitefield, a young woman in 1697 Salem, was mauled by a mysterious beast while gathering mushrooms in the woods. While her older sister and a few of her friends hunt for the monster, Patience struggles to survive the infection that has set in.*

Patience is in bed in her family home, but it's winter, and the Whitefields don't have enough fuel to keep their drafty cabin as warm as they would like (–1 penalty). The infection is a massive whole-body sepsis, so Patience will need to acquire 20 successes in order to survive. Patience's Stamina + Resolve total is 6, and she has five points of Willpower remaining. Patience's player decides that she will spend Willpower on each roll until she runs out. Thanks to Patience's parents' efforts to make her comfortable and keep her fed, Patience's player will receive two bonus dice on each roll.

On the first day, Patience's player hefts a handful of 10 dice (6 dice base, with a +3 die bonus from the Willpower point, a +2 die bonus from the care provided by Patience's family, and a –1die penalty for the chilly temperatures inside the cabin). She rolls only two successes. Patience's fever worsens and the half-healed wounds become inflamed.

On the second day, Patience's player rolls another two successes. Patience is now completely delirious. The inflamed wounds start to smell like rotten meat. Patience's mother stops praying for her survival and starts praying for her soul.

On the third day, Patience's player rolls three successes. Patience's condition seems to stabilize. She still isn't conscious, but her temperature has stopped rising.

On the fourth day, Patience's player rolls an amazing seven successes. Patience's fever wavers, but doesn't break. Although still not fully aware of her surroundings, Patience's delirium fades a little and she is able to exchange a few words with her worried parents and drink a few mouthfuls of broth.

On the fifth day, Patience's player rolls three more successes. Patience falls back into fever dreams. Her delirium seems quieter now, but nobody can tell if this is because she is on the mend or if she is simply too weak to thrash around and call out the way she did earlier in the week.

On the final day, Patience has run out of Willpower, so her player only rolls 7 dice. She still manages to get three successes, enough to bring the total to 20. Patience's fever breaks and her delirium transitions into normal, healing sleep. The flesh around her wounds gradually fades from bright red to a healthy pink. When her sister returns from the woods with stories of wolf-men and pagan rites, she will find Patience up and about, though still weak. Patience has survived the sepsis, though she will carry the scars for the rest of her life.

Science

The Science Skill remains unchanged in all eras, from the hoary past of 315 BCE to the modern day. Humans have always used science to understand the world around them. What modern people dismiss as "superstition" is nothing more and nothing less than the less successful science of an earlier time. Whether you're talking about chemistry or alchemy, child development or the balances of the four humors, you're talking about science.

Although the content of science has changed, humans have always used the same techniques and reasoning to describe and understand the world around them. Whenever a character tries to reason out the rules of the natural world — or recall how those rules have been reasoned by someone who came before her — she uses the Science Skill.

Streetwise

Looking back from the modern era, history looks like a long march towards urbanization. The very first city was probably Uruk, built in Mesopotamia some time between 4500 and 3100 BCE. Although cities have fallen in and out of favor with various human societies since then, the general

trend has been towards cities concentrating more and more wealth, influence, and human life within their borders. The Streetwise Skill has been with humanity for as long as cities have created unique dangers and opportunities for those who dared to live within them.

The mechanics of the Streetwise Skill don't change significantly in different time periods, but the uses do. Drugs and prostitution are illegal in modern New York, but they were legal in ancient Tyre. On the other hand, a character in an ancient Mesopotamian city might still need to use the Streetwise Skill to find smuggled goods.

Before the game starts, the Storyteller should take a moment to decide what sort of services and information are illegal or hard to find in the cities where the game will take place and determine what kinds of Streetwise actions, bonuses, and penalties are available.





Philodox sits cross-legged, the heart of a spiral of history.

His sanctum is laid out in a trail of relics and trinkets from across the ages, cascading backwards through eras as they come closer to the mage at the center. At the edges are mobile phones, wires, plastic wrappers; they lead into a trail of bullet casings, medals, tattered pieces of fabric; and on and on, plunging deeper into time. A preserved, charred fragment from the Great Fire of London; a coin minted in the reign of King Phillip the Fair of France; detritus of the first millennium from a dozen digs across North Africa. Then further back still, to scraps of iron and bronze, pieces of pottery, until the spirals are so deep into the past that all traces of humankind dry up entirely.

All but for the objects that lie directly before him. Torn from the ground in the Balkans, these are as old a sign of human civilization as Philodox has ever seen.

He reaches for the first relic, begins the ritual, and Time unfolds before him.

• • •

Raska Dig Item 85a — Bone dagger, carved with unknown symbols.

Dawn's light touches a crumbling old hut beyond dry, cracked pastures. Faded colors of an ancient mat on the threshold. Humid air stirring sluggishly, tousling the braids of human hair nailed to the hut's frame. Darkness within shifts.

She emerges, the blade of sharpened bone tightly in her grasp. Cattle-blood drips down its length, and from her hands.

She straightens up, looks across the gathered crowd — men and women in simple garments of leather, cotton, flax. Their expressions read as a mixture of fear, anticipation, veneration.

She speaks. A language that has not left human lips for millennia, but Philodox's spell reveals the meaning.

"The streams are bitter from the tears of a god," she announces. "It is wracked with sorrow at the state of the world, and its misery has entered the water. I will go into the hills where the springs lie, and return to you when I have appeased it."

• • •

Raska Dig Item 66 — Amulet marked with what appear to be proto-Sumerian markings.

The amulet clatters down onto the cave's stony floor, a challenge against the silence of the den. Sharp slices of light split open in the gloom — a hunter's eyes.

"I knew you were coming," it growls amusedly, and the shadow stretches languidly. "No need for such clamor."

The woman snorts derisively and gestures at the amulet.

"You no longer need keep your jaws from the herd," she states, "for I invoke our agreement, as the Black Tree witnessed. I compel your aid."

The shadow shifts. Upright, alert, *interested*. "My aid? Whatever for? I have little interest in rounding up lost cows that have strayed too far, and you, you need not my pack's protection to walk Pangaea. Or did you forget that you flew here as a bird?"

The woman shakes her head, and there's a hunger in her smile.

"There is something we must hunt. Perhaps it is beyond your capabilities."

The amber eyes burn at the challenge.

"Have you," she asks, "ever hunted a *god?*"

• • •

Raska Dig Item 8 — A small clay statuette, animalistic and inhuman in appearance.

The air is filled with mosquitoes and gloom. A trail of rancid gore, seething with immanence, leads through tainted, twisted trees up the oozing stream. The stained gulley of ichor ends in defiled springs, where a heaving, shuddering mass squats at the heart of the bubbling waters.

Yellowed spars of bone thrust through the old god's ruined meat; some are shattered and some splintered. The hunters are already here, circling in the shadows, having harried the prey until forced to stand and fight. Their maws are splashed with divine blood.

The god lurches and twists, the ephemera-meat sloughing off its carcass to spawn mewling spirit-children that gibber and slither away. It senses her arrival, and she feels her eyes scratch and ache from the sight of the broken old horror. Steaming drool spills from outraged mouths as it screams in outrage.

She raises the statuette of the Wolf, and lets her will loose upon the world.

Fire scours the god's oozing hide; she twists its insides out, and flenses it with otherworldly shouts. The hunters close for the kill, their shapes shifting and dancing as they tear out great gobbets from its flanks. Still the god roars and battles on with its dreams and its talons. Trees shatter before its onslaught, and a tide of reverence washes over its assailants. Knees bend for a moment before the woman remembers herself once more.

The god falls.

As the hunters howl with triumph, the woman climbs atop the blubbery hulk, her own hands turning to tearing blades, and cracks the divinity open like a butchered animal. There, *there*, her prize.

The great, stone heart of the god. Its *soul*. The salvation of her people.

• • •

Philodox blinks as the present enfolds him once more. He lays down the last relic, and forces himself to breathe.

The omphalos stones are real.

If Philodox can recover one for the Ministry, his promotion is *assured.* All he needs to do now is hunt down the Diamond meddlers who have been studying the same archaeological sites.

The war for the past begins now.



The Sundered World

"Mankind are so much the same, in all times and places, that history informs us of nothing new or strange in this particular. Its chief use is only to discover the constant and universal principles of human nature."

– David Hume

Seven thousand years before the modern era, millennia before fledgling nations learn the secrets of bronze, then iron, then sciences even more wondrous. This is truly an age of darkness, when nights are lit only by the stars and moon. The world is encompassed by wilderness, untamed and untrammelled, the domain of fierce beasts and spirits. This is a paradise of the hunt, where predators can pursue quarry across the boundaries of the very realms of existence. Humanity does not rule here. To many of the denizens of this ancient landscape, humanity should be nothing but *prey*.

Those denizens are wrong. Humanity is shedding its place in the cycle of the hunt and taking on a new mantle. The people of the Neolithic have girded themselves with hard-won secrets wrenched from the world.

The Sundered World is the story of the Awakened and the Uratha of the Neolithic era around 5500 to 5000 BCE, in a time before history, metallurgy, and the hegemony of humanity. The Awakened of this time are simply the "Wise," and lack the deep, mystical culture of mages that will one day span the globe. No Seers of the Throne demand obedience to distant Exarchs, and no Pentacle demands mages hide their magic from the Sleepers for the sake of their souls.

The Wise struggle to survive in a wild landscape of Mysteries and dangers, forging alliances with the few Awakened of their own tribes. Humanity, fragile yet tenacious, is flourishing wherever it can find a foothold in a world still deeply scarred by the Time Before. Wild animals and weather, storms, and shattered fragments of old gods all threaten to extinguish such sparks of civilization before they can truly kindle the torch of knowledge.

While the Wise shelter within human communities, the Uratha stand as apex predators across the world. This is the time of Pangaea itself — the Border Marches, the place between Flesh and Spirit that is the true, native land of werewolves. In this hunter's paradise, no boundaries lie between the Uratha and their prey. Only the Hunt matters, eternal and bloody, in the shadow of the great god *Urfarah*.

Yet this golden age is in decline. Paradise is threatened. The Great Wolf is old, and the Uratha can see that his strength is fading. The world changes as humanity flourishes and the Uratha must change with it. Some deny or ignore their doom, reveling in Pangaea's last days with willful ignorance. Many more, though, have sensed that something is coming. The world still bears scars from its last great convulsion, but the actions and decisions of Wolf's children will soon sunder it anew.

The Sundered World focuses on a culture known to modern archaeologists as the Vinca, spread across an area of Europe that will one day become the Balkans, forming a network of communities bound together by a common language and traditions — and by their Wise. The Vinca are not grunting thugs squatting in caves; they are farmers, crafters, priests, and traders with a rich culture bound up in ritual practices. Among the Vinca, the Wise do not need to hide their natures, though the Sleeping Curse still forces them to perform magic away from the eyes of the community. The Wise are a vital element of the Vinca people, protecting them from a savage world and acting as intermediaries with gods and spirits.

As for the Uratha, the settled people have an often tumultuous relationship with the men and women who walk as wolves. Wolf-Blooded are born among the farming communities, and decisions have to be made whether to embrace

The Real Vinca

The Vinca were a real Neolithic culture, named by archaeologists after the village near Belgrade a prominent site lies under. Of particular note is Vinca "writing," the oldest known example thereof in the world. It was almost certainly of ceremonial meaning and purpose rather than being for factual recording of information or for trade, and due to its sheer age there is no way to translate or understand what it meant. In the Chronicles of Darkness, these designs are markings in High Speech and First Tongue, and the intricate masks and figurines that the Vinca made are ritual objects of actual arcane power, but they likely served a genuinely ceremonial purpose in real life as well.

them or send them away to the wilds of the Border Marches. Uratha are as much spirit as flesh — capricious, fierce, and deadly entities that the Wise must appease, negotiate with, and sometimes fight. Now, though, as *Urfarah* weakens, the Uratha begin to pay far more attention to the human herd.

The Vinca, of course, do not call themselves by that modern name. In their own tongue, they are simply the *People*, much as their Awakened are simply the Wise and the vast waters of the great Danube around which they flourish is simply the River. Other people, other Awakened and other rivers exist — but none so vital and central to Vinca life.

Theme: An Untamed World

Beyond the tilled fields and the pastures trodden to mud by cattle, the forests are tangled and filled with gloom. The hills are untouched by the passing of humankind. A traveler standing atop a high point might look all around and see nothing but an endless sea of trees, glades, and undulating landscape scarred by the watery courses of rivers — not a fellow human in sight. Beyond the circle of firelight, the nights are dark, home to prowling beasts and far worse besides. The whims of weather and changing seasons can destroy a community; disease, disaster, or starvation can shatter a settlement. Spirits maraud through the wilderness according to their own designs, and, in the most lonely places, a traveler can simply walk into the Border Marches themselves, the realm of the Uratha.

Mood: Alien and Familiar

The inherent humanity of the Vinca and their experiences is harshly juxtaposed against the raw realities of life 7,000 years in the past. The Vinca are humans, with all the same troubles and travails as any modern person. They live, they love, and they struggle day to day for their survival. The Vinca have friends and family, make toys for their children, toil hard for reward, and share stories, songs, and celebrations with one another. The Vinca people understand pain, fear, and sorrow just as anyone today might.

Yet at the same time their society and the world in which they live is starkly different. War is effectively unknown, while concepts of nation do not exist — identity is based on tribe and family. History and lore is passed on through oral traditions, while *writing* is the province of the supernatural, the act of shamans and the Wise. The horizon is close indeed, and many Vinca might never really know the world beyond the immediacy of their village — though, like all humans, they may wonder and dream about it. Money does not exist, although trade *does*; wealth, in as much as the Vinca understand it, can be best measured in cattle. Magic is real, spirits really *do* exist, and Vinca life is intertwined with rites and ceremonies precisely because the world is filled with strange forces that they struggle to understand.

The Neolithic World

Across the Land, the People toil and cling tenaciously to life beneath the turning of the seasons and the passing of the years. This is a harsh world, an unforgiving world, and one that lies in the shadow of its own shattered history.

The Time Before

The People have always been here, since the River itself was born. The first of the People dwelt on its banks and thrived from its waters, their settlements growing as the years passed. The eldest woman of the eldest community can only remember a time when the People were already here, and she recalls the stories from *her* grandmother that said much the same. The People have slowly scarred, marked, and laid claim to the land by the sheer weight of their continued presence. The borders of woodlands have crept back, pastures are trodden in by cattle, and now the ground is wounded where humans dig for copper and colored minerals. Once-new villages have become old. The hills remember the traditional songs of the People so well that, sometimes, they echo the songs back.

This way of life has held steady for as long as the People can remember. Yet they know, deep in their bones, that it was not always like this. In the Time Before, the elders say, things were *different*.

Once, life was easy. The world may be a paradise for predators now, but in the Time Before it was a paradise for *humanity*. The world was in perfect balance. A man need not take an ard to break the earth and sow crops; he could simply sing the seeds to life and watch them bloom to fruitfulness in moments. A priestess could call to the gods, who dwelt in their rightful and sacred place, and bless the herds of cattle so that livestock would never sicken and never die. When humanity demanded it, the very mountains would bow in obeisance, and



A Broken Clock

For those Wise who try to use the Time Arcanum to observe the Time Before, they find their efforts frustrated. In most places, the Time Before no longer seems to exist at all; it is simply *gone* from the timeline, replaced with the ancient and slow ascent of the People from their earlier, simpler culture. The Time Before *can* be scryed upon from the vicinity of shattered shards of Time **(see p.46)** but this is an extremely dangerous and uncertain practice.

vast edifices were raised up to the skies. If the clouds darkened and howled in the grasp of an angry storm, the People would command calm skies to return, and the world itself obeyed.

The world broke and shattered when the harmony of the world was overturned by catastrophe. The gods fell to fighting among themselves, the People ceased to respect them, and the world was split asunder as a dark hunter glutted itself on the glories of that time. The tumult was beyond imagining, laying waste to everything, annihilating the age of the Time Before. The world never recovered, its magic guttering to mere embers. Only a few wise souls can still grasp that spark of power, and must nurture it carefully.

The world is still scarred, its fabric torn with wounds from the destruction of the Time Before. The People can look upon the damage done and see the passing of this glorious age. Yet at the same time the People have always been here, and have always lived like they do now. The Wise look upon the shards of shattered Time and the evanescing, mad remnants of that era, and know that the Time Before is now naught but a fading echo, never real. Humanity has been denied its inheritance.

Life Among the People

Don't stray beyond the circle of firelight, where the shadows slink and mutter. Raise your voice with your sisters and sing bravely into the cold night. Make sure the flames do not fall to dull embers before dawn comes, or you will die.

Do not walk into the woods alone amidst the groaning boughs. Keep the edge of your axe keen. Say your respects to the trees as you seek out timber for the village, and always look carefully before you split their bark. Never cut a tree that bears a face, or you will die.

Bury the sacred amulets beneath your home when you raise it up. Always place a sacred pot by your hearth to house the spirit of the embers. Remember to ward your threshold against the spirits beyond, or you will die.

Tend carefully to your fields and your cattle above all. When you are blessed with plenty, feed your neighbors. When your cows or crops are stricken with sickness, beseech the Bull and the Bird for aid, or your food will wither and you will die.

Spirits of Hunger

Hunger is quite *literally* the great enemy. The brood of the Gnawed Bone plagues the People, a choir of famine, gluttony, malnutrition, and starvation. These spirits seek to ruin crops and kill cattle, to drive those who have plenty to gorge themselves upon it and lay no stores for the long winter. Those who find themselves lost in the wilds at night must be wary; those who fall asleep hungry sometimes wake with their souls in the grasp of possessing hunger-spirits. These unfortunates return to their villages as mad-eyed, ravenous ghouls. Few such spirit-Claimed have the restraint to try to hide their new natures, instead seeking to kill and devour as quickly as they can. The Gnawed Bone Choir absolutely hates the Wise, who deny them the feast of Essence that the People should be providing them.

Heed the words of the Wise, and you will survive.
This age has no mercy for the foolish or the weak.

The Village

The community is the heart of life. Most of the Peoples' settlements lie in the lands around the great River, but over the years the flourishing of their culture has led to expansion. Some of the People live so far south that the uplands rise into mountains. Others live in far-flung reaches where travelers from foreign tribes come and mingle, trading and exchanging knowledge.

Villages vary considerably in size, from a few dozen families and their farms to centers of craft and ritual with populations in the thousands. These latter sites are the powerhouses of the age, places where traders tell news from distant lands even as they haggle over exotic goods like shells and salt. The Wise are scattered across the land, but their Circles sometimes gather at these great settlements to contemplate the major concerns of the day or to work powerful magic.

Almost every village sits at the bank of a river or stream, or squats around bubbling springs in the hills. A steady source of fresh water is vital, and no settlement will survive long without one. A threat to the water source is among the most grave that any community can face, whether it comes from a savage drought or a horror that drips poisonous ichor. Appeasing or binding the spirits of the rivers is of vital importance, and the Blood-Wise bear heavy responsibility for tending to such pacts and relationships. More than one village has been deserted after an angered river-spirit befouled its waters — and many villages have survived drought when benevolent spirits drew up more water from the earth's depths.

Settlements tend to have densely packed buildings in a central cluster of homes, storehouses, granaries, and shrines; the very heart of this arrangement is an open space for the community to come together around the night fires for rites and ceremonies. If the community possesses a sacred omphalos stone, it is sited at the center of this holy ground. Despite the close-knit layout, the People love space within their homes. Made simply from mud-brick, straw, and timber, a hut can have several rooms, each for its own purpose, including a shrine to the gods.

Around the houses are crafters' workshops and pottery kilns, and the simple pens within which the herds sleep at night. Everything important is to hand. By gathering so closely together, the community fends off wild predators and provides itself with comforting security. The People do not, however, build great walls or palisades around their settlements — they don't need such defenses. The only sources of attack are spirits and other horrors of the wild, and those are warded off by the efforts of the Wise and the gods. Any spirit powerful enough to ignore the amulets and charms that defend the Peoples' homes would hardly be stopped by a wall.

A halo of agriculture lies around each settlement. Fields feed the population with wheat, oats, and barley. Pastures of cattle are a steady source of meat, but the Peoples' pastoral talents are more sophisticated than just that — they also raise their herds for milk, leather, and bone. Nothing goes to waste. Stories passed down around the fireplace acknowledge that the People once travelled in the wake of untamed herds and lived off the wild bounties of the forests, but that time is largely past. Villagers search through the woodlands for berries and herbs, and hunters set their snares or stalk animals with bow and spear; but these are lesser sources of food, suited to those who don't devote their time to the fields. The People have brought the wild herds to heel, learned to break the earth with ards, and now choose the sites of their communities for fertile earth and good grazing land. Hunger is the great enemy, and agriculture its bane.

The Wise often choose to dwell at the edges of settlements. In solitude, they can more easily practice the Art without being hindered by the Sleeping Curse, but with the village easily accessible they can acquire what they need for daily life with ease, and can rush to defend their people when disaster strikes. The huts of the Wise often end up more akin to shrines, many-chambered places of veneration where the villagers bring sacred pots and offerings to their protectors and seek the advice of the ancestors and friendly spirits. Pacts with the Wise commonly grant spirits the right to manifest in these shrines so that they can interact with the People and ask for services or gifts in a safe, sacred place.

Some of the Wise go further afield, risking the dangers of the wilds to dwell in places of power that they seek to exploit or defend from others. Using magic to shape the world around them, the Wise raise up stone dwellings around Hallows on rocky pinnacles, or weave the very trees together into a living fastness around a site of power.

However far away the Wise might sequester themselves, however, they always return to the great settlements sooner or later. Places of arcane power and sacred symbolism do not

only lie in the reaches of the wilds. At the heart of the oldest of the Peoples' communities lie gifts from the gods themselves — the omphalos stones, powerful Supernal Demesnes anchored in divinely shaped rock.

The People

A modern citizen would have no difficulty seeing one of the People as a fellow human. As well as food crops, the People harvest flax and gather cotton. They weave these into clothing, as well as using leather and animal hides. Buttons and pins are made from carved bone. With these materials, villagers make simple but practical clothes to cope with the seasons and the weather; during warmer times, they favor short skirts, cotton jackets, and tunics that leave the arms and legs cool. Adornments are common. Beads and decorations are made from carved bone and stone, or even rare obsidian traded from far lands or forged with the magic of the Wise of Storm and Sea. The fortunate possess gleaming copper ornaments, though the metal is not yet used for tools.

The People have no aristocracy and no chieftains ruling through force of will or strength of arms. The communal wisdom of the elders guides the community. Elder women are afforded the most respect in such matters because they are closer to the Bird goddess, pre-eminent divinity of the People. Families and inheritances are generally handled on a matriarchal basis, although the greatest weight is given to the practicality of given circumstances. Still, communities that have gone out of their way to snub or demean the elder women of their number find themselves plagued by bird and snake spirits with vengeful temperaments.

Most villagers spend their days toiling in the fields or tending to the cattle herds. The most fundamental demand of survival is putting food in the bellies of the population, and no matter how fair the weather or fertile the earth, the People have learned the hard way they can never count on where the next meal will be coming from. Even with the tools and hard-earned agricultural lore that the People have accrued, it's brutally hard work. No automation or machinery exists to ease the reliance on raw muscle power.

This endless task of cultivating food lies at the center of daily life and culture. Season after season, villagers perform rites and ceremonies beseeching the spirits and the gods to keep their livestock healthy, to ward off predators and bestow clement weather upon them. Granaries are reverently tended to, protected from vermin and from malevolent spirits by watchful villagers and clattering arrays of ceramic warding amulets. They are both a store of food and the source of seed for the next year's crops. The destruction of a granary is one of the greatest crimes imaginable to the People.

The wealth of a family is measured in the size and condition of its cattle herds. Most local trade is conducted in cattle, and influential families give cattle as gifts. Disputes often arise over livestock, in particular their theft and the swapping of healthy animals with unhealthy ones. Other animals such as goats, sheep, and pigs are also raised, but are less significant — the Bull god watches over those who rear his children, but Goat and Boar are more concerned with beasts of the wild than those that humans have broken.

Violence and crime is uncommon. The demands of survival leave little energy for such things, and communities are mostly small enough that everyone knows everyone else. Sometimes, though, desperation or passion or greed can take root and push villagers to acts that the rest of the settlement cannot accept. Such matters are brought before the elders. Compensation is the norm, rather than punishment for its own sake. Debts are usually paid in cattle. When the wronged party is a spirit or other inhuman entity, some sort of service or act of penance is agreed to with that being. The most troublesome individuals, those who even their own family condemn or who have transgressed against the gods, face greater censure and are exiled from the community entirely.

It is extremely rare for hostility to overflow into outright violence, but it does sometimes happen. Large families within a village may feud and bicker until their anger boils over; two villages may find themselves arguing over a swathe of fertile land or fine pasture that could sate the hunger of their growing populations. Even then, the People usually avoid confronting each other in any sort of battle. Instead, they raid the herds of their foes, beating herders they encounter and driving stolen livestock back to their own lands. These raids are the very first, most tentative steps that the People have undertaken towards notions of war, and are so rare that they are shocking events neighboring communities remember for years. The Wise scramble to quell such outbursts of violence.

Castes

Agriculture is the focus of life, and common crafts — weaving cloth, carpentry, carving bone and stone, and making tools— are usually performed by family members of a given talent as and when they are needed. The smaller villages cannot support entire castes of craftsmen; only the larger settlements have the materials and the surplus of food necessary. Everyone farms or herds; everyone needs to eat.

Four exceptions to this rule exist — traders, potters, hunters, and the Wise.

Traders gather in groups of men and women, treading the dust or the mud along well-remembered routes to the north where the salt-makers live, or to the east where obsidian is mined, or to the south where the sea-tribes trade the treasures of the sea and secrets gleaned from piscine sages along the coast. The People see this sort of lifestyle as rootless, even worthy of suspicion, but the exotic goods and news that the traders bring home with them are valuable and welcome. Most traders still consider a specific community their genuine home, where their extended families live and where they can expect to be given food and welcome with no strings attached.

Potters hold a sacred place within the culture of the People. When the gods gave the People their gifts, they handed down knowledge of secret signs and sigils that have real, deep power — words that are carved into clay rather than being spoken. By

carving these words, they are given substance in the material world, changing it with divine will. It is the kiln-keepers who are tasked with keeping such lore and wielding it for the good of the People. Theirs is a holy burden.

The kilns of the potters pour forth a stream of religious and ritual crafts — figurines of gods and spirits, carved amulets, warding-tablets, and sacred pots. These are vital to the People, just as much as any number of cattle or bushels of grain from the fields. Food keeps hunger at bay, but it is the work of the potters that shields against the wrath of spirits and gods

The potters are the caste closest to the Wise. The Wise teach special god-words in the tongue of the spirits to inscribe into amulets, and the Wise themselves wield sacred words that even the kiln-keepers cannot master. Potters and Wise gather together in strange and secretive ceremonies away from the rest of the village. This closeness extends further than the ceremonial and magical. Potters are heirs to a semi-sacred and highly spiritual vocation, and the Wise find something to relate to in that. They take more spouses and lovers from among the potters than from among the farmers, and often form closer friendships and alliances with the kiln-keepers.

Potters are treated with respect and a little awe by other villagers. The urn that a potter makes for a woman protects her soul and breath at night from theft by hungry spirits, and is marked with symbols that are more than just pictures — they are impressions of the divine into this world. Potters tend to be a little otherworldly, and their daily life is even more burdened with ritual and ceremony than normal. Most are fed and clothed by their families, but those kiln-keepers who lack relatives are looked after by the largest families of the settlement. Putting food on the table for a potter is a sign of affluence and power.

The People once hunted to feed themselves, before they tamed the earth and the herds. The hunters remember that time, preserving and retelling the tales of the Peoples' greatest hunts. They form their own cults and fraternities within the villages. Hunting provides meat, hides, and bone, and it culls the wilds of vicious creatures that might otherwise threaten the villages, but to most of the People it is a huge risk with little reward. Hunting alone is tantamount to embracing death in a wilderness filled with dangerous animals and spirits.

The hunter-cultists hold the act of hunting as sacred, and hence worth the risks. They venerate Wolf above all other divinities, the god of predators. Wolf is distant from the People now, the hunters say, because most of the People have forsaken the hunt. By continuing to practice the hunt, the cultists ward off Wolf's anger those times when it comes into the material world, and invite its blessings on the rare occasions that it pays attention to humanity.

The Wise are the smallest and the most powerful caste of society. They are absolutely venerated for what they are — the wielders of immense power, shepherds of the embers of the Time Before. When disease threatens the People, the Wise can cast the unclean energies out of them; when storms wrack the skies, the Wise send them away with mere will; when horrors lurch from the Border Marches, the words of the Wise halt them when any number of spears would have splintered and bodies been broken. The Wise are not expected to till the fields or herd cattle; villagers bring them food from their own stores and harvests. When one of the Wise finds her clothes are torn and damaged, she need merely mention it for families to hurry to mend them. The kiln-keepers hang off her every word, and beseech her presence for their sacred and secret ceremonies of marking clay with god-words.

It is tradition among the Wise that family ties are broken — the Wise serve all of the People, not just their own blood kindred. This level of separation is not practiced by any other caste or layer of society. The Wise are at the pinnacle of power among the People, but the summit can be a lonely place.

Supernatural Beings

The world in which the People dwell is one that blends the supernatural and the natural together, and this is just as true of their communities. The Wise are an entire caste defined by supernatural power, but other beings also dwell among the People.

The Wise know that some of the People do not suffer the Sleeping Curse. Most Wise believe these Sleepwalkers have their souls partially illuminated by the halo of an actual Awakening — that the transcendence of divine enlightenment touches those close to one who is newly made Wise. As a result, Sleepwalkers are usually called "ember bearers" and, when an Awakening occurs, a circle of the Wise will closely scrutinize friends, family, and other close acquaintances. Ember-bearers are highly prized as assistants and acolytes.

Wolf-Blooded generate fear and wonder. The People do not see them as a single category of being because of the varied manifestations that Tells can take. Instead, Wolf-Blooded are believed to be blessed by the spirit world, touched by a curse, vessels for the ancestors, or werewolves-in-the-making depending on the particular power that they wield. Born seemingly at random among the families, there are very few bloodlines that commonly produce Wolf-Blooded of a given type. Those who are less monstrous in their aspect — and who are useful to the community — are accepted as shamans, hunters, and warriors. Wolf-Blooded who manifest more monstrous Tells are driven out into the wilds, expected to find their way to the Border Marches to be among their "true" kin.

The Claimed are monsters and horrors. A hunter staggers into the village after weeks away, his fingers warped into talons and his maw smeared with gobbets of his brother's blood. A villager is seized by a warped and fleshy tree covered in faces while her friends flee screaming; she returns later, her skin blistered with bark, and steals away animal carcasses in the night. Those so touched by the spirit world become inhuman things. At best, spiritual hybrids make demands of food or worship, but they are just as likely to indulge in wanton slaughter, cruelty, and madness. Some maintain enough of their former personalities to simply be pathetic — mentally ruined and reduced to shadows of their former selves, sporting horrific physical mutations.



Few Claimed are accepted into the community. Exceptions occur when a pact is agreed to between a village and a spirit, wherein it is allowed to bond itself with a priest or priestess in harmonious union; sometimes it occurs when a spirit has been wronged and justice is done by giving the offender to the spirit to serve it as a host. This latter is the most savage and harsh of punishments that the elders can levy, worse even than exile. Even these Claimed are kept at arm's length, revered as holy beings or feared as alien entities — but their sheer power is undeniable. Their spiritual and physical might can save a village — or damn it.

The Sacred and Profane

The People offer worship to many beings in order to survive. Ceremonies and sacrifices to lesser spirits are very common, because these little gods rule many small but important aspects of life. They commonly venerate the spirits of water-springs, of trees in the deep woods, of particularly old or symbolically shaped rocks, and of the winds.

Greater spirits are also afforded reverence, but more carefully. The People desire such spirits' benevolent aid, but they are capricious and alien, and their attention can be as dangerous as its lack. When the earth is first broken for the sowing of new crops, the People smear their hands and faces in mud to acknowledge the great spirit-queen of the soil; they hope for her fertile blessing, but they are happy to just avert her wrath.

The People also worship a pantheon of older gods. They hold that these sacred, true gods are the particular patrons of the People, and believe that the pantheon is made up of survivors of the Time Before.

These animal-headed gods are not tied directly to the spirit world — instead, they are as close to the world of Flesh as of spirit, inhabitants of the Border Marches whose power rests in the natural cycles of the world. The Bull, the Bird, the Snake, the Cat, the Fox, the Wolf, the Boar and all the other gods are the inhabitants of the Land just as much as the People are.

The nature of the gods is mutable; they are all expressions of the world's divinity, and the oral traditions of the People are a confusion of different tales and stories. The Bird and the Snake are sometimes separate goddesses, and sometimes one being. They are twin aspects of the highest of the gods, the especial protectors of the River, and closest to the People. The Wolf was once central to the pantheon, but the stories chart his slow descent from power to the edges of the wilds.

The gods are distant, but their presence is felt. The cattle fall sick in a village without any Wise present to provide aid, so the villagers undertake a great ritual to call upon the Bull's blessing. If the cattle wither and die, it must be an expression of the Bull's ire that needs to be appeased; if they recover, the Bull must have interceded benignly. A family matriarch calls upon the Bird to bless a newborn. The child grows up fast and strong, and she clearly has the Bird watching over her fondly.

Signs of Ritual Activity

The ceremonies and rituals that the Vinca perform aren't empty gestures. A Vinca character benefits from a +2 bonus to any resistance trait for resisting or contesting the attacks, Numina, Influences, and Manifestations of spirits and Border Marches gods that she may be unfortunate enough to suffer. This benefit lasts as long as she is part of a Vinca community that performs such ceremonies. If she ceases to be part of that community, she loses the protection.

This might seem like mere superstition, but the People are certain that the old gods exist. Meetings with the gods are rare, the stuff of stories round the fires as darkness falls — perhaps once or twice a generation, a lost villager who has strayed into the Border Marches is rescued by an animal-headed figure of overwhelming presence, or a blighted village is saved by direct and obvious divine power that manifests symbols of one of the gods. Yet these visitations come with their own risks in turn, because the sheer presence of one of the old gods causes reality itself to shudder and break. Those who lay eyes upon them suffer, becoming touched in the head and plagued by strange occurrences. Only the Wise are safe.

Faced with gods and spirits, the People gird themselves with ritual and ceremony to appease and ward. The seasons are marked with celebrations that honor the divine. Sacred talismans carved with god-words are buried under new homes to fend off hungry spirits. When new calves are born, the newborn's birthing-blood is used in a rite to thank the Bull. Hunters offer up a portion of their kills using Wolf's sacred true name, *Urfarah*, lest the woods turn against them and they never return from their next hunt. Pottery figurines are laid at tree-spirits' shrines in the woods and the wilds, while sealed pots filled with honey and marked with the spirits' tongue are hurled into the river to please the river spirits.

Priests and priestesses are not a separate caste. A villager follows his family's tradition and becomes the priest of the Boar, but he is also a farmer. A priestess dons the ritual clay mask of the god that she serves during a ritual, symbolically shedding her daily persona to become an intermediary between the people and the divine.

Most sacred of all are the omphalos stones at the heart of the larger settlements. These rugose stones bear no marks of human hand, standing a foot or two tall. Almost organic in texture, with a glistening sheen, their marble white is marred by threads of grisly green and red. The omphalos stones were given by the gods to the People so that the Wise might better guide them. Each creates a Demesne where the circles of the Wise can safely practice magic — and even enter the realm of the gods'

dreams. The Wise use the omphalos stones to commune with each other, and sometimes they emerge with startling revelations and realizations that change the Peoples' way of life forever.

Necropolis

The People know that the human spirit does not cease at the moment of death. Without proper care and reverence, the dead do not pass on to the afterlife, a place of rest and respite from the world's ceaseless dangers and demands. Ghosts haunt the ruins of deserted villages that fell to starvation or disease. Lost hunters and travelers still stalk the woods, barely aware they died long ago but consumed by a gnawing hunger for the flesh and blood of the living.

Each settlement maintains a graveyard set aside for the burial of the dead. Bodies are placed in graves and tombs by their families and priests. To aid them in the afterlife, goods are buried with the dead — sacred urns and figurines of the gods, beautiful ornaments, useful tools and exotic shells traded from far away. Each grave is warded with god-words inscribed into clay amulets to fend off thieving spirits looking to snatch away the fading spark of the soul or for a cadaver to puppet.

A graveyard is neat and tidy, because chaotic layouts confuse the dead when they attempt to pass on. A pool or pond of water lies at the center, specially dug. When the Water-Wise deal with riled ghosts or walking corpses, these sacred pools serve as actual Avernian Gateways to the afterlife; immersion in the water cools the passions of the dead, so that they can be ushered on to their fates.

Industry and Artifice

The People thrive despite the dangers of the violent and wild world. Their crafts are incredibly advanced, born upon the revelations that the Wise draw from the realm of the gods' dreams. Villagers make wooden, bone, and stone implements of excellent quality, and the first mines puncture the skin of the land to tear out gleaming copper and bright minerals.

Weapons & Armor

Everyone possesses a weapon of some sort. Even a farmer or a potter who might never plan to risk the wilderness must have some form of protection against the wild animals that threaten herds. Spirits stalk under cover of night, and from time to time one has the strength or insanity to defy the wards and the Wise and enter a village on the hunt. Mutated Claimed lie in wait for the unwary at the edges of civilization. Upon rare, terrifying occasions, werewolves come forth from the Border Marches on the trail of their quarry — or just with a hankering to hunt humans for a night.

Correctly fractured stone holds an incredibly sharp edge. Bone, too, can make a vicious and easily shaped weapon. Clubs, axes, and spears are all common, while knives are less of a weapon and more of a tool with a use in almost every trade and task. Some of the People use bows, mostly hunter-cultists of the Wolf and those who particularly seek the blessing of the Bird; stone arrowheads are lethal and can kill at range, which is an amazing advantage in this period. Slings are common among villagers, and easy enough to carry — an excellent tool for a herdsman who spots a wild animal at the edges of the pastures that might make a fine addition to the night's meal.

Javelins are rare, though once many of the People used them. A generation ago, a wounded hunter from a settlement on the River met Snake herself. She healed his wounds but first let a snake slide into his guts to curl itself around his heart; she cautioned him that if he ever threw another javelin it would kill him. A javelin's striking motion was too close to that of a serpent, and Snake's animal children had petitioned her that humankind should not possess it. After such a clear signal of displeasure, only a few hunter-cultists who venerate Wolf dare use javelins now.

Ranged Weapons

Bows: Damage is equal to minimum Strength, most bows are Strength 2 but those of especially proficient archers may be Strength 3. Penalties for insufficient Strength are doubled. A bow's short range is equal to the archer's (Strength + Size + Athletics) x 3. A character can only fire once per round without the use of Merits or magic, and "reloading" takes one action. The stone arrowheads the People use break off in flesh, but are insufficient against armor — add one to the bow's damage rating against unarmored beings, and reduce damage by –2 against hard structures or armored targets.

Armor

Few people bother with armor, relying instead on being swift and quick-witted for their survival. Some wear enough clothing to gain a little protection, such as the hunter-cultists who tend to don layers of tough hides.

Fire

Humanity broke free of the tyranny of darkness long ago, seizing the spark of fire and wielding it against the gloom and the shadow. Fire separates man from animal, mostly clearly in the refinements of the People. Flames dance in the sacred heart of the kiln, creating marvels of pottery and magic. The Wise see their own enlightenment as a very direct evolution of the mastery of fire. Flame gives all of the People a magic of their own, a mastery of their environment that no beast can match.

Fire is vital for survival. It fends off the lethal cold, cooks food so that it is safe to eat, and scares away animals. Embers can be lit by striking flints and creating sparks, or by using fire drills, but the People always keep a flame stoked somewhere in their communities — kilns, hearth fires, and sacred torches. It is far easier to start a fire by taking blazing brands from an existing one. When they travel and go farther afield, villagers take clay pots within which glowing embers seethe and smolder.

Wild animals fear fire. A character wielding a torch or brand in one hand gains a +2 bonus to her Defense against the attacks of wild animals, and any such attacker must also

Melee Weapons

Type	Damage	Initiative	Strength	Size
Axe, Small	2	–2	2	2
Axe, Large	3	–4	3	3
Club	1	–1	2	2
Knife	0	–1	1	1
Spear**	2	–2	2	4

**Spears give +1 Defense against opponents who are unarmed or wielding a weapon of Size 1 or less. Spears are wielded with two hands; it requires Strength 3 to wield a spear one-handed.

Ranged Weapons

Type	Damage	Ranges	Capacity	Initiative	Strength	Size
Bow	2*	See above	1	–3	2	3
Javelin	2	Thrown	—	–2	2	2
Sling	1	Thrown x3	1	–2	2	0

* +1 vs. unarmored, –2 vs. hard or armored

Armor

Type	Rating	Strength	Defense	Speed	Coverage
Heavy hides	1	1	0	0	Torso, arms, legs

succeed on a Composure + Resolve roll to be able to attack at all. Wild animals must spend a Willpower point *and* succeed at a Composure + Resolve roll to be able to enter the circle of illumination cast by a fire at night. These restrictions also apply to spirits who have fire as their bane.

Starting a fire with simple tools such as flint and tinder requires a success on a Wits + Survival roll; a character with an ember pot benefits from a +2 bonus. Trying to start a fire with wet or sodden wood inflicts a –3 penalty. With a fire lit, characters gain a +3 bonus to all resistance and Survival rolls to fend off cold and wet.

Tools

The tools and implements that the People produce are finely made and superior to previous eras — simple, yet effective. Still, Neolithic tools can only achieve so much. Tools cannot provide an equipment bonus above +2 without the aid of magic.

Ritual Pottery

The crafting of ritual ceramics that use god-words can be a taxing experience for a potter. Careful rites are involved, particularly around the inscription of the sacred sigils of the tongue of spirits and divinities. The crafting of any of the following items exposes the potter to supernatural influences and inflicts a breaking point if her Integrity is 5 or higher.

Breath Urn: Marked with god-words, these urns protect the spark of life from unwholesome entities. A human sleeping within five yards of a breath urn benefits from a +5 bonus to resist, withstand, or contest any attempts to steal her soul, tamper with it, or otherwise damage it; the soul takes refuge in the sacred urn if someone seeks to do it harm.

Spirit Ward: Taking the form of a talisman, pot, or statuette, a spirit ward is carved with First Tongue sigils that invoke the wrath of the divine and old pacts with the Shadow. Any spirit wishing to enter a building that has had a spirit ward buried beneath it must expend a single point of Willpower each time it wishes to cross the threshold.

Yantra: The potters of the People produce large numbers of ceramics for ritual use by the Wise, calling upon the secret names of the gods and invoking strange mysteries that magic can harness. Marked with High Speech or First Tongue, these ceramic amulets can be used as Yantras by the Wise. Any number of Yantra ceramics can be used when casting a spell that is being performed as a ritual (up to the character's usual Yantra limitations), each item granting a +3 bonus;

ceramics used in this way are sacraments, and their power is then expended. A ceramic can be used as a Yantra for a spell cast at Instant speed, but it only grants a +1 bonus, and only a single ceramic can be used for a spell in this way.

Islands of Civilization

The horizon is very close.

The villages of the People are small and self-contained worlds possessed of their own rhythms and cycles, oases of relative safety and security. Beyond the horizon is the vast unknown, the dark and tangled forests where spirits slink and mutter, the distant valleys where howls rise up into the night sky.

Who would leave such a place to venture out on uncertain paths, to brave the wilderness and its savage denizens? Who would leave the shelter of the community, the protection of a stout roof, to expose themselves to the howling wind and driving rain and searing sun? Who would forsake the company of friends and family to strike out into the unknown?

Yet while the settlements of the People are islands in the wilderness, these islands do not stand in splendid isolation. They are bound together in a greater whole by tradition and the needs of survival.

The scattered communities trade with each other and with lands beyond the Land itself. They follow paths that have been trod repeatedly for generations — dangerous journeys carefully planned for. Along these threads of connection, a stream of materials, people, crafts, and information flows. News, names, and ideas are carried forth. Travelers from one settlement speak at the next of new births, deaths, the observed behavior of the spirits, and the weather, and the warnings of the Wise.

This slow but steady network serves the People well, but there are times when it is not enough. When disaster strikes, when starvation threatens, when terrible threats rise from the wilderness or amazing new discoveries are made, speed of foot may not satisfy. On those occasions, the People look to the Wise who commune with one another through magic and the realm of dreams. Through the Wise, demands and news can flash across the entire Land within a day.

A few souls roam further afield than their kindred. They leave the River far behind, venturing beyond the lands of neighboring tribes. Traders travel to the far southeast, where the land grows arid and hot; and north where it grows cold and wet. Some of the People return to their homes with amazing stories of bizarre cultures and Wise who rule their people like tyrants, or who are all blind yet can see, and other such fancies. Travelers speak in awe of the sea, of vast endless water that is beautiful yet leaves them with the chilling sense of a deep, great hunger. The Water-Wise nod when they hear these stories, and warn the People never to step into the cold embrace of the ravenous ocean.

Travelers bring great riches back, for many of the tribes of other lands crave the wondrous ceramics that the Peoples' crafters make. The People are most particularly blessed by the revealed mysteries of the old gods. Even the Wise of other tribes seek their work.

Survival

The world is filled with dangers, but the People have little reason to differentiate between natural and supernatural threats. A ravening beast is quite capable of tearing a wayward hunter to pieces, whether it is a hungry bear or a riled spirit. A treacherous marsh and a place of shattered time are both equally dangerous, and few travelers will survive either experience. Often, the natural and supernatural are entirely intertwined — supplicating the spirits of the forests may in turn calm the angry beasts that hunt there.

Starvation & Sustenance

The greatest threat to the People is not the teeth of some monster or the curse of an eldritch horror, but simple privation. A poor harvest, the ravages of weather, or an outbreak of disease among the herds can leave a village desperate. Water is relatively plentiful in the land of the People, but even that cannot be relied upon when the weather threatens a drought.

Characters can survive for a number of days without water equal to their Stamina. However, for each subsequent day that a character goes without water, she suffers a cumulative –1 penalty to all actions (to a maximum of –5). Once she has gone for her Stamina in days without any water, she suffers 3 points of bashing damage per day that passes, and this bashing damage cannot be healed until she receives water.

Characters can survive for a number of days without food equal to their Stamina + Resolve. For every three days that a character goes without food, she suffers a cumulative –1 penalty to all actions (to a maximum of –5). After this period, she suffers 1 point of bashing damage per day that passes; this bashing damage cannot be healed until she receives food.

Desperate or foolish characters can turn to all manner of unwise sources of sustenance. Eating uncooked meat, drinking brackish water or eating plants of uncertain provenance inflicts the Sick tilt on a character unless she succeeds at a Stamina roll — and might cause much worse if she's managed to pick genuinely poisonous berries or drink from corrupted water sources. An Intelligence + Survival roll informs a character if the sustenance they are about to partake of will force this Stamina roll.

Weather

The capricious whims of the weather can kill and destroy just as surely as any monster. Storms and floods ruin crops and sweep away buildings. The winter's chill kills slowly but inevitably. The summer's heat brings drought to the fields and slays through thirst.

Environmental tilts can be difficult to deal with. Travelers can seek respite from Extreme Heat by taking cover in the shade of woodlands, but Extreme Cold provides no such sanctuary; a fire is vital. Heavy Winds and Heavy Rain demand that characters seek shelter, but settlements are few and far between when traveling the wilds. Succeeding at a Wits + Survival roll is

enough for a character to find or assemble some sort of basic shelter in the wilderness, enough to fend off these tilts for a while, but there's no guarantee it will be a pleasant experience.

Disease

When disease strikes, the People turn to the few cures and remedies that they know of. In many cases, sufferers must simply survive and push through their afflictions with sheer resilience. Medicine is limited by the usual +2 maximum tool bonus of the Neolithic era, but for some illnesses no equipment bonus can be gleaned at all. The magic of the Wise is the greatest protection against the ravages of sickness.

Spirits can be a powerful source of healing. However, spirits of the right kind are few and far between, and their aid often comes at a punitive cost.

Beasts

Beyond the fields and pastures, the bloody cycle of hunter and hunted still dominates the world. The creatures of the wilds sometimes harry the herds of the People, intrude on their lands, or attack humans directly — especially if their usual food sources are depleted. Fire is one of the most powerful tools available for seeing off such threats.

BEARS

Bears are large, lumbering, and dangerous creatures with savage tempers when provoked. Plenty of bears roam the hills of the Land, and they have little compunction about wandering into cultivated lands in search of food. They rarely hunt humans specifically to eat them; many attacks happen when a hapless villager or hunter just strays too close.

Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 3, Resolve 3, Strength 7, Dexterity 2, Stamina 6, Presence 5, Manipulation 1, Composure 2

Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Intimidation 4, Survival 3

Merits: Demolisher 3, Hardy 2, Iron Stamina 2

Willpower: 5

Initiative: 4

Speed: 14

Defense: 5

Size: 7

Health : 13

Attack	Damage	Initiative	Dice Pool
Claw	1	+1	11
Bite	2	0	11

Crushing Blow: Bears benefit from the 9-Again trait on attack rolls.

Thick Hide: Bears have 1 point of armor.

BOARS

Boars are wild, untamed kin to the pigs herded by the People, albeit far more foul-tempered. They can provide good meat and bone from a carcass, but it's no easy task to bring one down.

Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 3, Resolve 2, Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 6, Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Intimidation 2, Survival 3

Merits: Hardy 3, Iron Stamina 3

Willpower: 3

Initiative: 5

Speed: 12

Defense: 6

Size: 5

Health : 11

Attack	Damage	Initiative	Dice Pool
Tusk	1	+2	6

Furious: When a boar has any of its final three Health boxes filled with damage, it gains a +2 bonus to its attack rolls.

WOLVES

Packs of wolves roam the Land, and sometimes raid cattle herds to bring down sick or vulnerable animals. The problem with wolves is the risk that something supernatural dwells among them — there may be Uratha slinking through the pack, and Wolf often sends servant spirits among their fleshly kin.

Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 4, Resolve 2, Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 2

Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl 4, Intimidation 2, Stealth 3, Survival 4

Merits: Hardy 1, Iron Stamina 1

Willpower: 5

Initiative: 6

Speed: 15

Size: 4

Health : 7

Attack	Damage	Initiative	Dice Pool
Bite	1	+1	6

Down the Prey: If a wolf's attack hits a target whose Defense has been reduced to 0, it may choose to knock the target prone.

AUROCHS

Aurochs are huge and surly beasts, kin to the Peoples' cattle. Aurochs have the favor of the Bull, and so hunting one is always a risky prospect. However, the big animals are destructive and uncontrollable with a tendency to invade pastures, ruining the land for tamed livestock. Given the necessity of killing and driving aurochs off, the People have several ceremonies of penitence that they commonly perform in the aftermath. If an auroch kills a villager, this is seen as a sacrifice that should placate the Bull.

Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 2, Resolve 3, Strength 6, Dexterity 2, Stamina 6, Presence 3, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Intimidation 3, Survival 3

Merits: Hardy 2, Iron Stamina 1

Willpower: 4

Initiative: 4

Speed: 13

Defense: 5

Size: 7

Health : 13

Attack	Damage	Initiative	Dice Pool
Gore	2	0	9

Spirits & the Shadow

The world is not a solid fabric, but rather a patchwork interwoven with threads of the spirit world. It is possible for a human to simply *walk* into the spirit realm, if she knows the right paths to take and the right places to turn. Through the Border Marches, the place the Uratha call Pangaea, denizens of both worlds can traverse into the other. As a result of this, spirits are *everywhere*.

This is not a harmonious balance. Spirits are not supposed to dwell in the world of Flesh, and they suffer unless they anchor themselves to something. Wolf, fallen from prominence as it is, still mandates that spirits should not cross the Border Marches into the Flesh and humans should not enter the Spirit in reverse. Some of its lupine children attempt to enforce this divine law, but their numbers are too few, and only the greatest of transgressing spirits are worthy of Wolf's own attention.

Just walking through the woods could lead to an encounter with one or several spirits, usually Urging or Claiming anchors such as plants, animals, and stones. The results can be utterly maddening entities — shambling tree-horrors of oozing flesh and bark on great trunk-like legs, or plants whose flowers erupt into streams of stinging bees with sneering little human faces, or golden-eyed vermin that pour from their burrows to lap and lick away the very substance of a victim's soul. Spirits aren't all hostile and some can even be benevolent, but walking into the wilds is always a risk. Even otherwise placid spirits get upset when their territory is violated, or when a hapless villager inflicts some sort of snub by saying the wrong thing in a conversation.

Avoiding spirits in the wilderness is very tricky; some are obvious, like shrieking groves of flesh-trees, but others are less so — a curiously intelligent fox curled up in the shade, or a swarm of flies over the sun-drenched pasture that suddenly takes a humanoid shape when disturbed. Avoiding stumbling upon spirits in the wild requires a success on a roll of Wits + the *lowest* of Occult and Survival.

Since interactions with spirits are so common, the oral tradition of the People includes many well-known bans and banes that the Wise have gleaned about frequently encountered spirit types. A character who succeeds at an Intelligence + Occult roll might remember some of those bans and banes, though there's no guarantee that the specific spirit she is facing will be subject to them.

Scars of the Time Before

The wounds that the Time Before inflicted on the world still linger. Bizarre structures claw at the skies in the distant reaches of the wilds, great towers with impossible geometries or ghastly aspects. In places, the rolling hills and forests give way to wastelands of rock that look like melted wax and are home to screaming ghosts. Weird phenomena scour the landscape, such as a storm that changes the destiny of everyone it rains upon.

These scars usually take the form of a spell of immense potency that is attached to a physical or natural feature. They can be countered or unraveled normally, but doing so requires picking apart a vast wellspring of sustaining energy.

The insane tower that rises up, always on the horizon, is under the effects of Space magic that gives its internal proportions ridiculously vast or small distances; its internal halls are dozens of miles across, while stepping from its base to its summit only takes a few strides.

The wasteland of rock is under a Death spell that chains ghosts, breaking their Anchors and instead attaching them to one of the strange, half-melted statues within it.

Fate magic accompanies the storm's Environmental Tilt with a spell that removes whatever destiny a character may have had, writing an entirely new one for her that may make little sense at all.

Shattered Time

The greatest of the scars of the Time Before can be found in immense, crystalline structures piercing the world's flesh,

ramming through into the Border Marches and even the spirit world like vast nails. Seething and shimmering with raw evanescing Time, these fragments of broken reality bleed off temporal disruption.

A region of shattered time is immensely dangerous. At its most extreme, a traveler may leave such a region *before* she arrives, or several of her will leave — all at different stages in her life. Some Wise find reason to venture within, hunting for lost treasures from realities that no longer exist (or stillborn ones that never existed, yet have manifested pieces of themselves in the area of wounded chronology). Not only Awakened brave the madness of these places. The People tell several stories of villagers and hunters seeking to save lost lovers or children by walking through these wounds to turn back time, or who would forge themselves a blessed future by crafting raw Time with their tools.

Shattered time always inflicts the following Environmental Tilt on the afflicted area.

Shattered Time (Environmental)

Everything seems off. People move and talk too fast or too slow, or judder from place to place. Your inner ear swims and leaves you dizzy. You're sure you were here yesterday.

Effect: At the beginning of each turn, roll a die and add it to one of the following traits for the remainder of the turn: your Defense, your Initiative, your Speed, or your Perception dice pool. Roll a second die and *subtract* that from one of the above traits. Whenever you roll a 10 on either of these dice, you suffer an additional minor effect — a key memory changes slightly, an old acquaintance changes his attitude towards you (and has now always had this new attitude), you never picked up a minor object, or you suffer 1 point of bashing damage from an injury that you didn't have until now. If you roll five or more 10s while in an area of Shattered Time, a greater effect occurs: Your history suffers a major rewrite, you gain a destiny, you leave before you arrived, or your timeline splits.

Casting magic from the Time Arcanum in an area of Shattered Time is empowering but hugely dangerous. A character performing such a risky act adds a +1 bonus to her pool for the spell at the time she casts it, and treats it as a rote action. However, she *also* adds a +1 bonus to her Paradox pool and treats *that* as a rote action as well.

What Has Yet to Come

The world as the People know it will come to an end as humanity inevitably, determinedly, claws its way forward towards mastery of the world. First, though, reality is in for another great wound, one that is a rival to the Time Before for the destruction and shock that it will inflict.

The Sundering is coming.

When it happens, when *Urfarah* falls, the interwoven worlds are torn apart. In this moment of devastation, spirits



Fading Wonders

The Neolithic Chronicles of Darkness contain vast and bizarre phenomena as a result of the Time Before. Yet by later eras — even the Bronze Age — these wonders have largely already faded, leaving only a rare few strange Mysteries and ruins for the Wise of those periods to investigate. How can this be?

The wonders of the Neolithic are slowly but surely eroded over the centuries by Dissonance as Sleepers encounter them. They are so vast in scope that the Sleeping Curse of a single Sleeper's soul is barely a scratch, but this process is repeated over and over again, year in, year out. The immense crystals of Time gradually dissolve. The insane structures that once served gods-who-never-were as thrones crumble, stone by stone. The river of time washes away the wounds that the world has suffered, and slowly heals reality.

are wrenched out of the world of Flesh in a vortex of shrieks and screams, hurled back into their own realm; formerly Claimed hosts drop dead, writhe in vile mutation, or fall into insanity. The Border Marches simply vanish, sealed away in frozen time as the Gauntlet slams down. The werewolves roar with sorrow and hatred. The entire balance of the world is reworked as the Great Predator's dying howl forces a new form of harmony between flesh and spirit.

The People will survive this, but they will have to change. The influence of spirits upon the world is vastly reduced, and the need for the old ceremonies and rituals diminishes. The People *flourish*. Yet so do other tribes, and the fate of those who modern scientists call the Vinca is sealed. In several centuries, eastern migrations will wash the Vinca away, drowning their culture beneath that of more aggressive, expansionist tribes.

Their legacy will live on. Not everything is lost. The gifts of their gods survive as the basis of the symbols that eventually become true written language in Sumeria — a direct line of descent from the First Tongue. And while modern archaeologists may struggle to unpick the mysteries of the Vinca, modern Awakened have a far more powerful tool available to them — the Time Arcanum. Mystagogues, Seers, and Libertines alike begin to discover that the Vinca may have had a great Mystery all of their own, a source of power that these latter-day Orders will scramble to discover more of.

Modern mages have caught wind of the omphalos stones that the Vinca communities gathered around. Powerful Demesnes where the Wise of that age performed their most mighty magics and delved into the Astral Realms. Potent Artifacts beyond the ability of any mage to make.

The soulstones of *gods*.

The Wise

In a moment of revelation, an ember flares in the soul of the Wise and illuminates the truth within her. Her life changes as she is hurled from quiescent Sleep into Awakening. She is transformed as the divine symbols of reality become hers to command.

In later eras, the Orders help mages turn that power to grand and philosophical goals. The Neolithic Wise, however, has far more practical concerns that demand her attention — and she will never be rid of them. She must *survive*, and help her community to do the same.

Creating a Neolithic Wise Character

Seven thousand years divide the Wise of this era from the Awakened of the modern age. One of the Wise of the ancient world shares much with her distant descendant in the 21st century — she and he both wield the same magic drawn down from the Supernal. Yet at the same time, her understanding of that Supernal power is radically different — it is profoundly linked to the natural and seasonal cycles of this broken, wounded world. She has no concept of unifying Orders that span the globe. The inheritance of the People is founded in the spoken word and carefully husbanded lore that has survived the ravages of the natural and the supernatural — she has no grand storehouses of knowledge to draw upon. Ultimately, it is just her wits and her soul against a vast, unknown, unexplored world.

When creating a Neolithic Awakened character, the normal Mage template in the **Mage: The Awakening Second Edition** rulebook is amended as follows:

- **Path:** Choose a Path as normal, but note that the Paths are given different names by the Wise of the People. The Acanthus is the Path of the Sky; Mastigos is the Path of the Forest; Moros is referred to as the Path of the Sea; Obrimos is the Path of the Storm; and the Thyrsus is the Path of Blood.
- **Order:** No Orders exist in the Neolithic. Note that this means starting characters do *not* begin with a free dot of Occult or the High Speech Merit, and cannot use Order Rote mudras to cast Rotes they have not created themselves without a Grimoire.
- **Dedicated Magical Tool:** Neolithic Awakened may have Dedicated Magical Tools based on their Paths, but note that these are different from those of later eras; see the Path descriptions on pp. 48-50.
- **Rotes:** Starting Neolithic Awakened have *no* Rotes, although they earn Praxes as normal.

- **Resistance Attribute:** The divine ember of enlightenment burns those who would seize it with far fiercer flame than the Awakenings of later millennia, and the very process of opening the soul to the Supernal leaves only the hardiest sane and alive. Neolithic Awakened begin with two bonus dots in Resistance Attributes rather than just one.

- **Merits:** The following Awakened Merits are specifically not available in the Neolithic era: Adamant Hand, Consilium Status, Infamous Mentor, Lex Magica, Masque, Mystery Cult Influence, Mystery Initiation, Order Status, and Techné. However, a new Merit is available for each Path.

The Paths

To the Wise, Awakening *is* fire, regardless of the Path which ignites one's soul with Truth. To Awaken is to seize the precious embers of magic, to hold them in your hand and speak them with your breath. With the flame of Awakening, the Wise illuminates the Path that she takes.

The elemental associations that the Wise assign to each Path are very different to how later eras of Awakened will see them. Exactly what causes these shifts through history isn't clear, but it seems more than just a difference in cultural viewpoint.

Acanthus: The Path of the Sky

The sky is both cruel tyrant and blessed savior. Its fickle winds bestow benevolent weather that caresses the land with blessed rain or sun, or curses the People with catastrophic disasters that ruin crops and claim lives. Night's gloom brings rest, but also cloaks hungry, stalking threats. The sky marches on in an all-encompassing, ever-repeating cycle of seasons and day and night; it is mistress of the fates of the humans beneath it, saving or damning them as its whims strike.

Those who Awaken to the sky are intertwined with the threads of this eternal cycle. They see the dance of chance and chaos that hangs over the world. The Sky-Wise find the fragile path through that chaos, sages and seers who turn the wheel of seasons back and forth to discover what must be done. They listen to the breeze for misfortunes and ill-omens, decipher the auspicious times for certain rites and actions, and foresee the coming season's weather. Without the Sky-Wise, the People would simply blunder their way into disaster, unprepared and unplanned. The Sky-Wise know the risk and reward of everything.

Awakening to the sky is terrifying. Through Mystery Play or dream, the Wise one brings herself to an open landscape over which the sky feels impossibly vast and overwhelming. Chaotic winds billow back and forth over a land that has fallen before all possible dooms — a patchwork of parched dirt, swampy mire, withered stalks, and shattered trunks.

Winds hammer the Wise one back and forth; rain pours down in fierce deluges; the sun boils from the sky and sears. Many are lost in the howling madness, or let themselves follow trails of iridescent feathers that lead only to insanity. Those who triumph set their wills against the chaotic and demanding realm, bending the fickle winds to their own desires, and find their way to the Pinnacle that rises from the desolate landscape. After a grueling ascent past savage, alien sentinels, tangled nests of thorny plants, and screaming clouds, the Wise one reaches the stone brazier at the peak; its flames stream in the wind, pulled one way then the next. The Wise one takes flame from the bowl in her hands, and lets it run free and wild across the summit — marking her place in this realm with the charred and ashen aftermath. She Awakens.

Path Tools: Sky-Wise tools resonate with the Path when crafted from feathers, the bones of birds, thorns, woven flax, or natural crystals.

Merit: Sky's Whispers (•)

Prerequisites: Sky-Wise

Effect: Your character knows what the slightest touch and caress of the wind and the sun mean for the coming hours. By spending a single turn observing her surroundings under the open sky, she can precisely predict the weather as far as the next 24 hours. This also grants a +3 bonus to all Survival- and Wits-based rolls to survive or resist the effects of weather.

Mastigos: The Path of the Forest

The forest rolls endlessly, as far as the eye can see — an interstitial landscape between islands of civilization. To enter the forest is to become submerged in its mysteries, walking tangled paths that wind through a labyrinth of twisted trunks and sudden groves. The forest surrounds and contains; it inspires awe and fear in the human mind. Those who enter the forest in search of its gifts must keep their wits and resolve under the canopy of long shadows. The sea of foliage engulfs the trespasser, leaving him adrift in a living maze.

The Forest-Wise see the symbolic meaning of the rolling woodlands, the wild and untamed focus of the Peoples' superstitions, and their place in the world. They are the lanterns that illuminate this darkness between the settlements, traveling vast distances in mere steps or willing messages to the minds of far recipients. They find the safest tracks for the People to travel, and seal away places of malign nature behind labyrinthine paths that fold in on themselves. Through the Forest-Wise, the scattered villages are unified into one, strengthened against the fear of the gloom and the wilds. So too are they masters of the divine realm of dreams that the omphalos stones open into.

The Awakening of the Forest brings the Wise one to what seems, at first, to be natural woodlands as any human experiences it — a tangled and terrifying maze. A few shafts of light descend from the canopy, illuminating the leaf-litter from which poke objects that the Wise one remembers from her life before — mementoes of important moments and experiences. Clay lamps leave lazy drifts of smoke, barely stirred by the breeze. The foolish are distracted by the relics of their past,

pawing forever in search of meaning within their memories; or they are driven to panic by shapes and shadows hunting between the trees that react to their fears. Those who focus on the living maze find constant obstacles — impassable thickets or chasms with deep and rushing waters. The Wise one realizes she can no longer let the forest define the world or have her horizons shuttered by the wilds. Through will alone, she demands that the paths conform to where she chooses to tread.

At the heart of the maze, she finds a towering and awful standing stone; cracked and crumbling, it seethes with inner heat. No matter where she turns, the menhir stands before her. She reaches out, breaks off part of its scalding rock and scars herself as it burns her palm. Then and ever-after, she understands that she carries with her the stone that is in every place, coterminous with all existence. She Awakens.

Path Tools: Forest-Wise tools resonate with the Path when crafted from scorched stone, wood, wolf-bone, and leather.

Merit: Trail Walker (••)

Prerequisites: Forest-Wise

Effect: Your character is attuned to the paths and ways of the forest. During extended travel through forest regions, she travels at twice her normal speed, as does anyone who travels with her.

Moros: The Path of the Sea

The sea is a distant and troubling thing. The River is vast and wide, but it is a mere echo of the power of the oceans. Through the River, the People are connected with that primal, deep and immense source — and they fear it. Those who travel to the distant coast discover an intimidating panorama of hungry, crashing waves that eternally hammer the land, scouring and changing it, transmuting fierce rock to sand and dust.

Every Water-Wise knows the ocean, even if she has never seen the sea with her own eyes. Understanding that the land is only a medium carved and formed by the ocean's strength, the Water-Wise shape the world around them to protect the People. The Water-Wise command the ground to gouge and shape itself into ditches and banks; they render tools unbreakable and turn obstacles to dust. Even the final boundary of death itself bows before the will of the Sea, and the Water-Wise shepherd souls onto the drowning path to the afterlife itself.

Awakening to the Path of the Sea draws the nascent Wise one to a shore. Empty and lifeless, the sands glint and glimmer under the soft light of an equally empty sky — the shore offers nothing. The waters crash and roil, but they also shine — the sea floor is not sand but treasure. A thousand thousand fragments of gleaming metal, shattered stone, and gems roll and clatter at each wave's passing. There are bones. The Wise one wades in, feeling the raw hunger of the sea.

Cold waters bite at her flanks, eager for her life. She is utterly alone but for the relics of some lost civilization, thrown down beneath this ravenous sea. A flame burns down there, a limpid light in the depths. Those who fear the depths and try to tread water are swept away on the waves. Acceptance is the answer here; the Wise one gives up her breath in return for what she desires. She sinks, drinks the sea into her lungs, and drowns. Thus does she change, coming to rest as a waterlogged corpse, and finds the forest of other drowned dead amidst the shattered stones and tarnished metals of the sea's floor. With her cold, dead hands, she touches the huge, shining tablet that protrudes from the debris, its surface marked with burning sigils, and it shatters at her touch. She Awakens.

Path Tools: Water-Wise tools resonate with the Path when crafted from copper or clay, from driftwood, or from stones from the riverbed.

Merit: Sea's Hunger (•)

Prerequisites: Water-Wise

Effect: Your character bears a shard of the ocean's ravenous desire to consume the bastion of the land. Whenever she destroys an inanimate object with her magic, her natural rate of healing doubles for the day.

Obrimos: The Path of the Storm

Nature's wrath lashes the world. The skies roar with thunder, and the People flinch and run for shelter. The mountains shriek down avalanches of snow or stone. Fires bellow and incinerate, flames running riot beyond humanity's feeble claims to master it. Glorious and terrible, the howling storm is a cauldron of churning energies. All is laid bare before the majesty of the world's ire.

The Storm-Wise stand before that majesty and demand it bows to them. Guardians and keepers of the sacred fire, the Storm-Wise are channels for the raw power of nature that they can see cascading through the world. Divine energies of fire, storm, and light pour through existence, diffracting into uncountable forms that even the Wise have no names for. These shining emanations reveal the glory of the Mother Storm, and the Wise bathe within it. Before them, storms part and rockslides falter, turned aside from villages and pastures. The gloom is driven back to reveal the lurching horrors therein, immolating them. No village falls to attack while its Storm-Wise still stands.

Awakening to the Path of the Storm is a challenge like no other. The Wise one struggles through a ruined, storm-tossed landscape. The ground is obsidian, melted by a vast, ancient fire; the sky roils with howling winds that spit and bleed lightning. The path ahead is evident — a mighty pillar of swirling cloud and storm that dominates the landscape. Reaching it is never easy.

No tricks or sudden realizations lie on the path ahead. The Storm-Wise one perseveres through raw will as fire sears, lightning splits the obsidian ground, and thunder deafens. If he flinches or falls back, he is lost. To survive, he must keep on until his mind and soul are exhausted — and then keep

going regardless. As he pushes through the screaming walls of the Mother Storm, he finally comes to a place of calm — the serene truth at its heart. In this place of cloud and light, the heart of the storm beats. He seizes hold of the heart of lightning, letting it scourge his body, and consumes it; he swallows raw power, raw truth. He Awakens.

Path Tools: Storm-Wise tools resonate with the Path when crafted from charred wood or bone, or obsidian.

Merit: Fire Keeper (•)

Prerequisites: Storm-Wise

Effect: Unless the Storm-Wise wills it, any torches or other sources of flame within her sight cannot be fully extinguished by natural causes such as wind or rain; they will always remain as embers at the very least.

Thyrsus: The Path of Blood

Blood connects all living things, a hammering beat marking every passing moment. That blood isn't always red, but whether sap, or ichor, or stranger stuff besides, it's a web of fluid existence. Anything that bleeds, oozes, suppurates, or seeps is part of the bubbling cauldron of life — a fetid mire of blood and life-force pouring through the world. It isn't pretty and it isn't pleasant but it is *real*.

The Blood-Wise feel that pulse. As wardens and healers, they mend flesh and knit bones when wounds would leave villagers crippled for life — and they hunt and slay in the forms of beasts to sate their own craving for the kill. The Blood-Wise are the most highly regarded by the People, for they banish pestilences and sing forth bountiful crops from the soil. They are intermediaries with the spirit world, for the Essence of spirits is bound up in the same cycles of life that anything of flesh and blood is. Without the Blood-Wise, the communities of the People would wither and die, or be consumed by spiritual poison.

Blood-Wise experience a frantic, swift Awakening. It is never serene and never slow-paced, but it is quite often fatal. The nascent Wise one finds herself in dank tunnels; the air is thick with the smell of rich loam and vegetation. Among the roots and fungi that break the walls, stone bowls hang from twisted wooden struts, cradling flames that cast flickering illumination through the caverns. In this tableau, the Wise one is prey, pursued by something hungry and savage. She *must* run.

Those who run themselves ragged by fleeing mindlessly die, eventually falling to the pursuer. To master this place demands the fusing of instinct and thought together, rather than surrendering to animal panic. The Wise one opens her senses and hears a *song*, her salvation. She follows it to its source, ahead of the beast on her trail, and finds the center of the tunnels. Here a rugose ancient stone stands, a behemoth within a vast cavern. Fire burns in hollows scooped from its flanks, and bloody handprints mark its base, each sticky and fresh. The air reeks of gore. The Wise one tears her hand with whatever she can — even her own teeth — and places her own bloody print on the menhir. She ceases to be prey, and becomes the predator. She Awakens.

Path Tools: Blood-Wise tools resonate with the Path when crafted from any sort of bone or wood, or if the Wise one's own blood is a major component in the crafting.

Merit: Spirit Warden (••)

Prerequisites: Blood-Wise

Effect: Your character is well protected by spiritual pacts and bindings. Spirits must spend a Willpower point the first time they wish to attack her in a scene.

Neolithic Awakenings

The Paths of this era experience very different Awakenings from later ages. The world's scars from the Time Before are still fresh, still oozing with wounded Time and Paradox. That a Wise woman of the Vinca sees the Supernal in a radically different way to her counterpart in the 21st century is the least of the distinctions between the two.

In comparison to the size of the population, far more humans are Awakening during the Neolithic than in following eras. The strict number of Wise in the world may not be vast, but were the modern world to produce as many Awakened in proportion to its bloated population, it would be drowning in mages.

However, the Wise of the Neolithic also have a grievous rate of attrition during Awakenings. The Supernal is just as hostile a habitat as the Fallen World — not out of some enmity for humanity, but because humanity's mark upon it is slight. Little safety can be found, little sanctuary offered, as the Wise soul journeys towards enlightenment. Many Awakenings are foiled when the nascent Wise one becomes lost to the Supernal Realm, left half-mad or worse. Some simply die, or outright disappear into thin air.

Watchtowers

The Wise have no concept of Watchtowers awaiting them in the Supernal. They have no stories of Oracles that might have worked to create such sanctuary. To the Wise, the Supernal is just like the Fallen world — a place of wild and potent forces that must be seized and harnessed through force of will.

That said, something special does lie at the heart of each of these realms. The Mother Storm, the Pinnacle of Winds, the Stone of Blood, the Forest Heart, and the Shining Tablet — shining beacons amidst the Awakening. The Wise see these as the fundamental souls of the Supernal, the divine essences of those strange places — the thrones of the gods who once dwelt there.

The Wise pass down their traditions orally, just like the rest of the People. The Wise, though, have the advantage of magic — they can use the Time or Mind Arcana to more effectively preserve their lore. Some of the Wise have examined the old tales of shamans and seers from past generations, and realized that the hearts of the Supernal realms are changing. They are *growing*. Once, the tales say, the Stone of Blood was small — no taller than a man — yet now it fills a cavern and

threatens to break through into the world above. Once the Shining Tablet was no larger than a handful of shattered masonry, yet now it rears from the seabed like a column.

The hearts are growing and changing. Some of the Wise wonder if this portends a return of the gods to their ancient seats of power.

The Practice of Magic

The Spirit Arcanum & the Border Marches

The Wise who wield the Spirit Arcanum contend with a very different phenomenon from the Gauntlet of latter ages. In this era, a strange in-between realm divides the spirit world from the material world — called the **Border Marches** by the Wise, and **Pangaea** by the Uratha.

The Spirit Arcanum cannot be used to look directly across the Gauntlet from the material world to the spirit world (or vice versa) because there is no Gauntlet. Rather than using Gauntlet Strength for any spell that allows a character to interact with the other world (such as crossing into it, calling a spirit, or the like), use the Depth of the Border Marches in that place (see p. 57). Additionally, any such spell can only move a character or call one from a single world away — a Blood-Wise in the physical world might open a rift to step into the Border Marches, and then a second one from there to the spirit world. She could not simply open a gateway from the Flesh to the Spirit in a single step.

Yantras

Neolithic Wise use Yantras like future Awakened will. In this age, the environment is far more of a powerful and symbolic force in the magic of the Wise, and environmental Yantras grant a +2 bonus rather than a +1. If an active Environmental Tilt is in effect in the scene as well, one that matches the nature Yantra and represents nature's power, that bonus is increased to a +3, for example invoking the lightning-tongued wrath of the Bird Goddess in the middle of a bellowing storm.

High Speech is held as the most sacred of Yantras to the Wise of the People — the very god-words of the pantheon gifted to humanity. It is commonly used as a Yantra because of this, as is runic High Speech, through which the unique ceramic Yantras of the Peoples' kiln-keepers are created (see p. 42).

Path tools rely on different resonant materials from those that will manifest for later practitioners. The Wise disregard the fivefold forms of tools — the coin, cup, mirror, rod, and weapon. Instead, Path tools are given forms associated with the most powerful of the gods, bearing specific magical functions. These may be statuettes or images of the gods, masks depicting their visages, fetishes made from the sacred animals of that god, or other, stranger forms.

- The **Bull** represents strength and determination, hardiness and resilience; it also represents magic tied to fertility and food.
- The **Bird** represents change, wisdom, and the magic of prognostication and perception.
- The **Snake** represents fortune, water, the soul, and the self, as well as the magic of healing.
- The **Wolf** represents desire, hunger, death, and blood, as well as violent and destructive magic.

The Wise possess no Orders, and therefore no Order tools. However, powerful and terrifying forces lurk in the world — spirit-gods and the divine inhabitants of the Border Marches — that some mages barter with for aid, or seek the patronage of, or bind. In such circumstances, Wise can create patron tools representing the entity with which they have made a pact.

Rotes & Grimoires

The Wise do not have storehouses of knowledge or age-old networks of Orders with their carefully cultivated and preserved magical lore. The Wise rely upon oral tradition and personal relationships between mentor and pupil to pass down the hard-won revelations of previous generations. Rotes are rare but treasured — the hard work of one of the few Masters among the People. Most are passed from one of the Wise to another as part of a trade of favors or knowledge, rather than being freely taught. The Grimoires of the Wise are amulets and tablets carved with High Speech — god-words of enlightenment in physical form. Without the techniques taught by later Orders, less-advanced Wise may only use Rotes when casting from a Grimoire.

Sources of Mana

Mana is a precious resource for the Wise, who usually refer to it in terms of embers or flame. Hallows often lie far beyond the boundaries of humanity's scant claimed land; some Wise do live in the wilderness, protecting these fonts of power, but it is an isolating, lonely life matched by the dangers involved. Most Wise in the villages turn to scouring their own Patterns for Mana at some point, when the need grows too great.

The bulk of Mana comes from animal sacrifice. The ritual slaughter of animals is practiced across the Land; the finest animal that can be offered up is the cow or bull, but lesser livestock are also killed for the magic within their lifeblood. Cattle provide five Mana through sacrifice, while sheep, pigs, or goats each provide only two.

This practice means that villages often provide the Wise with sacrificial animals at regular points in the year, usually under auspicious dates as the seasons turn. It is also common for a family blessed with great fortune or marriage to offer a cow to the village Wise; a newborn's birth is celebrated by the offering of a sheep or pig instead. When the families of one village wish to impress or mollify those of another, they offer animals to the Wise there.

The Realms of Magic

The Spirit World

On the far side of the Border Marches, where wolves prowl, lies the spirit world. It is a lunatic place, a warped reflection of the material world rendered in symbolism, exaggeration, and madness. Here the courts of spirits caper and dance, intent about their alien business. From here spirits come slinking into the world of Flesh, anchoring themselves in the thrill of the material and twisting it to their purposes.

The spirit world is as wild and untamed as the material world. The spiritual reflections of the villages are hives of activity — densely packed broods of spirits that contest with one another for Essence and power even as they unite against the beyond. Tool-spirits, emotional reflections of anger and love and hope and faith, and the transfigured animal and plant spirits of agriculture are all crammed in together, forced to hammer out arbitrary and absurd hierarchies to avoid complete chaos. These can be powerful allies for the Wise, if approached with wariness; eager as they are to see the People thrive, such parasitic entities would also happily lurch into the world of Flesh to rule over humans as spiritual princes.

Beyond the spirit-villages lie the vast spirit wilds. Here spirits of nature, the elements, the animals, and the woods rule. The spirit nobles of the wilds pay little direct heed to the villages with their rowdy, desperate spiritual inhabitants. Some servants and vassals, though, hungrily hunt at the boundaries for any Essence they might snatch away, willingly plunging in on raids to discorporate and consume. Where starved wild spirits are driven to do so by hunger, they form horrendous *magath*.

The Wise end up embroiled in dealings with the spirit lords of the Shadow. In addition to hungry or rogue spirits that have entered the physical world and are menacing the community, powerful spiritual attention can be garnered when villagers accidentally breach bans and pacts that govern particular areas of the wilds, or insult a spiritual guardian or ruler that they encounter. Spiritual courts may demand redress, usually in a bloody or excessive fashion, threatening destruction or stranger fates if not appeased. It is the duty of the Wise to handle such conflicts.

Certain types of spirit hold a particular importance for the Wise.

Fire Spirits are allies and friends to many of the Wise, born from the artifice of the People. Fire spirits are patient and measured, reflecting the husbanding of embers and the sacred role of fire in survival. They offer protection, solace, and comfort. Burnt offerings keep them placated, and many villages' Shadow reflections possess a brood of flame spirits that will try to protect the settlement's Shadow if it is attacked.

Forest Spirits are harsh and uncaring beings, close kindred who whisper and mutter to each other in a network that spreads from coast to coast. Forest spirits know a great deal and can carry messages far, but they despise humans as brief and irritating creatures with axes that cut and slice trees in the Flesh. Forest spirits that have Claimed trees or creatures in the woods go out of their way to kill and maim humans; villagers build shrines at the woods' edge where they spill blood to appease them.

River spirits have changed over the generations; once they were surly, hateful entities that resented humanity, but now they dwell in near-symbiosis with the villages as long as they are appropriately venerated. Of all the denizens of the Shadow, river spirits are most likely to manifest and directly approach villagers, whether to issue warnings and threats or to seek offerings or the indulgence of stranger desires. Some families claim "river blood" — their forebears wed a river spirit for a time, being taken as a spouse. A spirit procreating with a human seems strange, but the children of such unions are seen as likely to Awaken to the Path of the Sea.

The Ocean Beyond Life (The Underworld)

Even the Water-Wise, whose Path took them down among the drowned dead, hesitate to venture into the Ocean Beyond Life. It is a drowning place of black water. Ragged communities of the dead cling to existence on islands in the silent depths — ghosts and entities too fearful or tenacious to fade away, building ramshackle afterlives from the detritus that washes past on a slow tide. Overhead, what might be stars or crystals in a cavern's roof glint and twinkle.

The Wise believe the souls of the dead pass first into this Underworld, thence to drown in the black sea and sink until they pass into the true afterlife. This is an intermediary place, a purgatory through which the soul must pass. The pools of village graveyards can be easily opened into this realm by the Water-Wise, letting them directly shepherd shades through. Sadly, many of the dead refuse to accept the inevitability of their drowning descent, and scrabble for purchase on whatever rocky land can be found.

The Underworld is changing. The Water-Wise once knew it as an unbroken ocean — just water into the dark distance, no land at all. Generations passed and the first islands emerged from the depths. Now the waters recede still further. More and more solid ground is revealed. Channels gouged into the stone by deep tides are now hives for desperate dead clustering within and forging their own little dominions. Horrific, ghost-like creatures are revealed, too old to drown even in an aeon of the ocean's cold depths. Bizarre structures and places emerge into the chill air.

As the waters lower, the Water-Wise wonder *why*, and what will happen when the great sea of the dead is nothing more than a few trickling rivers. Perhaps, eventually, they will be able to walk directly into the afterlife itself.

The Astral Realm

The Astral Realm, the dreamscape of the gods, serves as the spine of the Wise community. To the Wise, this realm represents the hierarchy of existence — the individual rises into the community of humanity, and thence to the sacred symbol of divinity itself — sealing off the dark and raw power of the cycles of nature.

The Wise come together at the omphalos stones standing proudly in old settlements. Entire circles gather to enter the dreamscape together and plumb its secrets. The Oneiros is of little interest to most of the Wise in this time. Instead, their focus is on the Temenos.

A far cry from the glutted crowd of concepts and ideas in the modern world, the Temenos is a simple place. Navigation is easy, with far fewer symbolic notions to get entangled and lost among. In the Temenos, the astral-walking Wise gather for their great meetings — Circles of mages across the Land come together to share their news and their knowledge. These meetings occur in the Astral domain of the People themselves, providing the Wise with comforting surroundings within which to plan the future.

Just as there is an Astral reflection of the People, so there are of the other tribes of humanity, and all the discoveries that they have made. The People are extremely advanced for the age, and the Astral Realm is the reason. The Wise — the Forest-Wise in particular — endure long searches through the Astral, exploring the domains of other cultures to hunt discoveries, ideas, and revelations that might be of use to the People. They take that knowledge back from the divine dream and into the material world. In this way, whenever another culture whose Astral reflection the Wise have found achieves something new, the People share it. Some would say they *steal* it. The mining of copper, the harvesting of cotton, and several improvements to tool design are just some of the revelations plucked from the Astral.

Such exploration leaves the Wise with an understanding of the wider world. They see reflections of tribes that they will never meet in person, and build a picture of what lies beyond the Land — and the picture is not a pleasant one. This is a savage and primal world still, and many tribes turn to dark practices just to survive — cannibalism, human sacrifice, or worse. A rare few, wielding the Arcanum of Space, actually travel to distant lands with weak sympathetic links gleaned from the Astral. Few return.

Beyond the Temenos lies the wild realm of nature where once the gods dwelled. The astral reflection of the omphalos stones, the hearts of the Bull and the Bird, stand here and seal the way ahead. This great monolith is both warding and warning, protecting the soul of humanity against the terrors unleashed on the soul of the world itself in the Time Before — and holding them back from the divine sanctum where the hierarchy of the gods was so brutally torn down.

A secret song can open the heart of the gods, but is carefully and jealously guarded by the eldest of the Wise. Young, ambitious, or obsessed Wise hunt the knowledge for themselves despite dire warnings from the elders. Few who breach the omphalos stone and enter what lies beyond survive the experience. They speak of shrieking, ecstatic winds born from the final fall of the gods, a terrible spire, a feeble and frail path through overwhelming wilderness, and stranger things beyond. No Wise one in living memory has reached the thrones of the gods that are rumored to stand at the end of it all.

The Abyss

The Wise call the Abyss the Outside, and see it as an endless sea of nothing that laps at the shores of all reality. That the Outside is dangerous and antithetical to reality is obvious, and the Wise understand that its waves can wash into the world when magic goes awry. However, the magical traditions do not assume that the Abyss is inherently unnatural or vile by nature. It is simply all-that-is-not, the primordial chaos from which the world first rose.

The wounds inflicted by the Time Before being torn from history are one of the sources of Abyssal horrors into the world; some areas of shattered Time or scars of the Time Before are breaches through which Acamoth and Gulmoth enter existence. The Circles of the Wise rally to eradicate most such threats, but the Wise have, from time to time, attempted to treat with or learn from some of the less obviously destructive Abyssal manifestations. This unsurprisingly tends to have disastrous results, but such is the risk of trucking with the primordial chaos of the Outside.

The Omphalos Stones

When the Time Before was torn from the world, the Bull and the Bird came to the people with the greatest of gifts — their hearts, a portion of their divine souls. With these, the Wise could delve into the divine dream and guide the People through the times ahead.

Each of the original omphalos stones is a fragment of the Bull or the Bird's heart. Most stand twice the height of a man, and each is a soulstone of immense power, anchoring a Demesne. These Demesnes are more potent than those created with a mage's soulstone — they are not subject to Dissonance, and spells cast from the Demesne's Arcana achieve an exceptional success on 3 successes rather than 5. Omphalos stones extend a Demesne in an area from 25 to 50 yards around them, varying between individual stones and the power of their originators.

Yet not all of the omphalos stones were gifted by the two great deities of the pantheon. The People spread and prospered, and their new settlements were adrift from the network of god-hearts. Hard and dangerous travel through the wilds had to be endured, and even where Wise possessed the power to speak to distant minds or command birds to carry messages, the villagers became isolated from the sacred traditions of the People.

The Wise went into the dream realms and the Border Marches, seeking out other gods. They entreated and supplicated the divinities and, through the plight of the People, won the gods' patronage. The Wise returned bearing new fragments of divinity, new stones for the far-flung villages that joined them to the community of the People.

Or at least, that's what they tell the People. It's a Lie. The Wise did intend to entreat and plead with the gods for their aid, at first. Yet every time they found one of the gods, they were ignored or rebuked or turned aside, and they began to



realize that many of these divinities cared not one whit for the People at all. When they found Fox wise and vermillion, and begged her thus, she refused too, and finally the Wise grew angry beyond reason. They did the unthinkable, and sought to bind Fox and take her heart from her by force.

The struggle ruined a swath of the Border Marches, but the Wise were victorious. They slew Fox and stole her soul, wrenching the stone heart from her carcass.

The villages spread ever further, and the Wise still hunt gods. The Circles maintain the lie that the omphalos stones are freely given, even though a dozen lesser gods of the Border Marches now lie as festering carcasses. This profane murder has made the gods withdraw much of their favor from the People — Bull, Bird, and Snake are rarely ever seen now — while Wolf long since ceased to concern itself with humanity. Three Circles once sought to trap the Great Predator and take its heart, but they never even reached the god — its pack of ravening, ancient children tore them apart.

The Traditions of Magic

The Circles of the Wise

Most villages are home to a single Wise one — an Awakened mage who serves them as both protector and intermediary with spirits and gods. She may be accompanied by a single apprentice, or rarely, two. The largest, oldest settlements host more than one of the Wise, as many as two or three full-fledged enlightened. Such scattered numbers leave the Wise lonely and craving the company of other Awakened. Thus the Circles exist.

The Circles are covens of Wise, akin to the cabals of modern-day mages. Unlike the latter, however, Circles are usually geographical in nature — formed of four or five of the Wise in communities close enough to each other that physical travel is manageable even for those without mastery of Space or the ability to take the shapes of the birds. These Circles come together to handle problems that no single Wise one can manage, like invasions of furious spirits or terrible natural catastrophes — but they also provide a group of people who can understand what the Wise go through. Circles are by no means made up of friends, and internal rivalries are common, but they are rivalries with peers rather than inferiors.

When a Wise one survives Awakening with mind and body intact, she is apprenticed to the Wise one of her village. If that mage follows a different Path, then after a year of learning she is sent to another community where she can find a mentor of her own Path. The Wise respect age, and a newly fledged Awakened is expected to follow the directions of her elders. She has little leeway to make her own decisions, even as to the communities she ends up in; the traditions of the Wise prefer that they live far from their own families to break any ties of favor and familiarity. Wise are placed to succeed their elders, to take up the mantle when the older Awakened finally perishes.

When the Wise come together in larger meetings, often in the Astral, they discuss issues and conflicts between Awakened that are beyond the ability of village elders or a Circle alone to

arbitrate. Two Wise might clash over possession of a Hallow, or one might ask that another be reprimanded for what she believes is foolish use of magic. The Wise seek a majority consensus on such matters; usually somewhere between a half and two-thirds of the Wise present being in agreement is enough. This communal expression is usually sufficient to deal with a matter, and it's rare that more direct enforcement is needed against a Wise one who misbehaves or refuses to accept a judgment.

Legacies of the People

Over time, the Wise have discovered that they can create Legacies. Like the potter's handiwork, the vessel of the human soul can be crafted and formed to alter the shape of its contents. The Wise look upon Legacies through the lens of the Peoples' sacred practices of the kiln and the gifts of the god-words, and so clay and writing often forms part of the oblations and even the Attainments that they wield.

Legacies are passed down directly from mentor to apprentice. For a mentor to teach any other the secrets of the god-words that have shaped his soul's vessel is extremely rare, and a vast show of trust.

The Hollow Keepers: This Legacy seals part of their souls away in clay urns that they bury and hide. Thus protected, they truck with spirits and the dead, their souls safe from harm. The Hollow Keepers undertake the most dangerous of ventures into the other realms to deal with their inhabitants. Of course, as the tales go, get hold of a Hollow Keeper's soul-urn and you become her master.

The Wind-Singers: These potter-Wise craft eerie ceramics of an alien appearance, through the apertures of which the blowing winds howl and whistle. The Wind-Singers use these harmonies of the sky to ward away all manner of malign forces — spirits of drought or flood, hungry avian horrors from the Border Marches, and ravenous insects that would devour the crops if left unchecked.

The Bull's Children: The Bull's Children have studied the omphalos stones, and shape their own souls in mimicry of what they have learned of Bull's divine heart. Powerful and magnificent, they see their own destiny as a divine one, a step above the Sleepers. The Bull's Children push for the Wise to move from being protectors to being rulers; they gather their own herds of cattle that thrive and flourish, making them rich among the People where most of the Wise abstain from such.

Sleepers and Ceremony

Except at the omphalos stones, where the saturation of divine power lets the Wise wield their magic without fear, the Awakened must perform their magic before as few of the Sleeping masses as possible. The People know and believe that the Wise wield power, but the cold dead ember in the soul of each Sleeper threatens to quench the flame of the Awakened as well. Performing magic directly before a villager leaves them confused and fearful, and the spell will likely go awry.

The Wise perform their magic in carefully prepared sanctuaries and sacred places where they can be assured of solitude, but doing this alone would leave the Wise isolated from the ritual life of the community and diminish their authority. Most magical workings are therefore accompanied by a great deal of public ceremony that calls upon the gods and other forces, and sometimes serves as Yantras to aid the actual magic. A Wise one casting out sickness from the cattle herds spends time among the animals, painting them with colored earths and calling upon Bull — the villagers see her at work. She then retreats with one prized cow to her hut, sacrifices it, and works the purging magic that heals the animals. To the people, the magic is clearly real even if they do not see the final casting — the Wise one has been seen at work, and the cattle are healthy thereafter.

Obsessions & Wisdom

Just like their descendants, the Wise are obsessive. They live in a vast, unexplored world of Mysteries, and they have the power to explore it. Vast otherworlds open up alien vistas at their mere whim. The shattered relics of the Time Before litter the landscape.

Yet the Wise are bound to their communities. The villagers need them constantly — to deal with spirits, drive out sickness, foretell the weather and the fortunes, turn aside disasters, spread news, and more besides. Digging a needed ditch will take many villagers long hours when they could be tending to agriculture; the Water-Wise can do it in mere moments, the ground flexing and buckling at her will. Without the sacred song of the Blood-Wise, his community might near-starve as their crops wilted and failed.

The demands of obsession and duty clash viciously. Most of the Wise seek to find some sort of balance — removed enough from society to pursue their own desires, while ensuring they are present enough to aid when needed and to be supported with food and garments they do not need to make themselves. A Wise one may disappear for days or even weeks, delving into the Shadow — but she promises she will always return. Another Wise one organizes the expedition of his Circle to a vast shard of Shattered Time in search of relics there — and they all tell themselves they are doing it to help protect their villages from the spill-over of broken time phenomena, rather than to feed their own hungry cravings for power.

Some of the Wise break, or simply refuse to shoulder the burden of duty. A life dealing with eldritch entities, up to the armpits in the blood of sacrifices, always feeling that all those lives depend on the Wise alone, is enough to wear even an Awakened human down. A few apprentices chafe so badly beneath the rules of tradition that they seek to find their own paths. Awakened who leave the communities make their own homes in the wilderness, often near a phenomenon that strikes a chord with their obsessions. To the Wise, these outcasts are pariahs — likely insane, utterly self-centered, or worse. The common People treat them with more respect, although the Wise spread frightening tales to ward them away from such apostates.

A rare few do, of course, become just as bad as those stories. The Blood-Wise who nests in the ever-rotting carcass

The Chronicles of Darkness

Strange things dwell in the wilderness, and stranger things than spirits crawl toward the People's villages seeking shelter or victims. Those who stray from the firelight at night risk being taken, possessed, or hunted by the things that dwell in the dark.

In a world where anything could house a spirit, the People have learned to be wary of anything resembling a human form, especially the bodies of the dead. The People bury their dead with great ceremony and protective amulets, hoping to fend off the possibility that an unfriendly entity might take the corpse as a body. Villages have been destroyed in the past, survivors telling tales of improperly buried dead hunting their former family and friends for their blood. Some dead return so quickly there's no chance to perform the proper rites. They die with unfinished business, or a desperate need to return to the land of the living, and make dread bargains with the never-born beings that swim in the Ocean Beyond Life. Bound by their desperate promises, these beings return to their own bodies with power over ghosts, but spew and sweat brackish, salty water that the Wise declare to somehow be both the sea and human tears. Not even artificial bodies are safe; the Wise tell tales of potters consumed by the secrets of clay and fire, inspired in their madness to craft human forms with their art. In the tales, these figures then awaken as wretched half-alive beings, neither spirit nor man, poisoning the land around them with their very presence.

Other monsters prey on the People directly — every village knows to keep hearths burning in their homes at night, in order to ward off the Shadow Owls that fly, silently, into dark places to steal the life's breath of the sick or dying, and warn their children against accepting the gifts of strangers, in case they are stolen away to a labyrinth of thorns. Sometimes, beings that seem human except to the Sight of the Sky-Wise creep into villages intent on replacing members of that community, pleading that they are truly those brothers, sisters, children, or cousins. They say that they were taken away and changed, and the person living with the People is an imposter left in their place.

Also human at first glance, monsters born of nightmares but housed in human skin feed from the fears of their victims, troubling the sleep of a village until they prey on someone strong-willed enough to see them for what they are in the waking world, such as a hunter or one of the Wise.

Finally, some beings may be related to the Pangaeans themselves; shapeshifters resembling Wolf's children but with the forms of different animals, and fusions of spirit and flesh that are not Claimed, spawned from the spilled blood of Wolf's enemies. Far across the sea to the South, beings with animal heads resembling the Divinities of the People but walking the material earth scheme to turn the human tribes of that region to their will.

of a dead god, who lures in hunters and travelers so he can crack their ribcages open and eat their hearts. The lunatic soul-stealer who dwells atop a tree, its branches hanging with urns marked with blasphemous and profaned distortions of god-words, within each a gibbering trapped spirit. The prideful, arrogant master of minds who simply enslaves an entire village to his will, absorbing anyone who comes to investigate into the servile hive-mind until one day two entire Circles of the Wise arrive to lay the place to waste. These dark practices are disorganized — a few outcasts may form relationships with each other, but they do not build entire traditions or fraternities. This makes them no less dangerous as individuals.

Blood of the Wolf

Wolf stands aloof from the People, but he has tribes of his own. The Uratha, shapechanging kin to the god of the Hunt, children of Wolf and Moon, run in packs throughout the wilderness between Flesh and Spirit. As their patron weakens, the werewolves face a terrible decision, one which will mark the world forever.

The Border Marches

A predator's paradise lays a mere breath away from the physical world. Within it, the hunt is an eternal harmony. Spirit and flesh commingle, and prey of all kinds abounds. A human can walk there, if she knows the right places and the right paths. A spirit can escape there from the Shadow, if it finds where the shallows lie. This paradise is called the Border Marches by the People, but the Uratha call it *Pangaea*.

Pangaea spans the entire world, a borderland between the worlds of Flesh and Spirit everywhere. Just how deep into the wilderness a traveler needs to go to reach it can vary wildly, but prey flows constantly into its embrace. It is the domain of *Urfarah*, the Great Predator and Lord of Boundaries, and the realm of the **Pangaeans** — beings that straddle the Shadow and the material in their nature.

Within the Border Marches

Pangaea is a hybrid of two worlds bleeding together, with chaotic results. A given region of the Marches has a loose resemblance to the physical world, but the feedback between

Flesh and Spirit results in bizarre features. A forest mixes slumbering spirits, loosely formed Shadow-ephemera, and real trees; the ephemera attempts to reflect the trees already among it, tangling into an insane mass of intertwined wood and branches. The landscape is often brutally vertical, all plunging chasms, spires, and pinnacles where the real world is merely rolling valleys. Where genuinely flat land exists in reality, the Border Marches take it to an extreme — vast, overwhelming distances without so much as a gulley or contour. Everything is primal, primeval, grand, and vast.

Animals are common throughout Pangaea, whether mundane animals or spirits. The Border Marches are more obviously fecund and filled with life than the material world, even in harsh deserts or frigid wastes. Eyes watch from the undergrowth and the cracks in the earth. Prey readies itself to run; predators assess the odds of a successful hunt.

Day and night occur in the Border Marches, but the sun is almost orange; the moon glimmers like liquid. These are the Luna and Helios of the Shadow seen through the Pangaean sky, not their physical reflections. A slight haze hangs across the landscape. The air is warmer than it should be, and carries strong scents — loam, sap, sweat, blood. Just breathing stirs the heart to pumping harder, and leaves one feeling ready to run. Primeval sounds of life come from every direction. The weather is savage and extreme, capable of changing from ruddy sunlight to roaring, primal storm in minutes. Sleep is difficult, filled with unnerving dreams; but it takes a long time to tire in the first place. Simply resting without slumbering quickly invigorates the body.

Within the Border Marches, the hunt is always on. Any creature attempting to hunt another gains the Hunting Bonus for the local Depth (see Entering the Border Marches, below) to *all* rolls relating to that hunt — including perception, tracking, attacks, endurance, and so forth. In the Border Marches, any sort of active pursuit is considered a hunt, and in Pangaea the hunt is inherently sacred. A Wise one seeking a spirit to demand its knowledge is on the hunt just as a hungry Uratha tracking a boar is.

The Hunting Bonus also applies to any attempt to change the state of a character, object, or concept. Whether reshaping material with tools or using supernatural powers to sculpt less tangible concepts, this interstitial realm is a place of change, not stasis. It lends its very nature to those who would transmute, warp, and reshape the world. All Awakened spells of the Fraying, Perfecting, Weaving, Unraveling, Patterning, Unmaking, and Making Practices may use the Marches as an Environmental Yantra providing the Hunting Bonus in dice, though not the dice qualities (such as 9-Again).

Uratha in the Border Marches do not need to use the Sacred Hunt rite. Simply taking part in any hunt automatically grants werewolves the benefits of the rite and the *Siskur-Dah* Condition for its duration. Since no Tribes exist at this time, the unique tribal benefits of the *Siskur-Dah* do not apply.

A predator injured by its own quarry heals those wounds at twice the normal rate while in the Border Marches; this includes the enhanced healing of the Uratha.

No state of Twilight exists in the Border Marches. All ephemeral entities are solid and manifest, regardless of their source. Spirit and flesh mix easily here, and if a spirit attempts to Claim a living fetter — a grotesque and very physical fusion — the Claimed adds the spirit's dots to the host's attributes at a rate of one per hour rather than one per day. Radical mutations of the flesh are immediate.

However, Pangaea is still not the true home of spiritual beings. Ephemeral entities bleed Essence at half the normal rate that they would were they in the physical world.

Entering the Border Marches

The Border Marches are as a shoreline between the steady ground of the physical and the mutable sea of the Shadow. The Pangaean paradise can be reached easily in some shallow places, but where it is deepest and hardest to reach, it possesses its greatest power.

Any given part of Pangaea has a Depth rating, indicating how far the gap between the Shadow and the Flesh lies at that point. The deeper the Marches, the harder it is to enter; Depth applies equally towards both worlds. This means that shallow regions offer easy access from the Shadow to the Flesh with only a narrow strip of Border Marches between, while deep areas play host to vast swathes of primeval landscape. Loci are particularly shallow, and may be mere paces from one world to the next.

Depth Rating	Dice Modifier	Travel Time	Hunting Bonus
5	–5	1 week	+2 & rote actions
4	–3	1 day	+2 & 8-Again
3	–1	1 hour	+1 & 9-Again
2	0	1 minute	+1
1	Automatic	10 turns	+0

Depth usually lies between 3 and 5, but some specific regions have a Depth of 2 and are usually well-known to humans as places to stay away from, where spirits easily find their way into the world. Loci have Depth 1, as do certain wounds ripped through reality. Finding a new path from the Flesh or Spirit into the Border Marches requires succeeding at a Wits + Survival roll affected by the Dice Modifier for that Depth; traversing the path then takes as long as the indicated Travel Time. A dramatic failure when navigating an area of wilderness may well result in a character accidentally ending up on a path into the Border Marches.

Areas of cultivated human land do not have Depth. Around such areas, the Border Marches blister and peel away from the world of Flesh entirely. No way exists for a spirit or human to cross the Border Marches into the other world; a scab-like barrier between the two worlds slowly scars itself into place, an ancestor of the future Gauntlet.

Transitioning into Pangaea is a strange experience. At first the path becomes enclosed and encompassing. Trees

crowd close to the trail; the blizzard is so thick that only a few yards can be seen; the dunes rise up either side, leaving only blue sky and sand visible. When the Border Marches are deep, the surroundings change only slowly, becoming more primeval in aspect; grunts and snarls sound off the shadows of the path, or the sands shift and undulate as *something* slithers beneath. The trees around a winding forest path begin to glare with alien faces or mutter among themselves at the passing footfalls. As the path completes and fully opens up, the traveler finds herself in the Border Marches. Leaving Pangaea requires passing along a path again, using the same system as for entering the realm in the first place.

Gods of Pangaea

Pangaea is home to all manner of bizarre entities. Natural animals, Claimed creatures, and spirits prowl and skulk. Uratha packs lair where the hunting is best. Entities that cannot be classed as animal or spirit or Claimed emerge from the fused landscape, singular monsters rising from boiling mires where the energies of the two worlds clash. Greatest of all, though, are the gods — the Pangaeans themselves.

Though similar to spirits, Pangaeans are — along with werewolves — the true natives of the Border Marches. They are powerful symbols of natural cycles and forces, the gods of weather, the seasons, and the animals. Unlike spirits, they are not reflections of the world but pillars of it — primeval divinities born in this rift between worlds. Each Pangaean possesses colossal power, and the Wise believe such an entity may even be a fallen inhabitant of the Supernal World, trapped between Flesh and Shadow by the end of the Time Before.

The greatest Pangaean is the Wolf God, *Urfarah*. The Great Predator is the divine manifestation of the hunt and the boundary, tirelessly maintaining the divide between worlds. Stories say the Wolf God was not simply first of the Pangaeans, but the actual creator of the Border Marches — giving them form so that it could achieve its primal urge to separate and patrol.

Most Pangaeans keep to their own unfathomable business, building colossal palaces or rending chasms in a manner that suits their whims. Bird and Snake dwell in the vast rivers. Rat once carved out a warren of tunnels and filled them with beautiful things. Bull tramples swathes of the Marches flat, pounding it to dust beneath his ten thousand hooves. The God of Spring coils and writhes beneath the ground, emerging from time to time to feed on the bounty of life that erupts in its presence.

Pangaeans are not always so passive and instinctual, however. They are interested in the matters of both their material and spiritual counterparts — but Wolf's one great law would forbid them from interfering. By *Urfarah's* command, the gods must remain in the Border Marches. Yet a seasonal goddess wishes to fix the world under her part of the cycle forever; an animal god tries to stir his children to plaguesome levels of population; the Great Mountain enslaves a human tribe so that they might build vast and pointless earthworks that pour Essence to hungry earth elementals in the Shadow. And so the Wolf hunts.

Father Wolf, the Pangaean

Yes, this means Father Wolf is not a spirit, as later eras of werewolves believe, but a Pangaean. In modern terms there's not much of a distinction, as most Pangaeans that actually survived the Sundering slowly turned into spirits (like the Firstborn) or became horrors entirely of the world of Flesh. The latter kind succumbed to the ravages of time as the ages passed, passing into myth as monsters of legend.

Many Pangaeans have fallen to Wolf's jaws, their souls cracked and shattered — Rat and Spider and Mountain and others besides. Some have been chased down by Wolf's followers, the werewolves. Others fall asleep and never awake, or simply disappear.

A handful have had their souls cut from their carcasses by the Wise.

Creating a Pangaean: Pangaeans are built using the same ephemeral entities system as for spirits, but with certain key differences:

- Pangaeans are *not* spirits and are unaffected by anything that would affect a spirit only. One of the Wise who wishes to use magic on a Pangaean must use the Spirit *and* either Life or Matter Arcana.
- Pangaeans are always at least Rank 3, and usually Rank 5 or more.
- Pangaeans do not have Manifestations and do not exist in Twilight. They are always solid in whichever realm they venture into.
- As well as Influences and Numina, a Pangaean also possesses Arcana dots equal to its Rank. It casts spells using its Rank instead of Gnosis. Many Pangaeans also possess other unique powers over the world.
- Pangaeans do not bleed Essence unless they are in the Astral.
- Pangaeans can meditate *themselves* into the Temenos and Anima Mundi as if they were Awakened. Pangaeans treat themselves as Demesnes for this purpose, and when they do so they physically appear in the Astral; a Pangaean can leave at any time, reappearing in the world wherever it left. Pangaeans can delve into the Oneiros of individual humans by first entering the Temenos then finding their way to the target in the same way that Awakened can.

- A Pangaean that loses all of its Corpus does not discorporate in the same way as a spirit, but leaves behind it a great carcass that will slowly wither and rot over the course of centuries. As long as its heart remains — its soul, a physically solid thing — it will reform just like a spirit that still has Essence when discorporated. If the heart is taken, then the Pangaean cannot reform; but as long as its carcass remains, should the heart be returned it will be restored to life.

- As well as their normal ban and bane, all Pangaeans treat the natural weapons of werewolves as their bane, regardless of the honorary Rank of the werewolf or the Rank of the Pangaean. Even *Urfarah* has this weakness.

NATIVE PREDATORS

This is the golden age of the hunt.

The Uratha are the perfect hunters in the perfect hunting ground, a preserve constantly refilling with prey. Spirits pour in from the Shadow, and animals of the Flesh seem to thrive in abundance. Should a werewolf seek the thrill of the hunt against prey on its home ground, she can simply walk into a neighboring world. Sometimes the very gods disobey great *Urfarah* and must be brought down — the ultimate test. Existence is a cycle of hunting, of gorging on rich meat and Essence, and of the simple joy of the pursuit. Distantly, Wolf watches over it all, the guardian of this paradise.

Cracks are showing. Not all Uratha are happy with this simple existence, and want something more. Some are stirred by the Firstborn to hunt more ineffable prey — solutions to questions that even Wolf's first children cannot answer. Wolf is getting *old*, slowing, faltering, and the Uratha see it and know fear. The whispers of the Warden Moon grow more alarmed at the ailments of its ancient lover.

The wolf must hunt; but paradise is under threat.

CREATING A NEOLITHIC URATHA CHARACTER

When creating a Neolithic Uratha character, the normal Werewolf template in the **Werewolf: The Forsaken Second Edition** rulebook is amended as follows:

- **Tribe:** No Tribes exist in this era. All werewolves are effectively Ghost Wolves.

- **Harmony:** Newly changed werewolves become Harmony 5 the first time they enter the Border Marches. Any breaking point towards Flesh or Spirit that would move a werewolf further from Harmony 5 and that occurs while a werewolf is in the Border Marches grants a +2 bonus to the dice pool to resist it.

- **God Hunters:** Uratha natural weapons always count as the bane of Pangaeans.

- **Bane:** Uratha treat silver as their bane, just like the werewolves of modern eras.

THE SILVER BANE

Yes, werewolves are affected by silver as their bane before the Sundering. In later millennia, the Uratha will believe this to be the mark of Luna's wrath after the slaying of Father Wolf. In this era, werewolves simply accept that it is a sign of the patronage of the Warden Moon — that her blessing comes with its own flaw. Even were a werewolf to manage to remove the Auspice with some defiling rite, it would merely aggravate the bane of silver further by leaving a spiritual wound in the Uratha's being.

RUNNING WITH THE WOLVES

The Uratha are born from humanity, yet as humanity flourishes and werewolves grow in number, so does Pangaea fade.

Where Wolf-Blooded and werewolves are cast out from human tribes, they find themselves called into the Border Marches. There, amidst the eternal hunt, the instincts of the newly Changed take over; a lone wolf doesn't survive long. Uratha seek each other out and form packs; over time, they gather more *nusuzul* and Wolf-Blooded around them. In rare cases, they adopt humans who have become lost or exiled but demonstrate the savage temperament needed to survive Pangaea.

Packs build their lairs and dens in the shallows of the Border Marches. A pack ventures into the deep wilds on the hunt, but the shallows provide a steady flow of easy prey and Essence — Loci in particular. More importantly, a lair built to watch over the most-used paths into Pangaea will more easily pick up on genuinely dangerous intruders, as well as getting the prime pick of those with Wolf's ancestry. Several packs may well all squabble for such territory, feuding and fighting over *nusuzul* and Wolf-Blooded. Some packs even delve into the Flesh to raid human villages, stealing away Wolf-Blooded who the tribes have embraced rather than exiled.

Uratha also seek mates and family from humanity. Some werewolves stalk back to villages to watch over their kindred, taking an active hand to ensure that siblings and parents are safe — a child lost in the cold wakes in a warm den, and is gently led back to the community by a wolf that has her sister's eyes; a hungry old man discovers a freshly killed rabbit laid before his door each morning. Some werewolves watch the villages to take comfort from seeing the daily domesticity and labors of the people they once lived among, and grow fascinated by particular men and women. Stories abound among the People of powerful, alluring strangers sweeping briefly through a villager's



life, or hunters who win the admiration of a shapeshifter and indulge in passionate liaisons deep in the wilderness.

Other sects among the Uratha hold this attachment to humanity as a weakness; they brutally cut the ties of their new members, going so far as to raid and slaughter human families: They dwell deeper in the wilds, in simple caves and hollows, and live as wolves. Most packs, however, remember that they are both human and beast. Uratha use the Border Marches' malleable nature to build eerie, alien dens overlooking the prey-paths; rock and wood all shaped like clay, fetishes and warding glyphs everywhere, vivid paints and dried blood used to render striking images on stone plaques. The largest packs, those that have collected the wolf-tainted castoffs of major human populations for decades, live amidst earthworks of considerable size and scope.

Packs squabble over territory, prey, and spiritual resources, but these clashes are rarely more than assertions of dominance — the Uratha shy from killing one another, for Pangaea is tainted by such kinslaying and the wilderness soon turns to hostile, toxic madness. Rarely, packs come together for a greater purpose — when ordered by the Warden Moon to hunt down a void-leviathan, hunting a Pangaean who has broken *Urfarah*'s law, or undertaking some great work under a charismatic leader.

Individuals and packs travel far more than the human communities from which they stem. Shamans of Wolf and Moon walk the paths between local territories to spread news, offer challenges and ensure that the patrons of the Uratha are not dishonored. Sects and cults have grown up over the centuries — networks of like-minded werewolves who share particular beliefs and traditions. In recent times, with the failing of the Great Predator, many of these sects have radicalized and begun to pursue urgent agendas. Now packs war against each other in some regions of Pangaea, or gather in greater numbers to march into the Flesh or Shadow and seize control of their future.

Glory of the Hunt

The hunt is sacred. This truth is innate to the Border Marches, and all werewolves can feel it deep down in their pulses and their hungers. Wolf-Blooded can sense it. Even *humans* know it.

The Uratha understand that they have a holy duty. They are the wardens of Pangaea, there to maintain *Urfarah*'s law. As lesser aspects of the Great Predator, the Uratha hunt rogue Pangaeans only rarely, and few packs are powerful enough to bring down a god. Instead, werewolves feel the urge to maintain the sanctity of their territory by hunting from the flow of spirits and mortals that cross through the Border Marches, and these depredations help maintain some balance between the worlds without choking the stream entirely.

Some Uratha resent even this simple duty. Rejecting their heritage, they attempt to build a different life — some become tyrants in the Flesh, leading their packs to overrun human settlements and enslave them. Others delve deep into the Shadow, forming cults that reject the Great Predator in favor of a more immediate patron, serving the interests of spirit nobles in return for lavish rewards. The fire of the hunt refuses to burn out, though. Sooner or later, this denial of their nature leads werewolves to madness, rage, and destruction.

The Father, the Firstborn, and the First Pack

Urfarah is a distant god. Some sects believe that werewolves are the offspring of Wolf and Moon, but many find the idea ludicrous; werewolves are born from humanity, not wolves or Lunes. More common is the story that, in the earliest days of the Border Marches, shards of Wolf's soul were torn from its body as it struggled with other Pangaeans, and these shards found root in the fertile flesh of humanity. Some even believe that Pangaea formed spontaneously from Wolf at the beginning of time, and that both humans and Uratha were born from the maelstrom of spirit and matter that resulted — hence why humans do not have reflections in the Shadow, unlike all other animals.

Regardless, werewolves know they are an echo of the Great Predator, yet the Wolf God spares little attention for its lesser children. A werewolf is lucky to see *Urfarah* more than a few times in the span of her life, and then as no more than a vast figure thundering on the hunt, the First Pack swarming at its heels. Few have the privilege to meet the god, or gain a moment of actual interest from it.

The Great Predator once lay with the mightiest spirits of wolves in the Shadow, for even a Pangaean progenitor needs solace from the struggles of the hunt. It became parent to a brood of squabbling brats — the Firstborn, potent wolf-beings that serve *Urfarah* as heralds and messengers. Young, passionate, and driven, the Firstborn are allowed free passage through the Border Marches to indulge their own interests, and this fills the Pangaeans with spite and the spirit lords of the Shadow with rage.

Firstborn show greater attention to the Uratha than their parent does. They are deeply interested in the sects of the werewolves, and actively meddle and visit where they can. Death Wolf comes asking fiendishly difficult questions; Destroyer Wolf demands the death of a Pangaean that has defied the Great Predator; Red Wolf brings warnings that *the world is changing*; the Eater of Names seeks the trail of any of the Wise intruding into Pangaea that she might chase down. Many a pack shares the hunt with one of the Firstborn, and often for stranger prey than simple beasts — they hunt eldritch monstrosities, figments, or the answers to impossible riddles.

The Firstborn are many in number, and are mostly only half-siblings to each other. Some are allied, but the Firstborn often squabble and argue, and are not above setting Uratha pawns against each other as moves in a greater game. The mightiest among the Firstborn are widely known across the world — heralds of the Great Predator like Destroyer Wolf, Dire Wolf, or the terrible Sky Hunter — while others like Black Wolf or Wolf-Who-Whispers roam more limited ranges. A few focus all their efforts on building power only in a specific region, like the Opalescent and Incandescent twins at whose command entire clans of Uratha and humans raise up

Pangaean temples to both Warden Moon and Glorious Sun.

The First Pack are monsters. Snarling, snapping, and slavering, this court of ancient werewolves follows the Great Predator in its shadow and join directly in its hunts. Some Uratha venerate them as progenitors of the species and paragons of the primal hunt — but only the eldest, fiercest Uratha would willingly go near them. The First Pack cares as little for other Uratha as Father Wolf does. Huge, warped, and savage, the First Pack are a far cry from later generations of werewolves. They have surrendered themselves so utterly to the hunt that they know nothing else.

The Warden Moon

The Warden Moon is patron to the Uratha and the spirit-god of sky and void, warding the world against the beyond. Luna is utterly remote, yet she shows far greater attention to the Uratha than *Urfarah* does. It is the mark of the Auspice that grants a werewolf purpose, and the Lunes who mark Uratha for their accomplishments — not the Great Predator.

The stories say the Warden Moon directed the creation of the Uratha. Her light guided shards of the Wolf to their human vessels; or he took Wolf as a lover because he needed servants with Wolf's ferocity; or it was her song that woke werewolves from the soil of Pangaea and gave them sentience. Luna created the Uratha with specific intent, and when the moon rises, werewolves howl to it because they feel the unstoppable call of the one who masterminded their existence.

Lunes often descend from the Shadow into Pangaea, bearing messages no pack dares ignore. When something from the void has breached the Warden's vigil, the werewolves answer the call to arms. Sometimes it is simply an alien spirit, lost in a world that it cannot fathom. Yet other, greater visitors from the beyond sometimes descend — colossal leviathans of incomprehensible nature, ravenous beings of raw void, and even broken prisoners of Luna's embrace that swirl and coil with eternal impermanence.

The Changing World

The end of Pangaea approaches.

Uratha culture is changing, provoked by the weakening of the Great Predator, the questions and demands of the Firstborn, and visitations from Lunes bearing strange commands from the Warden Moon. Once humanity was mostly ignored as anything beyond a source of new *nusuzul* and the occasional hapless prey, and the packs lived primal and simple existences. Yet humanity has flourished, the numbers of Uratha have grown, and they have been more marked by the time they spent in communities before the Change. Sects and cults grow and gain traction as there are more werewolves and more meetings of packs.

The news of *Urfarah's* weakness is spreading among the shamans. Troublesome Pangaeans more easily slip from its pursuit, and some say that the venoms of Rat and Spider still eat away within its soul. Gods of the seasons maraud the natural cycles of the Flesh with little fear of punishment. Even powerful spirits seem to tax the Great Predator when it comes





to the kill. The First Pack are growing uneasy, but unable to break themselves from the all-consuming hunt even now.

Many werewolves fear they know why. Once, the hunt dominated all the world — not just the Border Marches, but throughout the Flesh as well. Humanity, though, has shattered the cycle. Humans hunt still, yes, but it is not the totality of their existence. They have broken the earth and mastered the herd. They have settled. They have *changed*.

Humanity's impact on the Flesh and Shadow is already immense. That they have strayed from the path of the hunter is the undoing of *Urfarah*. As the tribes spread further, as the population grows, so will the Great Predator weaken further.

Innumerable sects and cults exist among the Uratha, but at this end of an era, certain have grown and spread to become major forces — all intent on setting about their own solution to the diminishment of Father Wolf.

The **Loyal** (*Umfinthimma)* refuse to accept that the ancient Pangaean may die. This age of the hunt cannot be allowed to end. Nothing in all of existence comes close to *Urfarah's* might; without her, all will be lost. The Great Predator is ancestor to all werewolves and the weak and shriveling faith of her descendants is the true poison that is weakening *Urfarah*. By blood and fang, the Loyal will build a new and unified Uratha people, an edifice of praise and reverence for the Great Predator where the weak and unfaithful can be purged. Any werewolf who suggests otherwise is a traitor.

The **Cull** (*Kazithaga)* blame humanity and their disproportionate impact on the symbolism of the world. By refusing the hunt like surly children, humans kill the Great Wolf slowly but surely. The simple solution that the Cull put into practice is to ruthlessly hunt humankind. Populations must be slaughtered, fields burned, livestock butchered. Humanity must be forced back into the fold of the hunt — if not as predators, then as prey.

The **Maw** (*Gathua)* are kinslayers, shouldering the burden of such a sin against Pangaea in the knowledge that they are acting for the greater good. Werewolves all bear shards of the Great Predator's soul, and in this age of flourishing humanity there are far more Changes occurring. Wolf grows weak because his soul is literally being chipped away. There need to be some werewolves to aid him in his duty, but now there are too many, and it is killing him. The Maw hunt and slay other werewolves so that the shards may return to their progenitor. Many, many packs must yet be slaughtered for the Great Predator to be restored to full health.

The **Shepherds** (*Sahenhar)* are learning from humanity. The old god weakens, and the Uratha must step up to shoulder more of her burden. As humans tend to cattle, so should werewolves tend to humanity, helping the population to expand so that more werewolves are born from their ranks. Some Shepherds manipulate communities from the shadows, and others seek a form of benevolent rule over tribes, trying to turn them to the worship of the Wolf God. Some suggest far more brutal approaches — the use of the moon's taint and the madness of lunacy to farm human villages into producing more Wolf-Blooded and *nusuzul*.

The **Inheritors** (*Ifila*), like the Shepherds, believe it is time for the Uratha to come to their full potential and to shoulder the burden of the Great Hunt. The Inheritors, however, believe that *Urfarah* is an obstacle. He will dishonor the Hunt as he slowly weakens, profaning the sacred duty with a pathetic decline. If the Great Wolf dies or finally sleeps, giving up his power to his descendants, then the great cycle of the hunt can be restored. The Inheritors gather wolf-spirit allies and entreat the Firstborn for their father's secrets.

The **Devourers** (*Tesfurfarrahu*) are a radical splinter of the Inheritors, a cult rejected for its blasphemy and now hunted by its erstwhile fellows. The Devourers plan a vile ritual to bind the Great Predator and consume his very soul, ascending to take his place as gods themselves. Hunted wherever they are discovered, the Devourers nevertheless work tirelessly towards their goal. They see it as a noble act that other Uratha refuse to see the truth of — that *Urfarah* must fall, but no Uratha will ever be able to simply take his place without partaking of his power as well.

The **Mourners** (*Athdursa*) are another radical sect who believe that the Uratha must accept Wolf's doom. The Great Predator will die because that is the natural way of things, but when *Urfarah* falls, the Uratha will not be able to uphold their progenitor's mantle. Pangaea will fall to chaos as creatures of flesh and spirit cross as they desire. The Mourners seek the most apocalyptic of solutions — some way to close the paths through Pangaea, sealing Flesh and Shadow apart from one another. The Mourners would sacrifice the Border Marches to save the world; they grieve the passing of paradise but believe it must be done.

Tyrants are not a sect at all but, like rats escaping a sinking ship, they are a clear sign of what is to come. Uneasy at the growing sense of *Urfarah's* weakness, feeling that Pangaea is becoming increasingly *wrong*, or running from the outbreaks of pack violence that are erupting as the sects begin to mingle and clash, the Tyrants care for nothing more than their own hides. They flee into the world of Flesh, falling upon human settlements with only short-term, base desires in mind. A pack of Tyrants might brutally seize control of a village so that its members can sate their need for food, for mates, for safety. Such communities often collapse, are purged by the Wise, or fall victim to one of the other sects.

Story Seeds

Citadel of the Moon

One village disappears, then another. Inhabitants and livestock vanish, leaving deserted homes and no trace of any struggle. Their tracks lead into the wilds, and thence the Border Marches.

What is Happening?

Deep in Pangaea, a visionary's orders raise up a vast settlement, beyond the scope of any community yet seen in the world. Immense earthworks rise through spirit-magic, and colossal

obelisks bind spiritual defenders in place. Here, the wolf-priests of the **Sanctuary** are building a place of safety for Uratha to flee to, a perfect society to survive coming catastrophe.

To the wolves' surprise, humans driving herds arrive before their ramparts, seeking entry. Driven by dreams and portents, the inhabitants of the deserted villages come in first a trickle and then a flood. They claim to be guided by a goddess who has never spoken to the People before. They have been commanded by the Moon herself.

Who are the Characters?

Red Gaze Shining is blind, but she does not need her eyes to see the visions that the Warden Moon shows in her dreams. The Cahalith has built the cult of the Sanctuary from nothing over long years, reciting the catastrophes that the Moon and the Lunes have warned her of to whoever will listen. She doesn't know how long she has to perfect this refuge before Luna's warnings come to pass, but fears it is soon. She doesn't know what to do with the human herd suddenly invading her city.

The Walker of Paths is of the Forest-Wise, but he has lost much of himself. His exploration of otherworldly paths led him to a great monolith of power in a place of shattered Time, and through it Luna spoke into his mind. The experience nearly broke him, but it also set him ablaze with zeal as a vessel for the goddess. He travels to a village, speaks of the promised city that Luna has prepared for the People, and his words *move* them.

Possible Resolutions

The Uratha are not purposefully stealing human populations, but as Red Gaze Shining speaks with the newcomers she comes to believe that this must be the will of the Warden Moon. Any of the Wise who come to the city seeking the return of the villagers will be firmly refused — the humans have come here of their own free will, and wish to stay. An attempt to retrieve the villagers by force will require the strength of several circles to overcome the numerous packs that have flocked to the Sanctuary's banner, and they will find themselves fighting the very humans they intend to rescue.

Investigating the villagers will reveal they are all under the effect of a Numina of colossal power, an overwhelming aggressive meme promulgated by contact with the Walker of Paths. It *is* possible to purge the Numina with very potent Mind or Spirit magic. The Walker, for his part, will refuse to cease preaching the Moon's will to the villages he passes. However, investigation into the source of the aggressive meme reveals that it did not originate with Luna — or at least, not the Warden Moon of *this* timeline.

As Red Gaze struggles to cope with mingling two societies, the werewolf needs help to construct a stable society. Those Wise who approach under a banner of peace might offer guidance on how humans and werewolves might best work together, and how the spirit magic of the Uratha and the agriculture of humanity might function to feed the city — or they could sabotage it and reduce the city of the moon into a howling nightmare of death and madness.

In the end, when *Urfarah* dies, the Border Marches will vanish — locked away in an eternal, frozen moment. Why would the Moon build this city of wolves and men, only for it to become imprisoned in nothingness? Why would the Luna of a lost or stillborn history reach out across Time to help create it? When Pangaea falls, will Sanctuary survive, and in what strange and Time-twisted form?

The Babbling Tower

A tower rises in the wilderness, vast and imposing. Its edifice is a work of stone and masonry unlike the People have ever seen, with impossible proportions and no apparent entrance. Strange sounds echo from the interior. Anyone who comes nearby finds it difficult to explain this, however, as they now speak an entirely different language.

What is Happening

The tower is a cocoon, raised up by a bizarre spiritual being called an *idigam*. The Builder of Tongues was once a mercurial entity of chaotic Essence, hunted by *Urfarah*. To evade imprisonment on the moon, it sought refuge within a human tribe, who offered it shelter for a price. The spirit had to become something they needed, the concept of *translation*, so they could understand nearby tribes and come together in mutual aid.

The Builder of Tongues served the tribes for many years as the concept of understanding the language of another, but eventually disaster reduced them to naught but bones and memories. The Builder has since gone mad, its purpose complete and its time passed now that many tribes have learned to communicate and co-operate without its help. It has roamed the world for long years, but has finally settled to create its chrysalis.

The Builder is within the tower, changing into something entirely new. Anyone who hears the burbling of the *idigam* within has their own language overwritten by that of the tribe the Builder originally served. Victims can understand each other, but can no longer speak the native language of the People.

Who are the Characters

The Builder of Tongues gestates within the womb of the tower it has built. Anyone who manages to breach the thick stone masonry of the chrysalis will face a breaking point just from seeing the swirling madness of the interior — pulsating threads of meat and cartilage, cascades of thought and words, screaming vortexes chanting secret tongues backwards and a haze that fills the lungs and the mind with dizzying *déjà vu* and unbidden memories.

A cult of the tower's victims clusters at its base. Those Who Remember are hapless travelers and hunters, joined together by the dead language that has replaced their original tongue. More than mere language is changing, though — they are gaining memories from the tribespeople that the Builder once served. Over time, their personalities are shifting and changing, becoming those of the long-forgotten.



Possible Resolutions

Breaking into the tower is certainly possible with the Arcana of the Wise; any meddling with the metamorphosing entity within, however, will release the Builder before it has completed its change. What is unleashed is a howling, psychotic terror of wings and words, spitting hatred and revelations with equally devastating effects. This malformed monstrosity imprints new languages on its attackers and the wider population like memetic plagues, each bringing a cascade of memories and concepts from people long-dead or who never even existed. If not stopped, the culture of the People is demolished within the year as the *idigam* rampages, deleting swathes of culture and replacing it with gibberish and nonsense.

Leaving the tower alone has its own risks. The homogenization of language slowly creeps out further, until after a year any villages within several miles speak the long-dead language of the Builder's saviors. Even when the *idigam* emerges, the violence of its new birth shatters the tower open and unleashes an earthquake upon the region.

The new being uncoils from the tower, a dragon of thought and contemplation. It has become the spirit-god of *words that trigger memories*, a Shadow prince of the concept of recollection.

War's Lonely Children

War breaks out. It's unthinkable, but two villages declare that they can no longer tolerate the other. The cause is a petty slight; each side is absolutely determined to annihilate the other. They take up arms and begin to fight. Spirits of a kind never before seen are appearing, stoking the flames of violence.

What is Happening

Spirits of war stalk the land. Desperate and hungry, they are instigating conflicts because the alternative is to starve of Essence. The spirits are lonely and confused. They don't know where they came from, but they know this world is cold and quiet and has none of the passion or rage of war.

In the wilds, travelers discover a vast weapon; a club or axe of bizarre aspect and ornamentation, half-buried in a crater amidst shattered trees. It seems to have dropped from the sky, but where did it come from in the first place? The weapon crackles with raw power, seething with Supernal energy. Newborn spirits of war crawl from the smoking devastation.

Who are the Characters

Although newly birthed, the war spirits are powerful lesser *Ensihim*; the maturity of a child combined with the strength of an eldritch terror. They are hungry and scared, but their instinct is to lash out and fight unless approached carefully. Each is a strange, inhuman figure of metal, stone, and blood, with bestial features and weaponry of styles that will not be seen for centuries yet.

The family matriarchs of the affected villages are angry and empowered. They feel free, able to ignore the dictates of tradition to respond to wrongs done through righteous retaliation. All the villagers are caught up in the war-spirits' influence. The sense of community has soared to new heights because every village knows it is *us* against *them*.

A terrifying source of power lies at the far end of the threads of destiny and sympathy tying it to the divine weapon. Somewhere, a raw symbol of violence and destruction has thrust the manifestation of itself into the Fallen World. As reality bleeds from the damage, those in the crater hear names in High Speech whispered by the strange-tasting air; the Warlord; the Destroyer; the *General*.

Possible Resolutions

War has entered the world. Anyone attempting to put the genie back in the bottle faces a hard task. Some of the war-spirits have staggered off, drunk on the violence of the villages, in search of further lands where they might spread their influence. Hunting them will be difficult, and some other power dogs the steps of any Wise one attempting to do so. Strange whispers worm their way into the minds of the Wise of foreign tribes where the spirits come to rest — offers of great rewards for the slaying of Awakened who would capture and cage the spirits of battle.

War-spirits still in the area can be fought and destroyed like other spirits. Now that the villages have been exposed to the shocking violence of this sort of conflict, there will be those who turn to such means in the future and give birth to yet more war spirits. Canny Wise may try to shape or subvert the war-spirits down a path they desire, perhaps attempting to turn them to spirits of noble battle or discipline and planting the seeds for whatever future warrior culture will arise among the People.

The warring villages themselves can be pacified through magic, but this isn't a permanent solution by any means. Once spells have lifted, rivalries and wounds caused by the violence will flare up again. It will take careful mediation to heal the damage done.

As for the divine weapon itself, destroying the Artifact is a task of epic proportions. It cannot be simply shattered and broken; it is infused with Supernal will. The Wise might take it to a place of shattered Time, unmaking its past so that it was never created; a Pangaean could take it to the Border Marches and hurl it from the edge of existence into the void beyond; the truly brave might trace it from whence it came, and give battle to the will that forged it in the first place.

Unstoppable Souls

They come from the east with the rising of the sun, glorious and terrible figures clad in gleaming copper and white ivory. The *Gudthabak* are tall and proud, able to take the sacred form of Bull itself. The bull-people confront the Wise and demand that their birthright be handed over — the omphalos stones hewn from Bull's heart.

What is Happening?

The bull-people dwelt somewhere to the east, born from the colossal, shattered horns of Bull itself from when it entered the world of Flesh and fought Wolf in a long, arduous battle. The god-ivory amidst which they dwell has diminished with the creation of each *Gudthabak* and now the bull-people have so little left that they fear for their future.

Now the *Gudthubak* have learned that the People possess entire pieces of Bull's own heart, and more, they have discovered that the Wise hunt and slay Pangaeans to steal their souls. That the People have stolen part of Bull's soul is blasphemy enough, but those omphalos stones could also be the bull-peoples' own salvation, a fresh source of god-shards to create more of their number. As its chosen children, Bull's heart should be theirs by right.

Who are the Characters?

The bull-people are shape-shifters, humans capable of becoming furious bulls or taking on the aspect of a minotaur hybrid. They are proud, strong, and supernaturally charismatic; even a single *Gudthabak* can easily bring an entire village under her sway. A *Gudthabak's* soul shines fierce and bright to the gaze of the Wise, burning with the glorious power of Bull itself. Attempting to meddle with the mind or soul of a *Gudthabak* with magic is akin to shoving ones' hands into a fire; possible, but leaving a Wise one who tries it with terrible spiritual wounds.

The *Gudthabak* establish rule through might, and Sun Rises Gleaming is the oldest and strongest of them all. The notion that the People might refuse his demands hasn't occurred to him, and he will be baffled and eventually enraged should it happen. Despite his temper, the elder *Gudthabak* has lived long enough to accrue a great deal of wisdom, and wishes the best for both his kindred and the humans that they rule over. If he decides to take over the lands of the People, it will be because they clearly need the firm hand of the *Gudthabak* to steer them to a better future.

Possible Resolutons

Most of the Wise cannot countenance handing over the omphalos stones of Bull to the host of *Gudthabak* and their human thralls. Not only are the stones vital to the People, but they were gifts from Bull, whatever the *Gudthabak* may believe. Refusal will mean conflict as the *Gudthabak* try to take over villages and cast the Wise out by rallying the People themselves against the Awakened.

The Legacy of the Bull's Children might seem the best intermediaries for any negotiations, as they are closest of the People to Bull and have spent long years sculpting their own souls into a form not dissimilar to the *Gudthabak*. However, both bull-people and Bull's Children are proud and unyielding. Worst of all, the Legacy might decide that the *Gudthabak* are a shining example of how they should be behaving, and attempt to aid the bull-shifters in overthrowing the other Wise and establishing a new nobility of Awakened and *Gudthabak* rulers.

One of the greatest threats to the Wise is the possibility that the bull-shifters will reveal the truth of the younger omphalos stones — that the Awakened have not cultivated a pantheon of allied divinities, but have in fact been killing and defiling Pangaeans to steal their hearts. If this discovery spreads among the People, it will threaten to overturn the sacred life of the communities, shatter their hearth magics, and turn them against the Wise.

Even should Sun and his *Gudthabak* manage to acquire the fragments of Bull's soul, whether through negotiation or conquest, the bull-shifters will discover a new and horrifying obstacle. The humans who made their dwellings among Bull's shattered horns naturally absorbed shards of its power, but the same is not true of the god's heart. The shifters will have to force shards into recipients, and normal humans cannot survive such energies. Only humans already touched by the power of a god will do — and that means the Wolf-Blooded among the People. Bloody and painful rites will be required to create the next generation of *Gudthabak* and they will need Wolf-Blooded sacrifices to achieve it. When the Uratha discover such practices, their wrath will surely descend soon after.

Inspirations

As a real-life archaeological culture, most sources about the Vinca are academic and only available with journal subscriptions, university access, or the like. For the budget-conscious gamer who doesn't have such resources available, the Internet is your best bet, both as an overview of the Neolithic, specifics about the Vinca and even details of individual sites you might find inspirational. When reading around the Stone Age, remember that it stretches from before humanity's evolution into *homo sapiens* all the way to the Copper Age; the Vinca were a "Middle Neolithic" culture, several thousand years after the setting for novels like *Clan of the Cave Bear* and films like *10,000 BC*.

The Chronicles of Ancient Darkness are a historical fantasy series of novels set around the time of this setting, albeit on the far side of Europe. Appropriately for this setting, they deal with the interaction of humans, spirits, and even mages, both as allies and antagonists.

Some episodes of the *Avatar: The Legend of Korra* cartoon feature flashbacks to a time thousands of years in that setting's past. While the technology levels and aesthetic style depicted therein are quite different from that of the Vinca, it's worth noting for two particular elements. Humanity is shaped by the endless wilderness around it — little points of light protected by supernatural forces from the unknowable landscape they sit within. It's also a good source for inspiration when it comes to the outright lunacy of a world in which spirits can trivially cross over into the world of Flesh and inhabit the land beyond the shelter of the settlements.



Thick black tendrils coiled around Nike as she stumbled away from the creature. She struggled against the constricting, dark flesh, calling out for help from her assistants. Sraosha called to her, making some kind of gesture as he did, but he had reverted to his native tongue.

"I don't understand!"

"Evil!" He called out, making the same gesture.

Frustration overcame Nike's fear. As if she couldn't figure out that the monster was evil. Every movement caused the creature to constrict further, making thinking, and even breathing, difficult. Nearby, she could hear Ptah chanting, calling magical fire to burn the thing. This would be a better idea if she weren't trapped chest-deep within its dark body. Crying out for the Egyptian to reconsider his action was beyond her limited supply of air at the moment, so instead she concentrated on the words to pull forth a magical shield. The effort strained her to nearly passing out, but just as the first waves of heat lapped at her skin, she felt the power of her magic take hold and block the inferno that enveloped her. Her hasty spell was not perfect, however, and she felt the blistering heat.

From where he was standing, Ptah could see his mistake immediately; the creature's body was impervious to his attack, but Nike was not. He watched in horror as her clothes and hair started smoking and burning, but before he could react a tendril snaked out at him, the edges burning with his own fire. He danced away from the thing, beginning the incantation to call power into his sword. Five more tendrils rushed at him, forcing him back and causing him to falter in his spell weaving. He cursed, and slashed at the dark form, hoping that his bronze would hurt the thing.

The creature's grip on Nike loosened ever so slightly as it dealt with Ptah, allowing her vision to clear and giving her enough room to slip her hand onto the hilt of her dagger. She could see Ptah fighting off six tendrils at once, his attacks leaving small oozing wounds on the creature and provoking it to recoil and strike with ferocious abandon. Sraosha was nowhere in sight. Pulling the dagger was agonizing, and the pain of movement and lack of air forced her to stop several times in her effort. Once it was free, she tried to stab at the large, black form coiled around her, but the exhaustion of pulling the weapon forth prevented her from putting any real force behind the blows.

As he fought, Ptah's warrior training took over, driving out all other thoughts. His sword seemed to sing as he struck the dark tentacles, drawing thick, reddish-brown blood as he made contact. He knew the wounds were not deep; he only hoped he could tire the thing enough to give Nike and Sraosha a chance.

Sraosha stood paralyzed by fear as Nike and Ptah fought the *daeva*. Though he did not know its name, he was certain it was a servant of the dark god. He tried to think, to pull himself out of the fear that had gripped his mind and turned him into a quivering child. Both of the foreign sorcerers had stopped casting spells and had resorted to force of arms against the demon. Blood oozed from dozens of open wounds on the creature, leaking darkness into the world. Snakes, spiders, and a slew of insects erupted into life where the blood splashed onto the ground and scattered from the combat.

The sight shook him, and he was able to finally push past his fear into anger. Their attacks were not hurting or weakening the demon, instead only furthering its agenda. He had no words in Greek to explain to them what this was, or the enormity of their problem. So instead he simply yelled out "Run!" as loud as he could and rushed towards Nike in the center of the mass.

Ptah heard Sraosha's call and saw him run towards the creature. Unsure of what the Persian sorcerer was planning, he pressed his assault forward, gaining ground to meet him in the middle. Sraosha had no weapon, though he was speaking in his native tongue, fast and rhythmic. Ptah hoped it was some kind of warrior mantra.

Nike had just freed her other arm as Sraosha reached her. He pulled on the coils wrapped around her, while chanting and gesturing urgently for her to assist him. Her strength was nearly completely gone, and all she had the energy to do was hand him her dagger. He took it from her and flung it into the trees before beginning to pull at the tentacle again. Shocked and angered, Nike pushed free of her captor with renewed strength.

Ptah arrived, hacking and slashing at the tentacles attempting to regain a hold on Nike. Sraosha hefted her and began running towards the tree line, chanting and murmuring the whole way. She heard the words *"Ahura Mazda"* repeated over and over again, and realized he was praying. She wasn't sure if his prayers were actually affecting the creature, but it seemed uninterested in a vigorous pursuit. Ptah lingered at the threshold of the temple long enough to cover their retreat, and the trio quickly made it to the tree line and beyond. Sraosha never once looked back, or stopped his litany of prayers until they were deep into the forest.

To the Strongest

When Alexander heard from Anaxarchus of the infinite number of worlds, he wept, and when his friends asked him what was the matter, he replied, "Is it not a matter for tears that, when the number of worlds is infinite, I have not conquered one?"

–Plutarch, Moralia

If Alexander cut the Gordian Knot as legend says, he used a sword to solve the riddle that challenged kings. But if you believe in philosophy over force, the real blade was a mind trained by Aristotle to see things as they are, banish useless rituals, and think beyond the patterns of ordinary, deluded mortals. If you honor certain gods, implacable and old beyond imagining, he cut down one of their number, one who guarded their crown of wisdom and power. These ancients overthrew their own forebears, and guard the spoils of victory. That's why heroes go mad.

Some say Alexander died because he claimed a hero's mantle too late: He reached too far for an inhabitant of the lowly Age of Iron. They say he wanted to be worshiped as a god, and to be fair, he never blushed at the title "Zeus-Ammon." Other lords of Olympus have ended civilizations for less.

If Alexander is a god trembling in his too-weak shell of flesh, he must represent some fusion of the divine king and a sorrowful Dionysus. As wine and fever cast their twisted vision and toxic air over his last days in Babylon, Alexander's hard-headed generals surreptitiously sharpen swords and ready alliances for the next bloody stage. If any part of Alexander is a god, it would be his legacy: violent ambition wrapped in intellectual rigor, applied to the dream of empire. One day he'll leave it all "to the strongest," and the world will see how a god's work dies – and how the violent and brilliant mortals dream of him in every age to come, and raise murderous, beautiful empires of their own.

Theme and Mood

To the Strongest straddles 323 BCE, across the decline and death of Alexander the Great. Its subject is his half-consolidated Empire. Alexander promoted unity in a mixed culture: a melting pot stirred with a bloody blade. Thus, our theme of **unity and division** describes how the Empire's death spasms throw Hellenistic traditions far and wide, shaping the region for centuries to come.

Awakened witches and philosophers will use this era to finish the work of eons, binding divided practices into a new art of high sorcery. For now, their work is only half-finished; the diaspora's branches have grown long, but the wielders of those branches do not yet realize they spring from one tree. The Empire brings them together, and sets the example of people brought together by conquest. Driven by whispers from beyond Tartarus, more than a few sorcerers would follow Alexander's footsteps to some half-revealed throne, wielding a kingly scepter and godly thunderbolt. Other sages dream as grandly, but with a different aim: Ascend to the supreme secrets of native sorcery and alien cults alike. Our mood of **ambition unleashed** captures both sorts of desires.

An Iron Age

Pentacle mages in the 21st century uphold a supposedly eternal tradition, but its immortality is only a fact in the most abstract sense: an essence that remains as names and values change. Modern Awakened rarely believe that mages in the distant past used the same rituals as they do now, and only a few fanatics, ranting with evidence-proof fervor, say that Atlantis was a historical place in the usual sense. Magic obscures the facts, and sensible archeology sets limits of what could exist in the first place. If the primitive historical view was correct, even Sleepers

would know it. A modern mage transported over two and a quarter millennia back probably wouldn't be surprised that her Hellenistic forebears believe Atlantis is a philosophical exercise, or even that there aren't formal Orders, but schools of similar occult philosophies instead.

She might be more surprised that magic isn't a high art, but a low one, practiced by heretical philosophers and shifty hermits. Alexander starts changing that, but it takes a few more generations for magic to grow into a "wisdom tradition." Warriors start the process by studying philosophers — they can't have Aristotle, so they look for the next best thing. Alexander's Empire exposes people to new ideas from once inaccessible places, but also exposes the common patterns in all ideas.

Beliefs and Darshanas

Behind it all, Creation hums with secret music. Through ecstatic prayer, esoteric logic, and deep meditation, sorcerers adopt certain beliefs in common — and strangely, these doctrines transcend their adherents' cultures. Awakened don't form the Orders known to their descendants, but adopt **darshanas**: belief systems common to many lands. An Asian sorcerer would recognize a Greek following the same darshana, as long as they took the time to speak and translate certain metaphysical concepts. Future generations will examine the darshanas and common legendry, and say they hail from a Time Before's castes and customs — and who knows if they're right? For now, sorcerers recognize their similarities, and ascribe it to knowing eternal, universal truths.

These philosophies reveal themselves to sorcerers from all lands, though they achieve the most formal recognition in the East, from whence they acquire their most commonly used names:

Jnanashakti, the school of wisdom. Practitioners look inside themselves at consciousness' inner worlds but also study the five elements, living things, and the magic that flows among them all. In Greece and parts of Asia, the school is called the **Gnostikon**.

Mahanizrayani, the school of the great ladder, declares that humans are the most blessed beings in all worlds because they can travel to any realm in a single life. Deeds and magical desire can make them demons, beasts, gods, or ghosts. Practitioners take their lead from the institutional priesthoods of many cultures. Western devotees speak of the great ladder, but call themselves the **Omphalos**, which they say is no stone at Delphi, but a mighty rock in the Astral Realms.

Samashti, the school of totality or the supreme end. Adherents cannot attain salvation until the universe does, so all personal moral striving is irrelevant — everything is corrupt, but some things work toward universal liberation. Any act that does so, no matter how offensive to ordinary morals, is permissible. Greek-speaking sorcerers speak of a sect of "guardians" or **Phulakeion**.

Vajrastra, the school of the **Adamantine Arrow** or thunderbolt, finds enlightenment in violent struggle. It's a faith of storm gods and heroes, favored by military-minded sorcerers from many societies.

Hidden Thrones and Chasms

The Abyss exists in Alexander's time. The Exarchs are as real as they've been through any age after the Fall. Nevertheless, in this era, the Awakened focus on them less than they will in centuries to come. Initiates of the Arcadian Mysteries (see below) know the Olympians made the world a flawed, shadowy place that hides Forms from the unenlightened. They struggle against gods, not ancient sorcerers — though in some interpretations, the "gods" are not completely inhuman, and are the ancestors of kings. Persian sorcerers know that Babylonian Baalim summon entities from the Abyss, and Indians understand both the *Asuras* that stand between sages and the Realm of Forms, and the *Narakas* of their madness and moral failings. Egyptian scrolls describe *Bakhu*, the mountain of night where Apep dwells.

All of these concepts describe Awakened secrets, but sorcerers from different lands haven't combined them into "universal" ideas. They clash over territory, Hallows, and secrets, more often than they strive against these great enemies. After Alexander dies, the Hellenistic Age helps mages share ideas. For perhaps the first time since the Fall, the Exarchs fear collective Awakened might — and in seeming response, nurture the first true Seers of the Throne, tempting the Tyrannoi into what modern Awakened remember as the first Ministry. For now, the gods watch and sometimes punish, but their agents are individuals and small circles, not grand organizations.

Nations and Cults

Mages who Awaken near Alexander's time not only wrestle with changes to the social role of magic, but to their identities as citizens. Greek grandparents remember that before they were Hellenes, they belonged to proud city states. Now Athens is just another city in the Empire, and Sparta is a museum to its former glory, filled with strutting, ineffectual warriors. Like Sleepers, sorcerers embraced broader identities as Greeks or Persians. Great cults cover these categories, teaching occult metaphysics from their respective cultures' points of view — and, for the most part, barring foreigners from their territories and secrets. Where darshanas represent archetypal magical belief systems, cults give them mythic particulars: gods, cosmologies, and legendary histories.

The **Arcadian Mysteries** or *Pelasgians* claim descent from the most ancient peoples of Greece, who ruled before giants raised now-ruined walls and wrote indecipherable characters on clay. Until recently, Arcadian cultists were usually low-born

folk magicians. They recently repaired their reputations by becoming philosophers, adapting cultic lore to Plato's metaphysics. These sorcerer-sophists call themselves *Atlanteans*, and say that as philosopher kings, they'll herd people toward a new Golden Age. *Tyrannoi* would rather rule the world as it is, through divine allies and earthly conquests.

Outsiders call **Karpani** *Magi*, but a "magus" is a Zoroastrian priest who guides lives toward Ahura Mazda. Karpani belong to an older tradition of poets and singers who could brighten or defile with magical speech. Until Alexander took the Persian Empire, the Karpani were content to act quietly, but when his soldiers scattered the priestly magi, the Karpani were forced to take their place.

The **Mantra Sadhaki** (informally, the *Mantrikis*) claim to carry on the culture of the Naga Kingdom, greatest of the demigod-peoples of old. Most Mantrikis are *Sannyasi*: ascetics who wander between temples and reject caste. As increasing numbers return to the world of kings and commerce, the cult may take a more active role in Sleeper affairs.

Newly arisen from Persian oppression, the **Weret-Hekau** ("great of magic") would revive traditional Egyptian religion, culture, and adherence to *Ma'at*, cosmic law. Blood-chilling powers lie buried in Egypt's sands, and only *Hemka*, priests who cultivate the *Ka*-soul, remember them and know the rites to keep them from arising once more. Their tradition is personified as the goddess of the same name, but they honor gods from the many dynasties of Egypt.

Awakened Demographics

To contrast the modern, degenerate age with a supposedly magic-drenched past, some mages say Awakenings have decreased over time. They're *almost* right. Although many more mages per capita inhabit Alexander's age than the 21st century, this hasn't created an era of myths made real. The average person is unlikely to ever witness an indisputable act of magic. The truth is that even though there's a higher proportion of Awakened to Sleepers than there will be in the future, that's out of a total world population of anywhere from 150 million to 231 million people. 40 million might live within Alexander's Empire.

Despite this modest-seeming (though by ancient standards, teeming) populace, enough sorcerers hide in the fold to form hierarchies around cities, temples, and trade routes, with enough left over to claim caves and rude hermitages in the places between them. Some of these witches might know a primitive trick or two without being Awakened, but fewer know the non-language of the Oracles that marks those roused from slumber into the plots of the gods.

Alexander's time is also notable as the last gasp of heroic heritage. Centuries ago, Greece's kingdoms were conquered by *Heraclidae*, descendants of Herakles who led the Dorians to conquer Peloponnesus. Now the last Heraclids are kings of Sparta, as insular and powerless as the phalanxes that defend them. Many families claim descent from Jason, Odysseus, or Telamon. Arcadian cults track these heroic dynasties (future mages will call them "Proximi"), monitor their offspring for magical ability, and take them under wing; but a few strike out on their own and, for a while, common people witness the power and flaws of ancient heroes.

Alexander: Mage, Hero, or Mere Mortal?

This talk of sorcerers, heroes, gods, and trembling mortals begs the question: Was Alexander himself anything other than a Sleeper? Alexander's mother Olympias supposedly said his true father was Zeus. Alexander sometimes accepted a semi-divine portrayal, but that's a matter of politics, not metaphysics. Could he have been a sorcerer? He won his Empire through military genius and fighting skill, not curses and astrology. He was an intellectual whose studies with Aristotle focused on reason, not magical tricks. *To the Strongest* assumes that Alexander was Great for a man unencumbered by a divine heritage, Awakened soul, or heroic lineage. He was just a man — and he died like one, from an undignified disease and, perhaps, a wounded spirit.

In your chronicle, the truth depends on how you want to portray the man and his age. If this is the last gasp of the old gods, perhaps he *is* the son of Zeus, or has Herakles' blood flowing through his veins. Alexander dies as the last mythic hero. On the other hand, he could Awaken through philosophical study and, as a sorcerer, create his Empire through subtle coincidences. Instead of the last hero, Awakened Alexander is the first modern man, wielding knowledge and the sword together. The world can't withstand the changes he means to bring about, so he dies, despairing of an Atlantis he could have made real.

What Has Come Before

Alexander is uneasy in peace but rules confidently, as he was trained to by his royal family. His father, Philip, prepared his first throne for him, for Alexander succeeded him as Hegemon of Greece (though the Spartans maintained an independent state). Perhaps his secret was to rule as if he has *always* ruled, or was the king his subjects were waiting for, whether they knew it or not. He maintained much of the Persian bureaucracy, adding his head to the intact body of the state. The Egyptians welcomed him as a liberator from Persian rule, and he allowed them to maintain their religion and local customs, importing Greek culture by founding Egypt's Alexandria (one of many cities to bear the name).

Alexander was not always gentle, and never simply eased into power. He conquered. He scattered the Zoroastrian priesthood. When his strategies failed to win him an easy victory in the Siege of Tyre, he massacred 8,000 people and sold 20,000 more into slavery. After these convulsions, average

Ages of Humanity

Most Greek sorcerers believe in the Hesiodic theory of ages, below.

Golden Age: Humans and gods freely mingled. All humans were Awakened, with magical *daemons* inhabiting perfect bodies. Mages believe this was a world where the Shadow, Astral, and material planes were one realm. This ended with the Titanomachy, when Zeus overthrew Cronus.

Silver Age: Humans lived in childlike ignorance, lulled to Sleep by the gods. When they rebelled, Zeus destroyed them, but their wild souls became spirits in the Shadow.

Bronze Age: People in this time are said to be "bronze-clad" as a comment upon their inventiveness and violence. They lived in armored houses, wielded sharp weapons, and possessed minds and bodies honed for conflict. The Pelasgians reigned in Arcadia until Lycaeon served his own son as an offering to Zeus. The king of the gods obliterated the royal family and sent a flood to swallow the world. The spirits of this age were consigned to deepest Hades, and never permitted to walk the world as ghosts. Arcadian mages believe themselves heirs of the Bronze Age.

Heroic Age: In this, the age of Troy and the Argonauts, heroes soared close to Golden Age virtue. They walked with gods and demigods, and founded all human nations before passing into Elysium. This age ended when the gods permitted heroes whom the gods had cursed for impiety to return from their adventures, their former powers diminished.

Iron Age: The current age.

Indian sorcerers mark similar ages through Vedic *Yugas* that last approximately 12,000 years each.

Satya Yuga: The godlike humans of this age lived for 100,000 years. Toil was unknown, because these naturally Ascended people acquired anything they wished through will alone.

Treta Yuga: The first flaws entered the human spirit, but humans still possessed tremendous power and innate Awakening. The gods sent avatars to protect the world, especially when Ravana, king of demons, conquered existence. Vishnu incarnated as Rama to liberate the world.

Dwapar Yuga: Indian sorcerers claim a special knowledge of this age, the time of the *Mahabharata*. Men and women in this age had to strive to Awaken, but those who did possessed legendary powers, prompting the gods to entrust them with moral teachings for the age to come. People were as ambitious as they were mighty, however; their battles built culture, but annihilated their own greatness.

Kali Yuga: The current age, where immorality reigns, and humans cannot Awaken without exceptional effort.

With histories connected to mighty, ancient empires, Egyptians and Persians typically reckon time by dynasty, including the reigns of mythical rulers. Weret-Hekau lore records the reign of "scorpion kings" over 3,000 years ago, and Karpani know that before Zoroaster brought the fire of truth, Assyrians, Babylonians, and the half-devil Ki-En-Gir people reigned. Egyptians regard their nation as the mortal face of an eternal cosmos, but the Karpani believe that in the future, the powers of truth and deception will commit to a final struggle, spawning messiahs and witch-kings. Prophecy places this two millennia or more in the future, but Zoroaster warned that this time will pass swiftly, and the devout must prepare. Even half-blasphemous Karpani worry about the final age, especially after Alexander's epoch-breaking entrance.

people lived as they had under Darius and other rulers, but gained more exposure to other cultures. They learned that men and women like them lived in distant realms, with the same pains and joys.

Beyond core territories, Alexander often gave enemies more freedom to dictate surrender terms. In defeat, Porus of India demanded to be treated "like a king." Alexander made him a regent. He didn't extend these privileges to enemy foot soldiers, however. The Kambojas fought fiercely, and Alexander leveled their cities and put the survivors in chains.

Alexander rarely restricted religious practices, so his conquests exposed diverse faiths and philosophies to each other. Greeks often identified local gods as variations of their own, but also acknowledged that there were gods unknown to them. They naturally retold and mixed up legends as they heard them. Gods adapted and transformed, and so did their rites — and the sorcery that channels divine power. Ideas flowed alongside exotic goods and Macedonian phalanxes.



Timeline

480–479 BCE: The battles of Salamis and Plataea defeat the Persian Empire's invasion force. The Empire never again attempts to invade the Greek mainland, and maintains a strong separation between Greek and Asian civilizations. Greek sorcerers make violent contact with more organized, literate Persian counterparts. Buoyed by the victory it led, Athens creates the Delian League to defend against future invasions.

469–399 BCE: Life of Socrates. Known primarily through Plato's works, Socrates develops a dialectical teaching method that challenges popular ideas and the thinking of the pre-Socratic sophists. Charged with corrupting youth and impiety, Socrates refuses the opportunity to flee and commits suicide, carrying out his own execution.

431–404 BCE: The Peloponnesian War pits the Spartan-led Peloponnesian League against a Delian League that has evolved into an Athens-dominated Empire. Both sides descend to brutal, total war until, besieged, Athens surrenders. Athens spends a year under the Thirty Tyrants, a Spartan-installed puppet regime, until restoring democracy. Athens never regains its former power, and even Sparta is too exhausted by the war to maintain the spoils of victory.

425–336 BCE: Artaxerxes III becomes the emperor of Persia after the brothers ahead of him are executed, commit suicide, and are murdered, respectively. He kills his 80 closest relatives to secure the throne. In 338 BCE, his vizier Bagoas poisons him, and has his sons murdered. Artaxerxes IV is left alive to act as Bagoas' puppet ruler, until the vizier poisons him as well.

371–362 BCE: Theban and Boeotian troops crush the Spartans at the Battle of Leuctra, establishing the Theban Hegemony, but the putative Empire collapses after the Battle of Mantineia. The Theban army defeats an alliance of Spartan and Athenian soldiers, but loses its king, Epaminondas. After that, the Theban influence dwindles as Macedon's rises.

360 BCE: In the dialogues of *Timaeus* and *Critias*, Plato describes Atlantis as a philosophical exercise. Some Greek Awakened subsequently adopt the name to share their legends of the Hesiodic Bronze Age and associated philosophies.

356 BCE: Birth of Alexander III, the Great, to Philip II of Macedon and Olympias. Alexander is trained as a warrior and philosopher from an early age. His principal non-military teacher is Aristotle, the preeminent student of Plato.

339–338 BCE: Philip conquers most of Greece. Only Sparta maintains independence, and it's a shadow of its former self. At the Battle of Chaeronaea in 338 BCE, Philip defeats the Athenian and Theban armies and asserts hegemonic rule. The arrangement is formalized in treaties, creating a combined Greek force for Philip's planned war with Persia.

336 BCE: Philip is assassinated by his bodyguard. Alexander inherits Macedon and hegemony over the Greeks. After a period of exile and intrigues within his household, he continues his father's plans for the conquest of Persia.

In Persia, Darius III becomes emperor. Bagoas selects this cousin of the imperial line as a puppet to replace Artaxerxes IV. Darius resists his vizier's manipulations. When Bagoas tries to kill Darius that year, Darius forces the vizier to drink his own poison.

331 BCE: Years of war with Persia and its satellites culminate in the Battle of Gaugamela. Alexander's tactics allow him to defeat a numerically superior Persian force led by Darius. This defeat leads to the conquest of Persia. Darius' satraps murder him during their retreat, leaving his body for Alexander to find. Alexander buries it with honors after he enters Babylon in October. At this point, he has effectively conquered Persia.

329–326 BCE: Alexander leads his armies east to consolidate Persian territories and expand farther, as far as Scythia and Bactria. He marries a local princess, Roxana, but fails to establish more than a superficial rule. He presses on to India, where his increasingly agitated generals preside over several massacres. After defeating Porus and obtaining his submission, Alexander's generals revolt and refuse to follow him farther east. Alexander's Asian conquests end astride the Ganges, at the foot of the Himalayas. He relents; they march back.

Cultures of the Empire

Alexander demands submission, not cultural conformity. This occasionally puts him in an awkward position, such as when Greek subjects criticize the ritual gestures of submission due to the Persian king of kings. He encourages subordinates to adopt local customs and, like him, synthesize the familiar and foreign into a new culture: Greek-speaking, but with Asian and Egyptian influences. This Hellenistic culture will outlast Alexander, shaping societies from Italy to the Hindu Kush, but his Empire's constituent nations have just begun to merge. Their languages number in the hundreds and their gods in the thousands, but under common conquest the following cultures draw inspiration from each other.

Greeks: Alexander inherited his father's League of Corinth, which united most of Greece's city states under Macedonian hegemony a generation ago. Sparta remains independent and technically unconquered, but politically irrelevant. For the first time, being Greek means being *part* of a nation, not the whole. Furthermore, Greek identity is portable. Alexander's soldiers take it with them in conquest. Greek traders and immigrants follow, until one can find Greeks from all walks of life in any place where Alexander has ruled for more than a few years. Greek is the language of the ruling class.

Persians: Greeks provide the military core of Alexander's Empire but Persians give it an administrative structure, imperial traditions, and millions of subjects. At its height, the Achaemenid Dynasty ruled perhaps half of the world's people through satrapies, efficiently gathering taxes and moving goods. Alexander preserves as much of this structure as possible, but replaces Persian satraps with Greeks wherever he

can. Alexander maintains the Persian custom of demanding reverence as the *Shahanshah*, or "King of Kings."

Egyptians: Long under the Persian yoke, Egyptians hail Alexander's army as a form of divine intervention, and call him the son of Ammon. Nevertheless, he keeps some Persian institutions to exert political control, filling them with Macedonian stewards. He founds Alexandria in 331 BCE; Greeks join Egyptians to populate the city, but Naucratis still remains the center of the Greek presence in Egypt for some time. Despite their approval of Alexander's conquest of the Persians, many Egyptians resent foreign rule on general principle. They especially wish to maintain a culture that stretches back to before recorded history. The Pharaohs are gone, but Egyptians still honor deities such as Osiris and Anubis. Greek rulers identify them with their own gods. After Alexander's death, they'll create combined gods like Serapis to unify the religions.

Jews: As unwilling subjects of the Persian Empire, the Jews greet Alexander's arrival with ambivalence. According to rumor, Alexander personally assured High Priest Simon the Just that the Jews will govern themselves as they have since Cyrus ended the Babylonian Captivity. Many live in communities outside Palestine, however, and add Greek culture to their own. The Jews of Alexandria grow into an influential, culturally distinct community.

Asians and Indians: As Alexander's armies strike eastward they encounter peoples who were scarcely ruled by Persia or who maintained their independence. In Bactria he marries a local aristocrat, Roxana. Curiously, many Bactrians already speak Greek and maintain Greek customs, because the Persians exiled Greek-speaking North Africans here before Alexander arrived. These chaotic culture mixtures are the rule until one reaches India itself, whose people belong to dozens of independent kingdoms but keep common traditions based on the holy Vedas and philosophical movements. Indians and other Asians travel throughout the Empire. Greeks call their ascetics *gymnosophists* ("naked sages"), but also encounter less flamboyant traders and soldiers.

Magic and the Supernatural

Before Alexander, the Greeks saw magic as a low practice designed to force the gods' hands. Sorcerers were believed to combine deception, madness, and real, dangerous power to various degrees. People went to them for love, prophecies, and success earned through secret forces, but not enlightenment. A professional witch was a myth-teller, performer, and wrangler of superstitions.

The most famous sorcerer is Orpheus, the great charmer, who almost conquered death for love. Other ancient poets, heroes, and philosophers were said to possess magical abilities, and though many disbelieve, just as many take the living oracles seriously. As products of virtue, wisdom, or divine favor, poets and philosophers possess less sinister connotations, though heroes tend to come to bad ends.

It's hard to define a typical subject of Alexander, but most of the major cultures believe that mad gods, monsters, and warring heroes have faded from the world. Many Greeks live near ruins, and Indians sing of old battles. The giants are gone, but people believe in unusual animals like the *martyax-war*, a great cat that shoots spines from its tail (and will one day be called a manticore). Many traditions describe hearth spirits, wood nymphs, and other hidden, magical peoples.

Alexander's reign sparks new interest in the magical arts, because folk wisdom and philosophy cross paths across the known world. After he dies, new cults arise, and would-be wizards create countless amulets and papyri. Alexander's assault on Asia exposes the West to Indian and Persian beliefs. His Empire contains countless unknown magical traditions, meeting on the road, at war, or in new cities that bear his name.

Material Culture

Alexander sparks an era of rapid technological advancement, but many of the results won't make themselves known until after his death. Most of the kingdoms under his command work iron confidently, but in a hundred years they'll use water wheels and pneumatic systems, and develop intricate gears for automata and even simple computers. While Alexander lives, prodigies might develop such devices, but no evidence remains. Thinkers and makers meet in places like Alexandria to exchange ideas, presaging the great library that will rise after Alexander's death to record their innovations. This is a time when strict divisions among practical crafts, philosophy, and natural science don't exist, so strange theories inspire many technologies.

Economics

Throughout the Empire, common people barter with their neighbors to get whatever they can't produce themselves. They're usually free or semi-free tenant farmers who deal exclusively in goods they can use. This partly shields them from the sharp inflation that follows Alexander's conquests. Pillage releases large amounts of gold and silver into circulation. Prices soar wherever soldiers seem likely to spend their loot.

Coinage

Alexander's mints make coins that conform to Greek standards, but Persian currency still circulates. Traders judge coins by weight and purity, favoring Persian coins for their unadulterated metal.

Military Technology

Alexander's army employs the Macedonian *phalanx*: a tight formation of soldiers using long spears. Philip of Macedon changed the typical phalanx by equipping it with *sarissas*, spears five to seven yards long that gave the soldiers a reach advantage over other units. The phalanx provides the decisive, crushing blow in engagements, supported by

Coinage

Coin/Measure	Weight (Oz.)	Resources Rating	Equivalent	Notes
Talent (Greek)	900 silver	• • • •	60 minas	Measure used for trade and tribute.
Mina (Greek)	15 silver	• • •	100 drachmas	3 minas for a typical slave.
Daric (Persian)	0.3 gold	• •	20 sigloi or 25 drachmas.	–
Siglos (Persian)	0.2 silver	•	7.5 oboli.	–
Drachma (Greek)	0.15 silver	•	6 oboli	A day's wages for a skilled worker
Obol (Greek)	0.025 silver	–	8 copper chalkoi	A *chous* (about ¾ gallon) of wine
Chalkos (Greek)	0.2 silver –	–	A meal.	

cavalry and javelin-wielding *peltast* skirmishers. Despite the lack of stirrups, mounted soldiers use bows, lances, javelin, and *makhaira* (a category of chopping swords that includes the kopis) without falling from their mounts. Chariots take the field as well, as platforms for archers, spearmen, and javelin-throwers, but aren't considered to be effective except as a psychological tactic against primitive enemies.

Soldiers use weapons made of iron, and armor made of thick linen and, for heavy troops, bronze plates. In addition to ordinary bows (often compound bows made of wood and horn) a few archers use the *gastraphetes*, a crossbow they cock with both hands, bracing it against their bellies. Alexander's army uses a larger version called the *oxybeles* in siege warfare.

War Elephants

Alexander and his enemies both employed Asian elephants as mobile platforms for archers and other ranged-weapon wielders. An elephant can also run up to 30 miles per hour in a devastating charge. However, an elephant's intelligence is a hindrance, driving it to act unpredictably; a panicked elephant is a danger to both sides of a battle.

Elephants are exceptional creatures, and use the following special rules.

The High Seat

A fully grown war elephant's back provides a stable platform for up to four people (though two is preferable) to loose bows, throw javelins, and stab enemies with long spears. This provides moving "high ground" and an unobstructed view, granting a +1 die bonus to attack pools, and penalizing most close-combat attacks against passengers (a –2 dice penalty). An additional *mahout* (rider-trainer) sits just behind the elephant's head, directing it.

Matters of Size

Bulky Creature: War elephants are faster than they look, but compared to humans, issue more force due to mass than acceleration. Smaller targets find it easier to get out of the way, but can still be killed by an errant blow. If an elephant attacks a target of Size 7 or less, it suffers a –5 penalty to its attack dice pool. If the attack hits anyway, add 3 levels of bashing damage. While an elephant has a Defense score, it may only employ it to defend against targeted attacks aimed at its head or legs, unless the attacker's Size is 8 or higher.

Mass Slam: An elephant may inflict trample attacks upon multiple adjacent targets with a combined Size 15. Roll its dice pool separately for each target, but count it as only one attack.

Natural Armor: Adult elephants have exceptionally tough, 1-inch-thick skin, providing natural 2/1 (general/ballistic) armor.

Crush Underfoot: If a target of Size 7 or less can't or won't get out of the way, add a +5 dice bonus to the elephant's attack as it crushes targets underfoot. The elephant also inflicts lethal damage. This stacks with the Bulky Creature rule, above, for a total of no attack penalty, with 3 levels of damage (all lethal) added to any successful attack.

Trunk: A mature war elephant's trunk possesses a Strength score of 4 and can be used to batter or grapple opponents before crushing or goring them. The trunk is *not* subject to the "Bulky Creature" system, above. The trunk inflicts bashing damage.

Morale Effects

War elephants frighten unprepared troops. Whenever a creature that's Size 7 or less (typically humans, horses, and dogs) sees it attack another living thing or is approached with aggressive intent, roll that creature's Resolve + Composure. If a creature actually endures direct attack by a war elephant (not its passengers), the Resolve + Composure roll is opposed by the elephant's Presence + Intimidation roll.

If an animal has a handler or rider nearby, roll the higher of the animal's Resolve + Composure or the human's Presence + Animal Ken dice pools.

If the roll fails, the frightened creature suffers the Shaken Condition related to any action where the victim might attack, approach, or potentially antagonize the elephant.

Elephant Behavior

An elephant's intelligence makes it hard to predict, and liable to ignore its mahout's commands. Situations that might spark unpredictable behavior include abuse, males entering

musth (a periodic cycle of sexual arousal and aggression), harm to a familiar human or animal (including the mahout), suffering aggravated damage, or a reminder of past trauma.

If any of these arise, the Storyteller may choose to roll the elephant's Resolve + Composure. If the roll fails, the elephant either flees or attacks the source of its stress.

Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 2, Resolve 3, Strength 9, Dexterity 2, Stamina 7, Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Skills: Athletics (Running) 2, Brawl 3 (Tusks), Intimidation 3, Survival 3

Willpower: 6

Initiative: 5

Defense: 4

Speed: 15 (species factor 6)

Size: 15

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Tusk*	+1L	13
Trample*/**	+3B	12

Armor: 2/1 (Natural Armor) or 4/1 (Elephant War Armor; –1 Dex, –1 Defense)

Health: 22

* Unmodified, base dice pool, but see rules on **p. 74**. –5 to dice pools but +3 damage against opponents of Size 7 or less.

** +5 dice against opponents that might be crushed underfoot as per **p. 74**.



What Will Come

Alexander's conquests spread Greek culture and bring about the Hellenistic period. Egypt, Persia and even northwest India are inundated with Greek philosophy and culture. It mixes with the practices of many nations, spawning new gods and traditions. Greek becomes the best language for travelers.

Later, as Rome seizes territory, the Kingdom of Pergamon allies itself with the rising power and becomes one of its major supporters. Rome takes over the Seleucid Empire with their help, and soon the Roman Empire conquers many of Alexander's successors, from Greece and Ptolemaic Egypt to Mesopotamia.

Timeline

326–324 BCE: Alexander takes a route through the deserts to return to Macedonia. On his way, he takes wounds in a fight with the fierce Malli, to the point that his army believes him dead. He miraculously recovers, and leads the



Arms and Armor From Alexander's Age

Ranged Weapons

Type	Damage	Ranges	Capacity	Strength	Size	Availability
Compound Bow	Strength	*	1	As built	User's Size –1	••
Gastraphetes (Belly Crossbow)	3	50/100/200	1	3	2/N	•••
Javelin	2	Aerodynamic Thrown	1	2	2/N	•

* 4x the user's Strength + Size + Archery

Close Combat Weapons

Type	Damage	Initiative	Strength	Size	Availability	Special
Makhaira (Kopis and other Chopping Swords)	2	–2	2	1	••	9 again in targeted attacks.
Sarissa (Long Spear)	3	–2	3	5	••••	+1 Defense, or +2 Defense vs. shorter pole arms.
Xiphos (Stabbing Sword)	1	–1	1	1	••	

Armor

Type	Rating	Strength	Defense	Speed	Availability
Linothorax (Linen Armor)	1/0	2	–1	•	
Thorax (Bronze Armor)	3/1	3	–1	–2	•••
Hoplon/Apsis (Large Shield)	*	3	+2	0	••

* A shield adds the listed bonus to Defense. This shield also applies a –1 penalty to incoming ranged attacks.

group onward home. The trip sees many of his men die of dehydration, starvation, and fatigue.

324 BCE: Alexander returns to Persia to find that his satraps have been misbehaving in his absence. He executes several to make an example. While there, he attempts to create lasting relations between the Macedonian and Persian people, marrying his officers to Persian noblewomen. An Indian sage pledged to his service commits suicide by self-immolation, after prophesying that he will meet Alexander again, "in Babylon."

That year, Alexander's lover Hephaestion — a man he once ritually made Patroclus to his Achilles — dies after a period of illness. Consumed with grief, Alexander exhibits increasingly erratic behavior.

323 BCE: Alexander's route home to Babylon falls on ill omens. Chaldean mystics warn him not to enter from the west lest he face the setting sun, a symbol of decline. He instead approaches from the east, through ill-favored marshy terrain.

In late May, Alexander becomes ill and remains sick for 14 days. On the 15th day, he makes what seems a miraculous recovery before suddenly dying hours later. The cause of his death is shrouded in mystery, and even his physicians cannot explain his illness, sparking rumors of assassination and poisoning. Alexander's orders for inheritance are for "the strongest" to take over; yet just before death, he hands his signet ring to his bodyguard, Perdiccas. This leads to confusion about succession and a shaky resolution naming both Alexander's half-brother Philip III, and his son Alexander IV, as king.

323–321 BCE: With the Empire in contention, Alexander's conquests continue to cause mingling between the East and West, spreading Greek influence and beginning both the Hellenization of Persia and lands to the East, and the Orientalization of Western lands. Greek and Persian mages travel to India, finding strange traditions and mysterious lands as they do.

321 BCE: The unstable unity in Macedon collapses with the assassination of Perdiccas. A war breaks out between the generals and nobles that history will call *Diadochi* (literally "successors"), and rages for the next 40 years. The Empire eventually settles into four major power bases: the Ptolemaic Kingdom in Egypt, the Seleucid Empire in the east, the Kingdom of Pergamon in Asia Minor, and Macedon.

320 BCE and beyond: With Alexander's death, his satraps in the east return to Macedon, weakening the Greek influence in India. Chandragupta Maurya takes advantage of the power vacuum and conquers northwest India, creating the Maurya Empire, one of the largest and most influential Empires in India. The long-lasting effect of the spread of Greek culture into Asia begins the Hellenistic period.

The Magical World

The meeting of Greek, Egyptian, Indian, and Persian cultures leads to intermingling of Awakened sorcerers from many different backgrounds. Pelasgians travel with Alexander's army both in support of his conquest, and as adventurers seeking out the mysteries of the eastern world. The Karpani are forced to come out of hiding and interact with the Awakened society. Mantrikis travel west to study their new brethren, and Weret-Hekau come forth to defend Egypt's traditions. As sorcerers travel across the world in the wake of Alexander's Empire, the Awakened combine their cultures and political might. Some dream of an Awakened Empire that stretches across the known world. This idea appeals greatly to the Tyrannoi faction of Greek magi. Some of them take up the name of Diadochi, style themselves the true successors of Alexander's empire, and declare the divine right to rule the universe.

The Way of Oracles and Furies

You live in a forward-looking age. Sleepers and sorcerers alike combine ancient wisdom with innovations. They mix the familiar and foreign.

You live in a blood-laced age, where conquerors justify themselves with exotic philosophies and modified religions. In Babylon, a Macedonian warlord fancies himself a philosopher, and accepts worship as a god.

You've Awakened to high magic. You unify witchcraft and philosophy, and can navigate the contradictions of this age. You see the secret patterns; you hear the meaning of mad sibyls' chants.

Witchcraft, Religion, and Philosophy

Even in this time, total belief in the supernatural is the domain of a fanatical few. Many are skeptical; most are cautious. Before Alexander, the prevailing view treats magic as a folk perversion of religion: ignorant chants and country myths to fool the gullible. The only parts that work are probably dangerous.

Urban centers and holy sites host an orthodox priesthood that usually doesn't make exuberant claims about its powers. Greeks tolerate a spectrum of opinions about the nature of the gods, but religion is ultimately a system of tribal belonging. Egyptian magic belongs to the gods, and the greatest magic they share is literacy — the scribe heals thousands when he records the cures for snake bites. Zoroastrian priests exhort followers to live pure, truthful lives that participate in the divine intelligence of Ahura Mazda. In India, priests remind people of their dharma. Religion isn't a modular part of one's identity, but part of the basic fabric of society. To belong, you perform the rites.

Then we have the philosophers. Pythagoras was said to be able to remember other lives and take on a golden, divine aspect. Empedocles controlled storms and did not die, but ascended from this strife-torn world. Asian sages speak of *siddhi*, "attainments," achieved through sufficient spiritual awareness. The further back in time these thinkers lived, the greater their reputed powers — a fact that arouses doubt. But even though philosophers closer to living memory make less spectacular claims, they share mystical ideas, sometimes with a favored few. Plato and Xenophon both hint at a mystical side to Socrates' teachings — one that might have been the true cause of his trial and execution.

Witchcraft, faith, and philosophy contribute to the common view of magic. Secret practices connect these perspectives in small communities. Greek mystery religions worship the Great Goddess, Orpheus, and other chthonic figures. Asian mystics renounce the world to contemplate secret teachings.

Then Alexander forces Asians, Persians, Africans, and Greeks to pay common tribute. He entertains their thinkers and leaves offerings at their shrines. Witches meet foreign soldiers on the road and sell them charms. Indian mystics share philosophies and supernatural visions with Alexander and his generals. They mix and mash together gods on the road, and initiates of the Mysteries discover that their lore isn't so mysterious after all. Once confined to the edges of orthodoxy, magic seeps back into common discourse.

Some would-be sorcerers are wise in an ordinary way, disciplined and learned. Many are charlatans. But a few are true miracle workers who see the future, hiss curses, or claim superhuman excellence from a divine bloodline. They reshape the Earth — but only the Earth. Only a few are true prodigies who seize power from beyond Chaos, in realms where the titans shudder and the gods harvest celestial might. They are Awakened.



The Sibyl's Tongue (Persistent Condition)

During Alexander's time, the Sibyl's Tongue is a common Condition among non-Awakened beings with supernatural perceptions. Under its influence, characters may only communicate what they learn through personal supernatural perceptions by speaking in the High Speech — but they cannot understand it. For them, it takes the form of glossolalia, but the Awakened understand the meaning.

A player with the Condition can spend a Willpower point to share information in the form of a riddle or allegory instead — write the verses down and run them by the Storyteller for approval. The end result should be something guessable, but not obvious.

Resolution: Acquire a supernatural template.

Beat: Despite the character's wishes, the Condition delays others' understanding for a scene or longer.

Forms of Magic

The era of *To the Strongest* supports many workers of magic, and many more frauds. Some real sorcerers pretend to be charlatans to avoid attention, and some ordinary tricksters stumble into texts, rites, and relics that possess real power.

Hearth Witches

These Sleepers know where to find magic, but can't invoke it in their souls. A hearth witch might own working amulets and other relics, harvest rare supernatural plants like Hermes' *moly*, or know a "spell" that contains power because of the entities that heed it, not any energy contained in the incantation itself. For example, Odysseus knew that by filling a trench with blood in a certain ritual, shades would drink and speak to him.

Anyone can become a hearth witch, but it's a dangerous profession to study in depth, because virtually all hearth methods contain curses or other detrimental effects.

Traits: Hearth witches are Sleepers with access to magical items or some way to exert non-supernatural social influence over a ghost, spirit, or other supernatural being. The ones who survive their first "spells" almost always possess dots in the Occult Skill.

Petty Seers and Sorcerers

Some Sleepers stir restlessly, and gain a small set of powers. They see invisible forces or summon petty curses due to arduous training, initiations, or an inborn quirk. These same factors tend to weaken their sanity, or at least their appreciation for social norms. Many act as country witches, mystery priests, or wilderness hermits. A few scholars, alchemists, and artisans enchant one or two items as life's masterworks, or discover some semi-reliable way to command a supernatural being.

Traits: Petty magicians possess a few Supernatural Merits such as Unseen Sense. Most cannot acquire new supernatural abilities, but may supplement what they know with relics and hearth rituals.

Of Mythic Blood

Though all are many generations removed from ancestor gods and holy families, a few people manifest the noble qualities called *Arya* or *Arete* by birth, not effort.

Traits: Children of gods and ancient sages may possess one or two Supernatural Merits, and cannot learn others. The strongest are called *Eugenes* ("of noble birth"). They're Proximi as per **Mage: The Awakening Second Edition**. The Myrmidons (p. 110) possess this background.

The Awakened

Great sorcerers behold piercing radiance beyond the cave of ignorance. Its light banishes the divide between witch, philosopher, and priest. In Alexander's time, Atlantis is Plato's allegory — just ask his still-living pupils. There's no Diamond preserving a prehistory, but a handful of cults, grasping at the truth of the Time Before Time like blind men describing an elephant — or taming a dragon.

Before Awakening, these sorcerers might belong to any of the other categories, or none. While occult studies and mystic awareness seem to make Awakening more likely, some of these mighty sorcerers rise to their stations despite being the sons and daughters of anonymous peasants, unable to read or write. Yet they all partake of the power.

Oracular Awakening

What does it mean to be an Awakened sorcerer? Most wizards' cults answer the question with similar stories. They say that when one Awakens, she sees past the obscure realm of humans and animals to abodes of gods and abstract forms. She attains a semi-divine nature, or an enlightened aspect parallel to divinity. In Egypt, an adept cultivates the *Akh* that unites desire and spiritual power. Bactrian and Indian sorcerers use the term Awakening (*buddhi*) to describe this state, and occasionally describe the wisest of their kind as *avesa avatars*: beings possessed by divine nature. Persians say virtuous poets possess *khvarenah*, a "shining" nature worthy of worship. Greek Awakened believe they cross the threshold of understanding the unclothed cosmos, including the omens sent by the gods. Thus, they gain oracular powers.

Alexandrian Mage Quick Reference

Creating a mage in Alexander's time is mostly a matter of following the normal rules in **Mage: The Awakening**. The following differences and new names bring the game to this period. Greek is the preferred language, as it was in Alexander's empire.

Mages, Magi: The term "mage" is entirely out of character. The terms "magos" and "magi" are recent Persian imports that would be understood in the proper context by experienced Awakened travelers. Awakened refer to themselves by a variety of other names depending on culture — usually some variant of "sorcerer" or "priest."

Other Terms: Greek mages speak of **Pneuma**, not Mana, and the term enters general use throughout the Empire. Instead of Paradox, many speak of **Nemesis**. They treat High Speech as an enlightened meta-language, not a common heritage from some shadowy first civilization.

Paths: Mages belong to Paths as usual, but overt visions of Watchtowers rarely accompany their Awakenings. They travel to sacred places for magical revelations, or go on inward journeys through the myths they know.

Arcana: The word "Arcana" is Latin. Greek mages master **Archai** (singular, **Arche**).

Orders: Instead of "Orders," sorcerers adhere to one of four **darshanas**, or schools of esoteric philosophy that have spontaneously formed among Awakened of different cultures. These provide rote skills. In addition, Awakened usually belong to a **Cult** from their own culture, which provides additional oblations, Legacy access, and a guiding mythology.

Secret Speech and Sacred Signs

Now that Alexander's Empire makes it easier to travel and compare practices, the Awakened understand better than ever that despite different cultures, they share a basic nature, though each cult believes it has a superior grasp of the underlying metaphysics. Lore that used to require Astral quests, spirits, or Space-twisted strides can be learned from veterans and merchants.

First, Awakened initiates of any of the great cults learn the rudiments of a primal spoken language. Greek sorcerers find themselves able to understand the babbling of genuine oracles at Delphi, Dodona, and elsewhere as if it's their native language — and they hear that frauds are nothing but nonsense. They can speak in tongues to each other, sending hidden messages within the gibberish. Sorcerers who were raised on the Vedas suddenly understand the *Sandhya* or "twilight" Sanskrit that uses metaphors and perfect tones to convey esoteric ideas. Persian Karpani spontaneously understand a similar variant of Avestan. Egyptian magi employ obscure allusions to the stories and natures of their gods. And incredibly, speakers of different variants of the secret language *understand each other*.

As they compare theories, many have come to believe that their secret languages tap into the concept of language itself: its Platonic form, the language of Babel, or the divine utterances in the Egyptian tradition. Cross-cultural groups call it High Speech. During Alexander's time, elder sorcerers attain great fluency in this language, but their students rarely understand it well enough to talk about anything other than magic.

Furthermore, the Awakened learn to inscribe and discern secret signs within their cultures' ritual languages, though some also combine them into geometric diagrams, or artistic depictions of magical concepts. One day mages will reinvent these figures as "Atlantean runes." Again, the Awakened understand foreign manifestations of the written form.

Yantras

As they debated the nature of sorcery, Indian darshanas expanded the word *Yantra*, meaning an occult diagram, to encompass the wide range of circumstances that direct magical power. This usage will survive to the modern era, though not without being discarded and remembered several times. Yantras use the standard rules in **Mage: The Awakening Second Edition**, supplemented by the additional systems herein.

Actions: During this age, sorcerers use concentration, mantras, mudras, and runes. A character's darshana determines his Rote Skills.

Besides simple concentration, mantras are the most common actions used to strengthen spells, and are considered practically mandatory for the Mantra Sadhaki (who are named for them), and the Weret-Hekau, who believe their utterances emulate divine speech. Greek and Persian magi weave High Speech into poetry and oracular mutterings.

Mantrikis and Egyptian Hemka also use mudras the most. Both cults believe certain gestures belong to the gods. Greek mudras depend on the nature of the spell, and range from spontaneous, ecstatic gestures to the *Pyrrhichios* armed war dance of Spartan warriors. Karpani use them in prayer, often in conjunction with sacred words.

In this era, sorcerers scribe "runes" to represent both the raw magical energies they see and what they mean within cultural symbolism. Indian sorcerers create the *Yantra* diagrams that inspired the general name for all the ways of power. Arcadian cultists write in obscure languages from the age of myth, Egyptian Hemka weave power into hieroglyphs, and Persian magi draw calligraphy from the Zoroastrian *gathas*



Mythic Places

Generations of sorcery have given some magical environments and Verges stronger but more specific Supernal ties than usual. To take advantage of such places, a sorcerer must invoke the place's legends with appropriate images, verses, and ritual actions. To raise Troy's ghosts, sing of the wrath of Achilles!

This goes beyond the normal semiotic associations mages use to activate Yantras. The sorcerer performs something resembling a play or mystery rite to unlock the power of the myth. Learning the correct rite requires a Prime Unveiling spell or research via Intelligence + Academics (with a modifier based on the place's fame or obscurity). Once the sorcerer knows what to do and takes the time to do it, she may use Environment and Action Yantras, but immediately gains a point of Mana (that she may spend on the spell, or not, as she wishes) and enjoys a -1 die penalty to Paradox.

and, when necessary, ancient script. Some devils only read cuneiform.

Places: In Alexander's time virtually every place of power possesses a particular history that influences how sorcerers use it. Nearly every settlement has a patron god, even if it's a rude grove idol instead of an Athena. The rules for Demesnes, Verges, and other magical environments operate as usual, but some places provide additional benefits when a sorcerer invokes the legends. Ascetics in the Mantra Sadhaki have the least use for such places, which represent material burdens they'd rather avoid, but wanderers do favor a few sacred sites. Greek and Egyptian sorcerers flock to sacred cities and storied magical places. Persian poet-sorcerers watch over Zoroastrian temples and old Assyrian holy sites.

Tools: All sorcerers use the tools granted them by their cults, Paths, and personal inclinations, though some appreciate them more than others. Indian magi often use whatever magical tools fall into their hands, be they scepters given by grateful rulers or a fresh flower, held up to represent some esoteric idea. Weret-Hekau use ancient tools made of gold and lapis lazuli. They favor Dedicated Magical Tools, and use Artifacts when they can get them. In fact, Egyptian magical tools are valued by Greek and Persian sorcerers too — a fact that causes Weret-Hekau to grip their magical crooks and flails tightly. Arcadian magi use natural objects harvested from sacred places and ordinary things, crafted with care — to them, a sorcerer's sword should be a sword first, and a magical aid after. Karpani value torches, braziers, and the like as symbols of truth, and wear white robes as a further sign of purity — or another color when they foresee the need to cast spells for a profane purpose.

Pneuma and Other Names for Power

As they share wisdom and battle for a trickle of Alexander's spoils, the Awakened learn that they pay a common price for power. They know magic shapes a vital force called **Pneuma** in Greek, a term which has entered common use throughout the Empire. Indian mages call it *jiva* (as distinct from *prana*, the energy inherent to the material plane). Persians treat it as a manifestation of *atar*, the "invisible fire" that transmits truth. Egyptians refer to magic's power as *hekau* (plural of *heka*, the general term for magic). Later generations unite these ideas under the Polynesian term *Mana*.

The Curse of Sleep

Sorcerers know that most people forget obvious forms of magic. They concoct various excuses for miracles and say they never saw the wonders magi unleashed before their eyes. Why does it happen? The traditional answer isn't really an answer at all, but it demonstrates the gulf between ancient and modern mindsets.

Modern mages assume there's some sort of baseline reality. It's the Lie, but it still follows predictable rules. Magic overrides it with laws that baffle Sleepers but can still be comprehended by Awakened minds. In Alexander's time, most sorcerers don't believe in neat divisions between reality, perception, and cultural dogma. Why do some people remember while others forget? That's their *place*. They don't belong to the cult or tribe. The gods ignored them.

It gets even messier in that many Awakened don't even believe the forgetful are really forgetting anything. This is an age of philosophers, yes, but of prophets and oracles, too. It's perfectly understandable that some priests and mystics see a different reality, and as true as anything anyone else might witness. The idea that this inconsistency might be a problem is foreign to many sorcerers. The Awakened see a monster knock down a wall, everybody else remembers an earthquake and structural flaw, and nobody's wrong. The important questions are pragmatic: Who'd be practical to blame? Who's going to fix it?

As Greek and Indian philosophy spread throughout Alexander's empire, formal reasoning prevails over mysticism. Sorcerers and Sleepers increasingly place their experiences within hierarchies of truth set by preferred schools of thought. Platonists believe that the evidence of our senses can be deceived, but essential Forms contain truths independent of any observer. Sorcerers from this tradition believe that they unmask and manipulate Forms, but Sleepers only see the crude phenomena that follow. Indian philosopher-sorcerers emphasize the limits of reason. An untampered consciousness reduces ultimate reality into thousands of discrete entities. Awakening collapses these into primordial types. The sorcerer acts as a vessel for the wordless essence of reality, expressing it through spells. Ordinary souls filter it into what they can understand.

Nemesis

Although godly power flows through them, sorcerers suffer punishment for *hubris*: defying moral and metaphysical strictures. Millennia later, mages equate hubris with arrogance in the face of power. For Greeks, it encompasses the act of bringing shame upon oneself or another. According to Aristotle, people court hubris because they place themselves above society's rules — and those rules come from the gods.

Indian mages consider certain acts to possess a quality of *tamas*: "darkness," or moral indifference. Zoroastrians conflate deception and impurity into the principle of *druj*. Egyptians mutter of a "weighing of the heart," where foolish magic exposes their souls to the forces of uttermost destruction. They speak of the battle with Apep, and how Ammut's ever-hungry maw awaits those who sin against *Ma'at*. Through literal gods or personified self-destructive impulses, punishment strikes the defiant, and speaks to the offender's tribal and religious identity. Reality isn't a mirror for sorcerers' beliefs, but those beliefs hone the symbols she uses to reach into the magical realm. Sometimes, the gods use those symbols against her.

Greeks call these punishments **Nemesis** after the goddess of vengeance. They call some individual manifestations "Kindly Ones" or *Eumenides*, a respectful title for the Furies. Modern sorcerers will call them Paradoxes. Sorcerers in Alexander's age make few distinctions between magical, material, and cultural matters, so Nemesis represents a complex collection of failings: to self-discipline, tribal ethics, and the natural order. Magi from different cultures have yet to agree that a single Abyss exists. To them, gods and philosophical laws wrestled order out of primeval chaos. Chaos still reigns outside the world, but "world" represents traditions as well as the state of nature.

Nemesis Conditions

Nemesis isn't "subjective," but a mirror held up to the soul, replicating its distortions, including those caused by a sorcerer's view of herself and her world. This introduces new Paradox Conditions. Design others based on myths from across Alexander's dominion. Other Paradox Conditions from **Mage: The Awakening Second Edition** also plague the era's sorcerers.

Monster

Chaos infests an animal (or sometimes, merges multiple animals into a chimera), filling it with pain and power. It gets bigger, stronger, and more ferocious. It instinctually recognizes the sorcerer as the source of its pain and attacks her. These Nemean lions, fused-snake hydras, and bulls of heaven attack until killed.

Although they arise from ordinary creatures, monsters look unnatural: the wrong size, or like they've been reduced to some sort of flesh-clay and crudely sculpted anew. They stalk afflicted sorcerers with malevolent animal cunning. Possessed by Nemesis, they cannot be controlled with Life, Mind, or Spirit magic, though spells from those Archai can inflict other effects. Each one might possess a single special ability, such as a venomous bite or the ability to regrow limbs. Otherwise, Storytellers should design them as moderate challenges for the afflicted sorcerer.

Possible Sources: Paradox resulting from a Life spell, or any spell cast upon or near animal life.

Resolution: The sorcerer casts a spell as above, and deals with the Condition's disadvantages until its duration runs out or the monster dies, whichever comes first. Note that it might require anywhere from a turn or two to several hours for the monster to mutate from its natural predecessors and begin its assault. The Condition's duration begins from the moment of the monster's attempted first contact, not the moment the spell triggers it. When the Condition resolves itself the monster collapses into a pile of fetid animal parts.

Beat: Earn an Arcane Beat after slaying the monster or surviving the Condition's duration.

Unclean

Twisted magic lays bare the sorcerer's failings to the point where her tools and methods abjure her. They represent gods she's offended, philosophies she's defied for the sake of her heart's desire, or symbols that link her tribe to the wider cosmos. Consequently, she loses access to one of the following Yantra categories: action, place, or tools. She gains no benefit from this category of Yantra and senses a magical miasma blocking her ability to use them.

Possible Sources: Any spell that inflicts a Paradox Condition, but especially Prime magic and spells from favored Archai.

Resolution: The sorcerer casts a spell as above, and deals with the Condition's disadvantages for the duration. She may also purify herself at a Hallow, meditating upon her errors. This reduces the duration of the Condition by one degree of severity, to a minimum duration of one hour or scene. (Thus, scene-long versions of the Condition cannot be ameliorated.)

Beat: Earn an Arcane Beat when the Condition expires.

The Elemental Paths

Since the epics, sorcerers have walked Paths linked to the elements of Earth, Air, Fire, Water, and the emptiness called *Aether* or *Akasa*. (In later ages, mages will call the realm of celestial power "Aether," but for now, Aether is the "substance" of space.) Beyond the gross phenomena they designate, the five elements are ways to classify what one perceives, and how the cosmos attains its multitude of forms. Magicians from opposite ends of Alexander's Empire learned that they know the same elements and correspondences. Born with varied temperaments and destinies, each aspiring sorcerer found her Path through contemplation and hard experience, and walked it until she Awakened in a sacred place either contained in her soul, or out in the world, where gods and heroes

walked before her. This journey determines the **Archai**, or fundamental magics each sorcerer commands particularly well. Centuries from now, sorcerers will call them *Arcana*.

Acanthos, Thorns in the Wind

Acanthos, "thorns," are so named because destiny is capricious. Eastern sorcerers often speak of how we suffer in proportion to our attachments to things, goals, and people, because the Wheel of Dharma tears them all from our grasp. Tyche is a popular goddess because adherents know she brings death or good fortune at her whim. She suits an age where armies wander like storms and common people flee for shelter. Thus, Acanthos are the Path of Air, ever-present, invisible and forceful. Egyptians believe this Path refines the *Ren*: that part of the soul which contains one's name.

Acanthos possess the largest proportion of sorcerers who live modestly. They're country witches and wandering pilgrims. To seek them out you must penetrate several layers of disguise. The hermit conceals his identity as a folk mystic with his useless charms, but *that* hides his true magic. Why cast a spell when you can lie? This deceptiveness suits sorcerer and peasant alike, because Acanthos magic is almost too subtle to be appreciated. Sleepers often don't appreciate their blessings. Unfortunately, they'll blame virtually any misfortune on the nearest self-styled witch. Better to admit nothing, and hide from Tyche's bitter winds.

Archai: Fate and Time; *Inferior*: Forces.

Gods and Powers: *Egyptian* – Shai, Renanutet; *Greek* – Tyche, Ananke, the Fates, Chronos; *Indian* – Vishnu, Lakshmi, the Ghandarvas; *Persian* – Ashi Yazata.

Sacred Places: In Argos, Palamedes, inventor of dice, dedicated his creation to Tyche. Acanthoi guard these first dice, which supposedly possess great power over destiny.

Oblations: Creating amulets and other "good luck charms," divination rites.

Magical Tools: Amulets, dice, lots, divination tools, and texts that record secret names. Daggers, bows, and javelins.

Mastigos, Colorless Scourge of the Aether

The Scourge are the strangest Path, concerned with matters that even sorcerers consider to be esoteric. Followers of the Path explore souls ardently, mapping their regions and hazards, and flay away unwanted desires. A Mastigos explores the Self, discovering its monsters, gods, and mazy byways. This inward focus makes it the most antisocial Path, but practitioners develop mighty persuasive powers. They're silent sages, teachers who don't seek students, but attract them anyway. Followers might shower a Mastigos in gold for just glancing at them in some meaningful way.

Greek practitioners are usually philosophers who barely speak of magic. Persian Mastigoi are infamous for perverting thought, the primal gift of Ahura Mazda, into something capable of inflicting lies and satisfying perverse pleasures. But perhaps the most intimidating members of the sect hail from Asia, where so-called "deathless ones" or *Arhats* silently hone their minds and crack the distance between things. They say separate places and thoughts are just illusions. Egyptians believe this is the Path of the *Ba*, the part of the soul that contains the identity and passions.

Archai: Mind and Space; *Inferior*: Matter.

Gods and Powers: *Egyptian* – Heru (Horus), Set, and Hathor; *Greek* – Philosophical concepts such as the Good and the Demiurge; *Indian* – Sages such as the Buddha; *Persian* – the seven virtuous Amesha Spentas or deceptive *Daevas*.

Sacred Places: Mastigoi rarely revere places, though they might respect the power of focused thought or sacred geometry. Members of the Path love scholarship and debate, however, and have gathered in cities like Alexandria to discuss the arts of thought and memory.

Oblations: Chanting, debate, mathematics, writing.

Magical Tools: Geometric designs such as mandalas, papyri with philosophical tracts, mirrors. Elephant goads, curved blades, and whips.

Moros, Doom of the Silent Earth

Moros is the personification of doom, associated with the element of Earth. Commonly said to have grim or morbid temperaments, a sizeable number actually display a genuine love of life, fueled by the knowledge that nothing after death can deliver the same pleasures. In the West, they're often called Hades' children; like him, they command the Archai of Death and Matter. Indian sorcerers are less focused on divine connections, but recognize that death and earthly riches pass away, while the soul and its purpose remain eternal. Persians focus on the world itself, and rites that prevent it from being stained by death's pollution. Egyptian magi link the Path to the *Sheut*, shadow-aspect of the soul.

Many cultures under Alexander link wealth and death. Egyptians stand in the shadow of long-plundered pyramids and Greeks build gilded coffins for fallen rulers. In much of Asia they give bodies to the fire, but offerings to a local temple. Persians and Jews are exceptions, but even they need the correct rituals, and assurances that the dead will find peace. Moroi throughout the Empire work in all aspects of the funeral trade, from preparing corpses to crafting coffins and tomb offerings.

Archai: Death and Matter; *Inferior*: Spirit.

Gods and Powers: *Egyptian* – Anpu (Anubis) and Nephthys; *Greek* – Hades, Charon, Thanatos, Orpheus; *Indian* – Yama, Kali, Kubera; *Persian* – Shraosha Yazata.

Sacred Places: Great Moroi reside in Necromanteion at Ephyra by the Acheron, where necromantic oracles help Sleepers communicate with the dead. It is said that Indian sorcerers maintain a grand temple to Yama far southeast of the edges of the Empire. Persian Moroi don't especially revere death, but attend to burial grounds to prevent corpses from polluting the world.

Oblations: Burying offerings for the dead, such as oboli for Charon. Meditation at a burial ground. Handling human remains for reburial or other ritual purposes.

Magical Tools: Bones, jewels, money, and gold. Maces and hammers.

Obrimos, the Fire's Purifying Rage

Obrimoi or "Raging Ones" earn their name not just for anger, but overall strength of passion. For every Obrimos who gives in to wild emotion, another tames it with discipline — a discipline of sharp breaths and gritted teeth, but effective nonetheless. They use fire as a purifying metaphor to burn away unnecessary emotions and look within, at the celestial energy flowing between them and the wider cosmos. They command powers associated with the kings of gods, so those who forsake ascetic lives often devote their passions to ruling others, or destroying what offends them with fire and thunderbolts. The Weret-Hekau call it the Path of the *Ka*, or soul's vital essence, and accord its followers particular respect.

In Alexander's time, Obrimoi prefer the professions of priest and soldier. As priests, their indomitable personalities manifest in sermons and other public rites. Truth crackles in the air. In the country, they banish storms and demand rain from the gods. Warrior-sorcerers strike like thunder and cloak themselves in shadow. They join military campaigns to bring other cultures into some greater order of things, or to defend it against external threats.

Archai: Forces and Prime; *Inferior*: Death.

Gods and Powers: *Egyptian* – Re, Djehuti (Thoth); *Greek* – Zeus, Herakles, Ares; *Indian* – Shiva, Agni, Durga; *Persian* — Atar Yazata.

Sacred Places: Mount Olympus is a well-known sacred site where many Obrimos Awakenings have occurred, but the Path is too fractious to maintain a common presence. Karpani meditate at places such as Arrapha, where fires continually burn without having been set or maintained by human hands.

Oblations: Burnt offerings, fasting, exposure to fire and storms.

Magical Tools: Ash, fire, crowns, scepters, and other symbols of rule. Spears and swords.

Thyrsos, a Staff Rising from the Wild Waters

Thyrsoi take their name from the phallic pinecone-headed staff used by the cult of Dionysus. Closely identified with the cult, many Greek Thyrsoi are recognized priests and celebrants. Persians give the Path less respect, as members often deal with "unclean" spirits and elemental manifestations. Indian followers of the Path see the Thyrsos staff as a manifestation of the *Lingam*, a similar sign of Shiva's power. Egyptians call Path of that of the *Ab*: the heart as the emotional aspect of the soul. (The physical heart is called the *hati*.)

If you asked an average person what sorcerers were like, a Thyrsos would fit the best. They're the era's archetypal magicians: wild people who live in the country, talk to spirits, and ignore the purity laws others obey.





The Path represents both clear, sacred water and the bodily fluids lesser souls believe to be too intimate or disgusting to turn to magical purpose. Its members walk between sacred and profane places. They're the greatest Awakened healers, and know the secrets of animals. The average person doesn't need enlightenment but a doctor, and someone to keep the livestock healthy.

Archai: Life and Spirit; *Inferior*: Mind.

Gods and Powers: *Egyptian* – Aset (Isis), Sekhmet, and numerous animal cults. *Greek* – Aphrodite, Dionysus, Pan; *Indian* — Shiva; *Persian* — the Ahurani Yazads.

Sacred Places: Thyrsoi believe that their mightiest brethren live in the land of Nysa, a mountainous place that might be in Africa, Arabia, or India. Some of them believe it's another name for the cosmic axis: Mount Meru, or the celestial Olympus that casts the mundane mountain as its shadow.

Oblations: Ritual sex, intoxication, hunting, solitude in wild places.

Magical Tools: Stone fetishes, green branches, water from sacred streams. Axes, hunting weapons, and farming tools.

Ancient Worlds

The mystics and philosophers of many nations believe in numerous worlds. In an age where the abstractions we take for granted are novelties, the difference between place and state of being is difficult to pin down. Dreams are invisible journeys. Death is a place. In civilized realms, they tend to say the universe works like a state. Wise gods reign on high, the dead and unclean inhabit dark precincts, and everybody else struggles in the middle, ignorant of forces above and below. And outside? Chaos. Lawlessness.

Above: Realms of Gods and Forms

Priests put their gods on celestial Olympus (for which the material mountain is a symbol) and in the Indian *Swar* ("sky") or *Arupa* ("formless") worlds. Weret-Hekau see gods in the stars or the fields of *A'aru*. Plato and Indian scholars promote new perspectives on the world-system. Plato establishes a hierarchy based on truth. The highest world belongs to universally true Forms (Greek: *eidoi*). There are many imperfect cubes of stone, wood, and bone, but the geometric Form of a cube is essential to them all. The universe radiates from an ensemble of such things. The Buddha and other Indian thinkers believe that the worlds are states of consciousness — even gods are rarefied ways of thinking. To Persians the high realm is simply *Arta*: "truth." The personified divine sparks called Amesha Spentas dwell there. Through them, the energies of creation emanate down to the world. Magic calls the high powers to Earth. After centuries of study and cultural exchange, mages unite these disparate ideas into the theory of Supernal Realms.

Sometimes gods visit, or extend their kingdoms to the ordinary world through what will be called Verges and Emanations. For now, sorcerers think of their histories first. The titans' empty palace stands on Mount Othrys, and the secrets of the Vedas might be found in reflections on the Sarasvati River.

In Dreams and Visions

As said: Dreams are journeys. The people of Alexander's time believe thoughts must be made of something, even if it's imperceptibly fine. Thoughts have bodies, and need to dwell somewhere beyond ordinary maps. That something? Greek *Aether*. Indian *Akasa*. Egyptian sorcerers send forth the *Ba*. The Karpani believe thought belongs to the immaterial *menog* realm. In each case, thought soars, and many believe dreams take place above the winds, among the stars. Yet many believe sleep is related to death. Greek priests say the river Lethe sings mortals to sleep with its currents, and washes memories from the dead before the gods send them onward. To believers, dreams dwell in the liminal realm between life and death. Yet sky metaphors occur often enough for sorcerers to speak of "Astral" realms as a cross-cultural compromise. In any case, these are places, not mere mental states — or rather, mental states are places made of Aether.

Sorcerers in Alexander's time map the thought lands cautiously. The most accessible realms belong to personal dreams, and then the deeper landscape of the self. Greeks describe it as a many-chambered cave ruled by Hypnos, god of sleep. Dream-gods called *oneiroi* create everything a dreamer sees, and usher her through the Gate of Horn, where dreams are only illusions and personal fancies; or the Gate of Ivory, to higher realms. Sorcerers possess the ability to pass through the Ivory Gate at will. Other traditions make similar distinctions between dreams about petty passions and those that speak to gods or higher truths. Mantrikis believe the whole world is *Maya*, a dreamlike illusion, so personal fancies are dreams within dreams. Egyptian Hemka believe dreams exist alongside material reality, but cannot be seen while the Ba concentrates on its waking body. Karpani believe ordinary dreams are chained to the world by *druj*, or deception, but it is possible to pass through nobler thoughts to drift up, toward *asha*.

Magi and lucky Sleepers pass through the Ivory Gate to *temenoi*, the Greek word for both sacred places on the material plane and subtle realms where gods speak to those who seek them out. Sorcerers don't always distinguish between physical and psychic places. Arcadian adepts believe that it's easier to contact certain beings when one meditates in their holy sites. Egyptians agree with them, and pray before the correct images or visit particular temples. Mantrikis believe that some holy places and images make it easier to visit corresponding divinities, but not to the extent of the aforementioned groups. Karpani believe that the battle between truth and deception is universal, so meditating at any place of power will do as long as the disciplined soul rises above distractions. In any event, sorcerers in this time don't see one *Temenos* of universal thought, but multiple divine courts. Gods and dream creatures usually wear the forms visitors expect. As magi from different cults travel together more often, they suspect

Variations on the Middle

Sorcerers in Alexander's time don't readily invent magical realms to build a consistent cosmology. In the age before heliocentric thinking, the universe is a smaller place. Death, enlightenment, and the gods merit additions to the cosmology, but the Shadow is an ambiguous case. It reflects the phenomenal world, and while it's certainly possible to go there and vanish from view, this may just be a matter of perception. Most sorcerers already accept that people can perceive and live in many states within the same reality. The Shadow is one such state. The fact that it's possible to vanish into the Shadow classifies it as a place in the world, but not an entirely separate realm. Sorcerers usually don't call the Shadow by any formal name, but speak of places they went and beings they talked to: "the grove of the spirit of the cataract," for instance.

that there's only one realm with many manifestations. In any event, none of them believe that temenoi tell the whole truth about divine nature. They're where gods manifest in ways humans can understand.

At the upper limit of the temenoi stands the place Greek sorcerers call the *Omphalos*. It stands embedded on a landscape of fearsome caves and palaces, said to be inhabited by the terrifying grandchildren of lust and violence gods: sons of Phobos and daughters of Eris, for example. Only the Omphalos provides safe passage beyond the temenoi. This great stone contains passages and challenges that must be confronted to progress further. Inscribed upon it are words of "High Speech," unadorned with cultural embellishments. Magi often go no further than the Omphalos because they wish to study the script or quest for the head of Orpheus, which is rumored to be entombed within.

Sorcerers who pass through the Omphalos may climb higher, to realms of penultimate truth. Egyptians name them after the undisguised, divine substrates of existence: the gods *Keb* and *Nut*, Earth and Sky. Other sorcerers speak of personal experiences climbing the lower slopes of Olympus or Meru. It is said, however, that these are places where beasts, trees, the world, and the stars dream. They do not cater to visitors' preconceptions. Dream-beasts and elementals appear as giant versions of their physical counterparts, or assume abstract forms beyond human imagination.

Beyond it all, a sorcerer might stand on the shores of what Egyptians call *Mehen* and the Greeks *Oroboros*: the snake that coils around the universe, shielding it from Chaos. Magi usually see what they describe as an "ocean" for lack of a better term. Five strange, huge palaces lie across the shores: one for each Path. They're ruled by what Arcadian sorcerers call *Suzugoi*, "yoked ones" who guard Forms and gods from worldly interference. They represent great power and knowledge that has been twisted by Chaos to test a sorcerer's resolve. The Suzugoi and their palaces are said to "belong" to a Path, but not in the sense of being members' refuges, but places to challenge themselves, and struggle against the guardians of supreme truth.

The Suzugoi and their homes possess countless manifestations. Sometimes they attune themselves to a visitor's culture, but that is entirely their choice. In Alexander's age sorcerers have reported the following:

- Dahhak, a sorcerer king whose sins opened him possession by the demonic son of Angra Mainyu. As a two-headed dragon (*azi* in Persian) that represents Mind and Space, it lairs in a Babylonian ziggurat: palace of the Mastigos.
- Mastema of Forces, the Hebrew angel of destruction, and Lilith of Prime, mother of the unclean. They dwell in the petrified branches of the Tree of Knowledge, whose fruit is now poisonous stones. This is the palace of the Obrimos.
- In an Egyptian palace of red stone, Sopdet (Sothis), manifestation of Aset (Isis) and queen of Time, stands by an empty throne. The crown of Upper Egypt sits upon it, darkened by the shadow of some snouted predatory beast. Sopdet explains that her co-regent, Set of Fate, is not bound to the end of worlds like the others. She represents both of them in the palace of the Acanthos.
- Typhon of Death and Echidna of Matter, who were bound here by Zeus for trying to overthrow him. Their palace of the Moros is the fragment of Mount Etna that pins their bodies. They're so enormous they can move about as they will.
- A jungle by the sea acts as the Thyrsos "palace." It's filled with the monsters and god-animals that command Life and Spirit.

Near the palaces of the Suzugoi a sorcerer might also find a ramshackle hut of blackened wood and unidentifiable hides. This is where the Old One lives. Aged and ash-covered to the point of destroying all signs of gender or origin, he or she answers to Pandora, Atum, Marduk, and other ancient names: the first person, or at least the first sorcerer. Something's wrong with the Old One now. He or she seems to stand for Chaos. Madness seizes anyone who dwells in that hut's shadow for too long.

Below: Lands of Death and Deception

The dead should pass beyond, whole and powerful, into kingdoms beyond rot and mortal knowledge. This is what sorcerers believe, even if their home cultures don't always agree with them. It's one of the Mysteries all cults share,

though the Moros know it best. But it doesn't always turn out that way. Souls get frayed by life. Parts slough off and get bound to lower worlds. Among the ancient traditions, the Weret-Hekau may understand the parts of the soul the best. They say that when people die without the proper rites, their unresolved passions create a malformed Akh which does not Awaken to the truth beyond life, but sends its Sheut, or shadow nature, to haunt the living. Greeks believe passions from the psyche might carry the personality away as a shade, doomed to inhabit Hades. Mantrikis contend with *bhutas*, fragmentary sub-incarnations that can help or plague the living. Persian Karpani hold to no consensus on the matter. Apparitions of the dead might be *nasa*, or unclean demons expelled by the body, or *gidim* from Babylonian lore. Some sorcerers think ghosts copy the original's personality, but others believe they steal them. In that case, the dead can't make the final journey until the ghost descends to the Underworld or vanishes, allowing the personality to rejoin the true soul.

Shades might wander the world for a time, but unless banished, eventually feel the Underworld's call. They wander caves and vast tombs invisible to mortal eyes until they reach the rivers the Greeks know: Styx, Lethe, and the rest. Other cults give them different names, and to the Egyptians they're all branches of the Nile. Then the shade passes down and down...to the place she expects to go, more or less. Hades. Duat. Whatever. Shades usually go to a realm governed by her gods or those that ruled the places where they died. Sometimes they visit strange dominions unknown to mythology. The Underworld changes in subsequent centuries and the old maps and legends lose their accuracy, but for now many religions tell the dead what to expect. It's the small differences you need to look out for, especially if you're an intruding sorcerer.

Sorcerers believe that far below, where everything rots beyond rot and the Forms cast not a single spark of truth, entities lack some part of what is required to truly exist. They don't cast shadows. They cannot conceive of righteousness. They live in many fragmentary realms, each defined by the things they lack. Even in this age, magi call them the Lower Depths. Karpani inherited some of their names from the Akkadians and Sumerians before them. Not all of them are evil, but none of them are good.

Primordial Chaos

One day mages will call it the Abyss, a derivation of *Abzu*, the primordial waters. Egyptians know it as *Nu*, and Indian sorcerers identify it with Purusha, the primal man who was sacrificed to make the universe. Chaos existed before the Archai, before gods and titans and ordered Forms. Greeks name it Chaos, but Arcadians say that after the gods overthrew the titans, they cast the mightiest of them into its heart, the anti-world of Tartarus. When sorcery goes awry, Chaos takes hold and Tartarus sends its monsters. Fools and sorcerers of surpassing confidence summon malformed lesser titans to serve them for a time, or deal with immaterial *kakodaimons*. Sorcerers won't call them Gulmoth and Acamoth for centuries to come.

Darshanas: Philosophies of Magic

New thought leaps across the world at the speed of lectures and reading eyes. Alexander came of age close to the apex of a philosophical revolution that swept across Greece in a chaotic fashion, following the political fashions of the old city-states. Alexander's father unified the country, but its people have yet to systematize their arts of thought. Despite or because of the more intense disunity among Indian states, their thinkers, bound by the Vedas and their priests, design common classifications for their philosophies.

In this, as in many things, the Awakened follow Sleeper customs. As organized **darshanas** in the East, Awakened philosophies find names, but the same beliefs flourish everywhere. Multiple sources of inspiration converge on four major schools. Certain ideas seem to flower whenever Awakened gather, no matter the countries they hail from: notions about veiled truths, invisible realms, and soul-wracking duties.

Jnanashakti

or the Gnostikon: School of Wisdom

Awakening is only an opportunity. Newly opened eyes adjust to the realm beyond black ignorance, but have yet to perceive what truly exists. Pure Form shines brightly, so one must adapt eyes of the spirit to see through the glory, to the thing itself. A sorcerer should be a philosopher and a mystic. Investigating truth is her supreme purpose.

The Jnanashakti ("Power of Wisdom") darshana claims to keep scrolls and tablets espousing its values that date back to the age of heroes, written in the High Speech. This archive is only part of the treasures kept by followers, who also hoard magical relics and pass secret epic poems from one bard to the next.

Followers also study nature, by cataloguing unusual creatures, recording odd phenomena and developing theories to explain them. They write bestiaries and scrolls on physics. They stalk the Shadow in search of ghosts and monsters, and explore ruins from the elder ages. They build wondrous devices to demonstrate the power of the Forms over falsehood, but these aren't always magical inventions. Sometimes, mathematics and nature only need vessels of wood and metal to demonstrate their power.

Jnanashakti say that outer journeys only take them halfway through the quest. Ultimate knowledge requires spiritual discipline, for Awakened psyches reflect the greater cosmos. Adherents use Astral meditation to understand the soul's secret wisdom as well as its darker, flawed regions.

Ethos: It's the duty of an Awakened citizen to learn, know, and teach the truth in proportion to his fellows' ability to learn. His knowledge should enrich society, but not overthrow it — scholars are wise advisors, not kings. His study takes two forms, for he must understand nature and all observable phenomena to create a basis for the internal, imaginative study of consciousness and higher truth. He can

teach Sleepers to sharpen their minds and learn practical skills, but higher studies lie beyond them — in fact, they might learn just enough to go insane, so it's best to limit them to non-mystical teachings.

Traditions: The Indian *Ayudhamuni* ("sages of tools") seek out objects and places from the prior Age, guarding them from Sleepers and unworthy Awakened. Persian *Kaldu* ("Chaldeans," now a general term for astrologers and other scholars) uncover deceptions against Sleepers and Awakened, which they believe serve the Dark One, Angra Mainyu. Like students of Parmenides, the Greek *Gnostikon* welcomes contemplative individuals searching for the difference between *Arche*, the fundamental truth of the magic, and *Doxa*, the illusions people perceive out of ignorance. Over the last century, Socrates' lineage has affected Greeks deeply, linking mystical ideas about truth to notions of mathematical perfection. Egyptian *Sebau* (singular, *Seba*) take their names from the class of scribes. They preserve ancient knowledge given by the gods, even if they have to plunder old tombs to do it.

Metaphysics: The cosmos is a dark shell of imperfect matter concealing the light of pure Forms. Gnosis is the transcendental wisdom that gives the Awakened the power to see it, beyond all illusions. Universally truthful Forms can be described according to the objective measurements of mathematics, the Vedas, and other means which cannot be spoken of, but wordlessly known by Awakened minds. When perceived by lesser minds, Forms degrade into mere approximations. Ignorance is everywhere now, so we live in the Fallen Age, surrounded by the lies we see.

Rote Skills: Crafts, Occult, Science.

Magical Tools: Written materials, writing implements, and novel devices constructed over the course of one's studies.

Future Fate: Over the coming century, the Jnanashakti organize a society of wisdom seekers throughout the known world, but never fully unify. The school divides itself into two distinct factions which endure for the next two millennia. One faction dominated by Pelasgians and Weret-Hekau seeks out magical Artifacts, texts, and wondrous places for their pragmatic virtues. They believe magi should use what they find to defeat ignorance and malefic sorcery. The Karpani-dominated second group believes it incautious to harness these discoveries immediately, and concentrates on archiving, guarding, and carefully studying them. Mantriki prefer this approach, though this may stem from rivalries with the Pelasgians instead of strong sentiments.

Mahanizrayani

or the Omphalos School of the Great Ladder

In this age of slumber, humanity has forgotten that it may rise beyond the animals and come face to face with gods. For most, this requires moral guidance across many lives. Only Awakened truly see the glorious, fearsome worlds that hide from ordinary senses and stir within the soul's infinite space. Sleepers need priests to teach them about the Great Ladder of existence, and Awakened must be encouraged to gaze ever upward, towards the immortal Forms and Godhead beyond.

Mahanizrayani sorcerers consider themselves to be nothing less than custodians of the order of all things. They possess an unparalleled understanding of the many realms of existence, because it is their purpose to ensure that no being invades a foreign world. Only human beings should soar between planes within their mortal lives, and they must be shepherded away from dark incarnations.

Sorcerers should guide Sleepers into peaceful, ordinary lives. If unready souls dabble with the capricious powers that surround them they almost always suffer death, or reduction to some degenerate state. Awakened must submit to guidance and judgment, so they won't fall like the old heroes.

Ethos: Adepts of the Great Ladder Awakened to guide the flock into noble incarnations and an eventual liberation from pain. For most, this will take many lives; but a few possess the spark of Awakening, earned through tumultuous past lives or exceptional discipline. Priests of the school want to spark the fire in sorcerers' mighty souls, to help them attain Ascension, and teach Sleepers to serve civilization — that is, keep to moral laws, uphold scholarship, and respect noble rulers. Without civilization's laws, human beings would surely descend into endless war and fallen incarnations.

Traditions: In the East, ascetic *Ekadandi* reject worldly things and point Sleepers toward higher truth. Greek *Cthonaoidoi* ("poets of the underworld") teach people about spirits and other supernatural beings, and the ways mortals should appease, bind, or destroy them, as the occasion demands. Persian *Dasturs* take the title of religious judges, for they determine whether an action furthers truth or deception. Egyptian *Tjati* act as priest–viziers to the ruling class. They believe worthy rulers are manifestations of the gods, and are determined to make sure they act that way.

Metaphysics: Many realms lie between complete enlightenment and the lightless hells of ignorance, hate, and self-obsession. Through multiple incarnations or moments of magical inspiration, humans soar to the thrones of the gods, or sink into pain. These realms include the Lower Depths where souls sink with unclean burdens; the Twilight of ghosts; the Shadow realm of petty spirits (such as nymphs or Indian *asuras*); the Astral Realm of ambitious gods (lesser *devas*, or children of the Olympian Twelve); and beyond, the Supernal *Hyperuranion* or *Rupaloka* of Forms where one attains unity with imperishable, divine principles.

Rote Skills: Academics, Expression, Persuasion.

Magical Tools: Ceremonial robes, artwork depicting the Great Ladder (as a tree, mountain, or mandala of beings), shrines and temples.

Future Fate: The Mahanizrayani take Alexander's death the hardest. They pushed the Awakened community to work together to create their own utopian Empire. Most counsel patience and restraint; creating an Awakened state should take lifetimes, after all. Magi ought to build on Alexander's successes and discard his failures. They should strive to build Plato's Atlantis, where every citizen benefits from the insights

of philosopher–kings. One faction of the Arcadian Tyrannoi and exiled Mantrikis wants to build the Awakened Empire immediately, ruling Sleepers by right of superior wisdom. This is justification enough; there's no need to waste time sharing the fruits of enlightenment.

Samashti

or the Phulakeion: School of the Supreme End

The Samashti school devotes itself to the universal perfection of humanity, because anything less is failure. Like many mystics, the so-called Guardians (in Greek, *Phulakes*) believe the world we perceive is a layer of deception over the sublime truth, but unlike other darshanas, they deny the notion that righteous gods and virtuous philosophies connect humankind to the true world's music. No, these are comforting myths sorcerers invented to pacify Sleepers — but they forgot the purpose of these myths, and most believe these lies themselves.

Awakening only opens your eyes to the nature of the Great Lie, and sometimes lets you summon the true cosmos to displace it, but never cures your soul of it. Bound to falsehood, your spirit can only find liberation when all of humanity does, and only under the guidance of one who has achieved final enlightenment. Adherents remain divided about who the Enlightened One will be — Buddha, avatar, hero, or sacred king — but agree that without such guidance, all religion and moral law is meaningless beyond its day to day functionality. Gods are lies or egotistical monsters; philosophies are all false. Murder or alms have no effect on your soul. Thus, Guardians look for their Enlightened One, or plot to create him through a combination of tutelage and destiny-twisting magic. For now, flawed souls are universal. Awakened who don't contribute to social stability or the quest for the Enlightened One should be eliminated. Dangerous magic needs to be erased from the world.

These beliefs stain Samashti sorcerers with a reputation for deception and betrayal. Enemies say the school is actually a sect of "moderate" Timoroi who've decided to prey on other Awakened in a slower, more sustainable fashion. Nevertheless, the Guardians also hunt down dangerous magicians and Artifacts with particular zeal.

Ethos: Only Awakened can Ascend and escape this foul world, but it's immoral for them to do so, and leave everyone else twitching in the pain of existence. Thus, Guardians must prevent other Awakened from escaping so that they will turn and save everyone. Furthermore, Sleepers must never be allowed to suspect that their religions are meaningless, their souls are condemned, and that there's no higher calling for an individual or society. If this were commonly known, civilization would collapse — and indeed, has collapsed, when sorcerers first faced the truth of this cursed world, and scattered to the winds. Yet this very curse means Guardians need not fear ordinary moral laws, so long as their acts further the great mission.

Traditions: This small darshana includes the Platonist *Phulakeion* cult, from which members take the "Guardian" epithet. In Asia, most adherents hide their beliefs, but a small sect called the *Khatwangi* (roughly "Bearers of the Rod," referring to a weapon or object made of bone) exists. Persian *Maari* ("Snakes") follow the school by offering petty witchcraft to ordinary people, because it`s better that they do it instead of some unpredictable fraud or wild sorcerer. The Egyptian *Sepermeru* ("near to the desert") cult follows Set, the sinister god of storms and strangers who nonetheless serves by battling Apep, serpent of chaos.

Metaphysics: As every great myth shows, impure acts — shattering, killing events — created the cosmos. The world is stained by its initial sacrifices, and unable to return to perfection. This price of creation cannot be paid until the cosmos produces a pure individual: One who achieves final enlightenment and chooses to save the world, not abandon it. Until that point, our befouled universe contains nothing truly virtuous. Men and women should remain faithful to family and tribe for practical reasons, but their spirits will always be trapped, no matter what they do. There is no difference between a god and a monster, or a prince and a beggar, and no reward for righteousness beyond egoistic pleasure and sentimental satisfaction.

Rote Skills: Investigation, Stealth, Subterfuge.

Magical Tools: Cloaks, masks, and bones.

Future Fate: The Samashti formalize their efforts to separate the magical and Sleeping worlds. They develop deceptions and false avenues for those who'd seek out magic with an unworthy heart. They look forward to an age without evil, where Sleepers never need to fear magic, and virtuous Awakened will not only protect them, but ensure that they never learn sorcery exists. They urge their brethren to eschew hubris, and mind their sins — and those of magi who belong to other factions. They eventually grow to believe that they can perform dark deeds on behalf of other sorcerers, and in their own damnation, prevent the corruption of others. Thus they will act as spies and executioners, cleansing their ranks of evil-stained souls and anticipating that someday, they must eliminate themselves, because one sin does not absolve another. This absolute belief in evil and punishment rises from Egyptian members principles of Ma'at. Virtue doesn't lighten one's heart against its feather.

Vajrastra

or the Adamantine Arrow: School of the Thunderbolt

In an age of war, warriors claim mighty spoils. Always popular, the Vajrastra ("Thunderbolt Weapon" or loosely, "Adamantine Arrow") school has risen to particular prominence, as its sorcerers walk with conquering armies or defend their communities from assaults. Many soldiers ask deep questions about a world they see convulsing with violence. They don't Awaken any more often than other people, but readily join together once they do, forming war bands of militant sorcerers bound by common experiences. Alexander's campaigns give them wealth, and a broader perspective than many other sorcerers.

The Ajivaki: Schools of No School

The semi-organized Ajivaki or "Living" sects reject the other four schools. These sorcerers don't organize as easily as some, but most employ the same basic critique to attack the great darshanas: Magic isn't a war, a grim duty, a sacred hierarchy, or a search for truth, but immanent in the world, always arising. Souls channel it, but it *happens* in the here and now.

Ajivaki sorcerers reject the notion that we live in a world that shows one side to common mortals, and another to witches, philosophers, and gods. Adherents believe that magic should flow out from what ordinary people believe, not philosophers. They often pretend to be the primitive witches or ordinary priests "high" wizards of the other darshanas look down on.

In the years following Alexander's death, few Ajivaka remain as they settle into one Order or the next. Mostly the Karpani, who remained in seclusion after Alexander's conquest of Persia, continue to hold to the belief of seeking truth and holding to small communities. A few Mantrikis continue on this path, seeking humble lives. Those who remain Ajivaka are slowly excluded from the growing society developing around the Awakened community. They are not shunned, but are instead bombarded with political pressure if they decide to interact with other mages.

Systems: Ajivaka groups blur the line between darshana and cult. They draw their diverse philosophies from local cultures. Yet it is not enough to simply believe — one must express that belief in a coherent fashion, uniting it with the universal truths of magic. Thus, Ajivaka sorcerers almost always possess Expression as a Rote Skill, along with two others set by local tradition. Few Ajivaka belong to the Great Cults, so they choose oblations from among those actions their home societies believe invoke higher powers. Note that even though the player can choose Rote Skills and oblations, the character doesn't arbitrarily decide to practice magic in such and such a fashion. She still experiences initiation into something greater than herself and combines these personal revelations and the symbols she learns from her sect. Some Ajivaka sects possess unique Legacies (and membership in them might be mandatory), but all can join Legacies that have existed since prehistoric times such as the various Tamers, and those associated with their Paths. Some Ajivaka sects provide training in High Speech and others don't. When they don't, members acquire a free Merit dot.

True veterans have seen Awakened chant and bleed in every nation and, casting rumors and bigotry aside, can see a world of sorcerers from many lands, using many tongues to speak of one truth. This opens opportunities for understanding — and conquest. For centuries, the school's warrior cults have left authority to kings and morality to priests. A warrior off the field slows down, losing touch with the life-and-death truths of combat. Alexander's solution was to *never* stop marching, and seek glory through continuous conquest. Forced back from the end of the known world, he's been struck with fatal melancholy. It's easy for a true soldier to see his fate.

Nevertheless, he solved the warrior-ruler's dilemma. Eternal war is the answer, because it's the truth of the cosmos. Military strife only reveals the secret condition of existence to Sleepers. When Alexander's Empire falls, the Adamantine Arrow will rebuild it under their command. They won't stop at India; they dream of rumored lands beyond, with abundant silk and new secrets to relinquish.

Ethos: The Awakened are mortals with the gifts of gods, so they stand to waste their lives to a greater degree than either, refusing to use their might to bring meaning to a brief existence. Thus, a sorcerer must emulate heroes and sages. She rejects vain rewards like gold and meaningless titles, obeys oaths, and struggles against all adversity, to glorify herself and provide a moral example that defeats death when her flesh cannot. On the question of ruling over others, the school holds that while acceptable, it courts corruption. It is too easy to lazily ease onto a throne, and always better to be a general on the march.

Traditions: The Awakened *Diadochi* in Alexander's army wait to inherit his realm. Persian *Artestars* ("Charioteers"), ravaged by Diadochi attacks, also wait for the end, to take revenge and liberate their people. Some Indian Vajrastra belong to a fellowship called the *Banapani* ("Arrows in the Hand"), but many belong to independent bands. In this era, belonging to the Kshatriya "warrior caste" doesn't predict membership. The Weret-Hekau call their protectors *Medjay*, after Egypt's Nubian warrior elite.

Metaphysics: Myths set the pattern for history and the subtle structure of souls. Gods, monsters, and mortals battle in every epic, and the cosmos still rings with war, though only Awakened can hear the clash of spirit-talons and the screams of war-made ghosts. Even the soul is a battleground between

the easy way of indolence and the disciplined lives people were meant to live. Mysteries bring the mythic drama to caves and closed temple rooms, but the truth is that the Trojan War is happening *now*, and the *Mahabharata always* thunders, because the truths within them stir in human hearts, and all of us, mortal and divine, re-enact the stories.

Rote Skills: Athletics, Weaponry, Intimidation.

Magical Tools: Weapons and armor.

Future Fate: After witnessing atrocities during Alexander's campaigns, some Vajrastra place themselves under Mahanizrayani guidance and follow its utopian vision. They swear oaths to help the Awakened found a new enlightened civilization. Tyrannoi Pelsasgians lure a few away with the promise of immediate temporal power. Others join Samashti cults to protect the Awakened through the arts of stealth and deception. Most warrior-sorcerers act through personal oaths. They vow to protect individuals, cabals, and groups of magi. These personal ties govern their political roles in the ages to come.

The Great Cults

Manifesting with common ideas throughout Alexander's realm, the darshanas ease encounters between sorcerers from diverse nations. Yet the schools provide an ethos, not a mythos. Where did magic come from? Why does it remain hidden? How did the first wizards learn the Art, and what powers do they raise?

Sorcerers look to their cults to answer these other questions, knowing full well that they'll supply partial, tentative truths. Full knowledge is enlightenment, the flowering of a life of discipline and seeking. Cults provide enough information to begin the journey: a framework of gods, legends, and secret powers discovered by their ancestors. Great cults supporting hundreds of mages flourish throughout the Empire. We've detailed major Egyptian, Greek, Persian, and Indian cults, but each civilization contains smaller groups.

Cults determine how wizards organize in their native lands, but Alexander's thrown a spear into formerly orderly hierarchies. Greek sorcerers claim Persian territory by right of conquest, and Indian sages walk from one end of the Empire to the other. They challenge local pecking orders, inspiring vendettas and duels. Egyptian magi ride the wave of their nation's resurgence under Alexander, but also plot to deal with him as another unwanted ruler.

Each cult contains a number of Legacies, including (but not limited to) those listed with each cult. Cult members of any Path may join these. In Alexander's Empire, some tutors now accept pupils from the Legacy's Path no matter the cult — only individual bonds of trust matter to them. Finally, a few Legacies are so old they predate the cults. Their sorcerers take pupils from any cult or none — they're passing fancies compared to the elder Arts.

Note that a sorcerer's cult trains her in the High Speech Merit, as detailed in **Mage: The Awakening Second Edition**, and Cult Status replaces Order Status.

The Arcadian Mysteries

Pelasgians, Heirs of the Titans

The Olympian gods have always feared humanity would overthrow them the way the gods toppled the titans. In the Silver Age, they gave humans rough, innocent souls to curtail their ambitions, but in doing so lost their worship. The gods cast these souls into the Shadow to become nature spirits.

The Olympians inaugurated the Bronze Age of worshipful mortals, but upward-looking piety came with dreams and ambitions. The Pelasgians ruled Arcadia then, and built a mighty city that filled the gods with trepidation. To humble these mortals, the Olympians snuffed out every Arcadian fire except for those in the temples, to roast sacrifices. But the Pelasgians freed Prometheus and learned to command flame. Next, the gods made Pandora to spread chaos, and set men against women, but the mortals made her queen of Arcadia.

Guided by Prometheus and Pandora, Pelasgian mystics spoke with dreaming titans and beheld the celestial music of the ten Archai. They ended sacrifices and embraced sorcery, but made no move against the gods until King Lycaeon moved against Zeus. The sorcerer-monarch offered his own son as a poisoned sacrifice, to strike down the Thunderer with defilement.

The Olympians destroyed Arcadia with a great flood, and the Bronze Age came crashing down. Deucalion's line survived, and with it, the secrets of magic. The cult of *Arcadian Mysteries* claims this Pelasgian tradition. Like their bronze-clad ancestors they listen to whispers from Tartarus. Crossing that abyss, they perceive the world of Form and music, and when they desire, impose its principles on the world.

Mythos: Magic draws down primordial Forms. These eternal truths aren't just ideal objects, but titans: the gods of the gods. Concept begat concept, acquiring complexity and personality. Cronus was one of these. He prepared the way for gods and mortals with Uranus's blood, and blessed the cosmos with the diversity, personality, and individual existence he possessed.

For his blessing and crime, Cronus' Olympian children cast him into Tartarus: the gap between the created world and its Forms. The gods became *demiurgoi* when they took the titans' place in the scheme of things and so made Creation a distorted shadow of the ideal realm, not a true reflection. Although he seized the Form of thunder, Zeus could never become one with its substance, so through him the power degraded into a shadow. So too did Poseidon and Hades claim titans' thrones without becoming one with their domains, for they were limited by the urge to remain individuals instead of raw elemental entities.

Through the Archai, sorcerers reach beyond the Olympians' imperfect, visible world. They cross Tartarus by bargaining with fallen titans, using the rites devised by their Pelasgian ancestors. Sorcerers negotiate with the darkness but never obey it, and ultimately keep these titans sealed away. Wizards pass these guardians to touch the Forms coiled in the Oroboros.

The Tyrannoi

During the succession crisis after Alexander's death, the Tyrannoi see their chance to seize and rebuild the Empire for Awakened benefit. Magi will bear sword and rod to keep Sleepers in line. Believing that eternal war will keep Sleepers in a position of servitude, some Tyrannoi Vajrastra call themselves Diadochi and act as "shadow generals," using Alexander's warlords as their proxies. They incite wars with foreign kingdoms and even encourage conflicts between "their" generals, sharing the spoils no matter which side wins. Embroiled in war, Sleepers cannot see the secret empire forming behind the warlords' thrones. The Awakened Diadochi follow Alexander's self-deification. Leaders ritually merge with Supernal Olympians: beings they will one day call Exarchs.

Factions: The cult originally split along political lines, with each faction supporting a city-state or power bloc. After Philip of Macedon unified Greece, his Awakened supporters did the same for the cult. Its combined power defended Greek interests and may have contributed to Alexander's ascendancy, but his success divides the cult once more. The *Atlanteans* have gained followers as Plato's legacy grows ever more famous, especially as his pupil Aristotle becomes known as Alexander's teacher. They've shed much of the cult's mythology or redefined it as abstract philosophical symbolism, and look to Atlantis as mythic Arcadia reborn, ruled by philosopher–kings. *Tyrannoi* follow Alexander's imperial example instead of his intellectual influences. They've seen him reshape religions to suit him, and believe that through temporal influence and powerful magic they can bind the Olympians, displacing them as they displaced the titans. As new gods they'd not only deserve obedience, but worship.

Organization: Like Sleeper mystery cults, the Arcadians use secret signs and myths to set degrees in their hierarchy. As a sorcerer rises through the ranks, she learns new invocations to the titans of Tartarus and the Oroboros of Forms. A sorcerer who knows the songs and gestures of high rank is to be obeyed by lesser magicians. All loyal members of the cult obey their region's Hierophant and his Epoptoi council of Masters. A typical branch of the cult centers on a great oracle or ancient shrine. Despite its lore, the cult neither hates nor loves the gods, whose war with the titans was inevitable, an adamantine thread in the skein of fate. They don't blame Sleepers for their religions, either. Without magic, ordinary men and women have no other way to contact celestial powers and in any event, faith signals loyalty to one's tribe and culture. Thus, members often practice ordinary religions, and many are even priests.

Oblations: Hymns to the titans; visiting an oracle or shrine; sacrificing meat and blood to the titans, and fat to the gods.





Legacies: The House of Ariadne, who follow the threads of Time; the Orphans of Proteus, wild shapeshifters; Skalds (called Rhapsodes in this age), singers of epic songs; Sphinxes, who study the secrets of language; and Storm Keepers, who practice weather-witchcraft.

Future Fate: Greek sorcerers spread influence across the known world, and their ideas begin to permeate the cultures of their brethren. Atlantean philosophy becomes the dominant strain of thought, and other cults the world over absorb its ideas.

Karpani

The False Magi, Poets of Flame and Corruption

Zoroastrianism survives — thrives, even — in Persia; but in conquest, Alexander butchered its high clergy, smashed great temples, and burned sacred texts. He had no particular grudge against the religion, but ruined it for the same reason he ravaged other Achaemenid institutions: They were political competitors who needed to be humbled. The magi have been overthrown, and heretics ape their words from the shadows.

Persian mages call themselves *Karpani*: remnants of an ancient order of poets and cantors who served Persians before Zoroaster founded the great faith. He spoke against the Karpani, accusing them of chanting to flatter and pry wealth from their patrons. Zoroastrians never acquired enough political power to suppress other Persian religions. That would have been a confusing exercise anyway, because non-Zoroastrians often honor the same Yazatas and Daevas. Magi demoted the pantheon to servants and shadows of its supreme powers, but respected them nonetheless.

Karpani adopted aspects of the religion to illuminate their magical studies, but never considered themselves true Zoroastrians, much less priests. They were the witch-poets people went to when they wanted results, not spiritual edification. But Alexander's conquest thrust them into that role, and a few now believe it's their mission to fight for Persians in the Empire and preserve their culture, including the sacred rites of a religion that rejected them. Yet just as many remain devoted to sorcery first, and play with light or dark powers when it suits them.

Mythos: Magic emanates from the righteous, creative power of Ahura Mazda or Angra Mainyu's evil. Ahura Mazda radiates and maintains the stuff of existence itself; Angra Mainyu continually putrefies and destroys it. Ahura Mazda leads the seven creative powers, or Amesha Spentas. The Evil One and his six greatest *daevas* oppose them, spirit for spirit, as divine personalities, moral positions, and natural forces. Five of the seven pairs correspond to Paths and their magic. Together, they are:

- Ahura Mazda (protection of the soul) and Angra Mainyu (spiritual corruption); Divine Power.
- Vohu Manah (righteous purposefulness) and Aka Manah (moral cowardice); Acanthos.

- Asha (truthfulness) and Indar (deceitfulness); Obrimos.
- Armaiti (devotion to justice) and Nanghait (discontent); Mastigos.
- Haurvatat (preservation of wholeness) and Tauriz (destruction); Thyrsos.
- Ameretat ("immortality" and preservation of health) and Zarich (aging and illness); Moros.
- Kshathra Vairya (just leadership) and Saurva (oppression); Worldly Power.

Karpani see the cosmos as a struggle between moral forces with physical manifestations. Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu stand beyond the powers of high magic. Kshathra Vairya and Saurva command the lesser powers of the world, from petty spirits to warring armies. A sorcerer is a poet whose verses either reveal the truths of the Amesha Spentas, or conceal and corrupt, strengthening their opposing *daevas*. Karpani typically identify these good and evil spirits with aspects of the self, including Virtues, Vices, and moral breaking points. Each Amesha Spenta upholds specific positive characteristics and each daeva encompasses certain sins. Karpani meditate upon them, summoning the Archai they control. Thus, magic always represents some moral truth or sin. Poets believe that Forces is always a matter of truth or deception. Fire burns away concealing darkness, or the darkness smothers it.

Factions: Karpani believe that all magic has a moral component, but many take a relaxed attitude toward righteous behavior. Sorcery's a dangerous profession, and a practitioner balances pure and impure actions until he finds a balance to suit his conscience. The old polytheistic witches and pagan poets call themselves *Kavi* (singular, *Kavu*), a word that means "visionary" and is often applied to gods and mystics. Kavi satisfy the flock's desires for a price, and align with Amesha Spentas or Daevas according to a client's will or their own desires. *Yashtipati* ("Hymn Masters") believe in a duty to participate in the creative purpose Ahura Mazda gave humanity, and strive to align their actions with the Amesha Spentas alone.

Organization: Karpani put stock in eloquently spoken memorized verse. There may be sorcerers among them who can't recite two hours of holy texts from memory, but their companions would hold them in low esteem for failing to meet the standard. This encourages them to organize in small groups devoted to study and mutual self-protection. Archai and occult knowledge determine the pecking order. A *Mede* (named after the religious caste of pre-Zoroastrian Persia and often used by Greeks to refer to all Persians) settles disputes by dint of superior scholarship when he can, and judges whether an action would satisfy Ahura Mazda or Angra Mainyu. He doesn't enforce these decisions, but relies on other Karpani to be moved by his logic and erudition. A large city might possess a handful of Medes sorcerers assigned varying degrees of trust depending on the issues or people at hand.

Oblations: Prayer before a fire or pure water, reciting religious texts.

Legacies: Celestial Masters, who harness the motions of stars and planets; the Clavicularius (called Binders of Daevas) who enslave their personified passions; Singers in Silence, mourners for the dead and dying; and Subtle Ones, who practice the arts of secrecy as a path to humility.

Future Fate: The term *magus* and *mage* begin to gain popularity in describing any sorcerer, and soon the Karpani become almost indistinguishable from the Greek and Indian sorcerers entering their lands. Most Karpani leave their cloistered lives to travel the world to learn and adopt the best parts of new cultures. Those devoted to preserving Persian culture refuse to join with the rest of Awakened society, though in parts of Persia, India, and in between, they evolve into the dominant group, if one with greatly transformed beliefs.

Mantra Sadhaki

Exiles from the Kingdom of Dragons

Look at humanity in the Kali Yuga: mostly Asleep and cursed with mortal fragility. It was not always so. In the prior age, superhuman tribes carved the world into warring kingdoms. They were violent, but even their evil was wiser than contemporary good. They knew when they sinned. Instead of confusion about their purpose, they felt afraid to embrace it.

Of all demigod nations, the greatest was the Naga Kingdom. The Naga people took their name from the serpentine gods they worshiped, who taught them the elemental Paths and the way of civilization long before the other tribes, and might have served as fathers and mothers to them all — in ancient times, the line between blood heritage and teachings was vanishingly thin. One of the five great bloodlines produced Prince Aryaka, and his great-granddaughter Kuni gave birth to the Pandavas: the fathers of civilization.

Nagas battled their Pandava relatives, but also forged alliances with them to help them fulfill their destinies. Yet even in triumph, the Nagas felt loss, for the Pandavas were destined to leave lesser descendants. They helped the Pandavas build mighty cities in the Khandava Forest, and suffered as the mortal race declined — and, on several occasions, betrayed them. Finally, the time came to withdraw heroic power from the Pandavas. The *Mahabharata* says a snake killed Arjuna's grandson, bringing the Age of Iron to the world. The Naga tribe also withdrew, but gave its teachings to a line of ascetics, the *Mantra Sadhaki*, to continue the task of guiding ordinary humans toward righteousness.

Mythos: Magic consists of two interrelated phenomena: *siddhi*, or "attainments" granted by enlightenment, and *mantras* that create change through the use of a magical formula. Although they're synonymous with mystical sounds, mantras ultimately function by issuing vibrations to the primordial medium. To set these on their proper source, a sorcerer must visualize every



aspect of the change he wishes to create, and imagine the songs that call upon appropriate *Devas*, or high gods. Siddhi manifest spontaneously as states of being, not thoughtful actions.

All forms of magic require an enlightened consciousness however, and never simply call power from higher to lower realms. Magic is a meditative act that sends the sorcerer's consciousness to the Devas of the *Rupaloka*, or world of ideal forms — and according to some, the sorcerer *becomes* the god that grants his desire, for every deity is also a *jhana*, or meditative state. Therein lies the danger of magic: An impure consciousness flies to darker realms, and *becomes* the very demons that befoul it.

Factions: Mantrikis divide themselves according to their position on whether the cult should remain Sannyasi or revive the Naga Kingdom — an act that was until recently believed to be pointless, since none of the superhuman nations could thrive in the Kali Yuga. The orthodox view broke against Alexander's war with the Kambojas. Even though he never interfered with the Kambojas' spiritual lives, some elders in the cult believe that the Kambojas' failures represent a weakness in the dharma passed down by the Pandavas and their followers. The other side keeps vows to live alongside society, not within it. Neither faction has an official name.

Organization: The Mantra Sadhaki walk from place to place in small groups consisting of a mentor, or *Acarya*, and his followers. They select migration patterns that ensure that they'll meet other cabals regularly, and keep their temples and Hallows occupied. Elders walk smaller circles across the land so that others can find and consult them. Taking their name from musical demigods, a small council of *Ghandarvas* act as messengers and advisors for each *Rishi* that leads them.

Oblations: Fasting throughout the day before meditating, nudity, chanting, drawing Yantras (the magical diagrams, not all subjects listed under the term in **Mage**) and mandalas.

Legacies: The Fallen Pillar, whose adepts find enlightenment through ascetic self-denial; Perfected Adepts who master physical yoga and martial arts; Thread-Cutters (called Cakravarti) who cut short karmically diseased lives; and Uncrowned Kings, who practice yoga that refines the intellect.

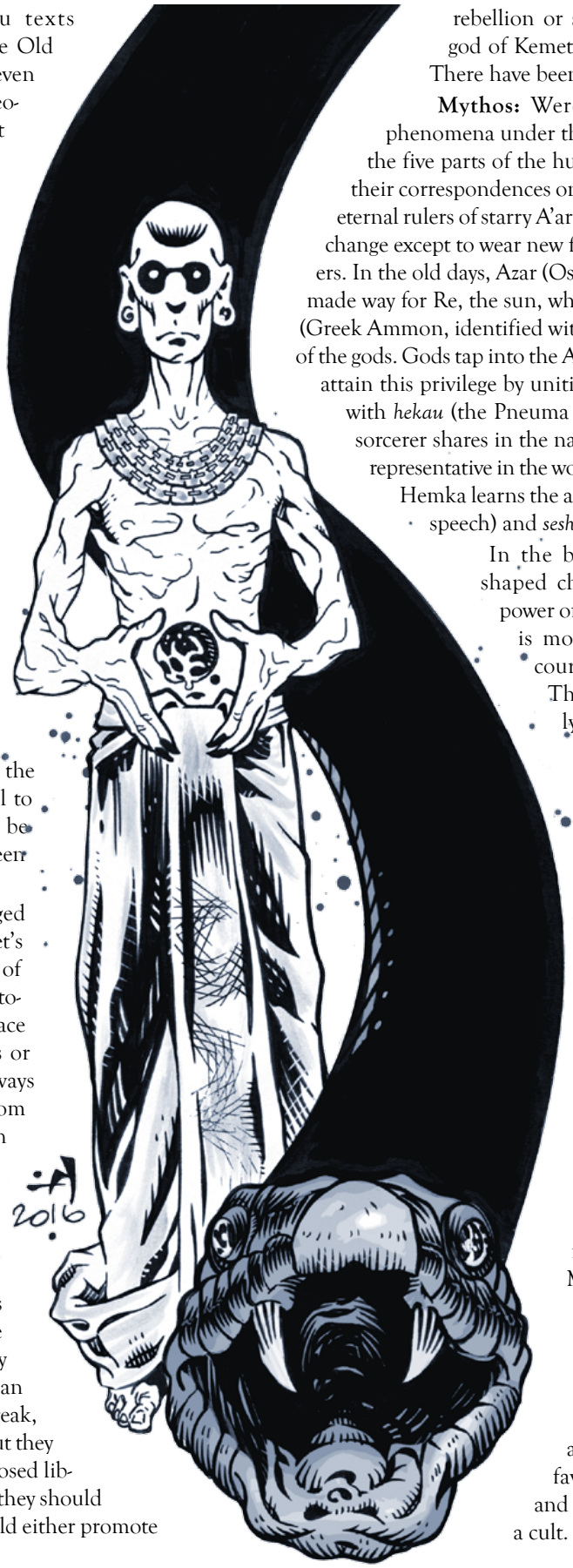
Future Fate: The darshanas Mantrikis developed into formal schools become the ideological pillars for future mystic orders. In the West, these merge with Greek Atlantean ideals, but in their homelands, Mantrikis keep to their own myths and beliefs.

Weret-Hekau

Priests of the Fivefold Soul

The eldest in a family must shoulder the greatest responsibility. They possess the longest memories. They remember ancient dangers. If the Awakened are a great family, the Weret-Hekau are its elder brothers and sisters — perhaps even its parents and first tutors. They arose in Kemet, the Black Land Greeks call Egypt, and as foreign philosophers struggled with codifying sorcery in ancient days, the Hemka ("priests of the essence") has already mapped the soul's landscape, and learned the duties of sorcerer-priests.

The first Weret-Hekau texts date back to the dawn of the Old Kingdom, and describe an even earlier age. The Predynastic peoples prospered under the direct rule of the gods, who taught them agriculture, crafts and the power of *Sekhem*, the subtle energy of all existence. The gods possessed an inherent *Akh*, a unified spirit able to command Sekhem. Before the Pharaohs of history, god-rulers build the foundations of Kemet's culture by reshaping Sekhem, but the project slipped out of their control, and disaster struck. The ancestors of the Weret-Hekau founded the tradition of erasing dangerous knowledge, so few signs of the earlier "Scorpion Dynasty" remain, but these early magi studied before they destroyed. They learned to unite the Ba and Ka aspects of the soul to produce the divine Akh, and became the new mediators between gods and humans.



Hemka have long belonged to an elite group within Kemet's society, populating the ranks of high scribes, priests, and aristocrats. They've fallen from grace many times, due to invasions or religious strife, but have always returned to power, lessons from each period of humility in hand. Thus, they understand Greek and Persian beliefs, and know the occult significance of the Atenist blasphemy, when Akhenaten attempted to bypass the gods and access the source of their might himself. They never doubted that the Persian yoke around Kemet would break, for their kingdom is eternal, but they distrust Alexander, their supposed liberator. If he is a god manifest, they should support him. If not, they should either promote rebellion or somehow *make* Alexander a god of Kemet. This is not unprecedented. There have been many Pharaohs before.

Mythos: Weret-Hekau magic places all phenomena under the dominion of the gods and the five parts of the human soul. (See the Paths for their correspondences on pp. 81-84). The gods are the eternal rulers of starry A'aru, beyond the sky. They never change except to wear new faces, or retire in favor of others. In the old days, Azar (Osiris) reigned supreme, but he made way for Re, the sun, who in turn united with Amun (Greek Ammon, identified with Zeus), the hidden overlord of the gods. Gods tap into the Akh of magical power. Mortals attain this privilege by uniting Ba (intention and desire) with *hekau* (the Pneuma of the Greeks). Therefore, a sorcerer shares in the nature of a god, and acts as his representative in the world. To cast particular spells, a Hemka learns the arts of *hu* (utterances of divine speech) and *seshau* (formal rituals).

In the beginning, the divine Akh shaped chaos into Sekhem, the raw power of the manifest world. Sekhem is more than "life energy." The course of destiny obeys its flow. The Scorpion lords carelessly shaped Sekhem, leaving cursed Artifacts and places throughout Kemet. Weret-Hekau don't command Sekhem with pure will, but look to A'aru to cultivate the Akh and manipulate Sekhem indirectly, like a farmer digging trenches to shape the flood for her benefit. Sekhem always carries a touch of its original chaos, so careless handling provokes Apep, the serpent. Apep, the demon Ammut, and a host of other dark powers threaten unready souls, so Hemka must always be mindful of Ma'at, and abstain from selfish and impulsive acts.

Factions: Weret-Hekau honor all the gods, but organize themselves based on the god they honor most ardently. They usually choose favored gods based on Path, and meet wherever that deity has a cult. Like mortal politicians, gods



Those Who Cross Over

As stewards of one of the world's oldest civilizations and skilled record keepers, the Weret-Hekau have accumulated a significant amount of information about supernatural beings who have interfered in their nation's history. Unfortunately Hemka are not immune to internal rivalries, so to dig anything up, a sorcerer needs to trade favors for access to a library or talkative expert.

A disciplined seeker of the truth would discover that after the fall of the Scorpion quasi-dynasty, their creations, Arisen (as detailed in **Mummy: The Curse**), dragged themselves out of the sand during the reign of Unas, sparking a conflict that drove most of them from the region and hurled Kemet into chaos. Few Arisen have been seen since, but lesser (though dangerous) entities called Shuankhsen can still be found hidden among the populace. Weret-Hekau believe these beings are the result of incautious experiments with Sekhem. In contemporary terms, Sekhem is not "Supernal," but the stuff of existence as it actually manifests. Awakened magic interacts with it like a smith holding tongs, while the Predynastic ancients preferred to grab this molten stuff with the spiritual equivalent of their bare hands. Weret-Hekau do not necessarily believe the works of Irem (a name few of them know) to be evil, but dangerous. Hemka have attempted to learn the old arts before, but progressing beyond elementary knowledge risks injury and Nemesis.

rise and fall out from attention. So too do their corresponding Paths. In Alexander's time the Obrimos or *Ka* Path enjoys prestige as priests of Amun. Path and cult-based division is so logical and in keeping with the facts of magic that Weret-Hekau have little patience for any other way, and believe that foreign magi probably serve Kemet's gods according to their soul's strengths, even if they give them strange names and rites.

Organization: Virtually all Weret-Hekau are aristocratic priests, but Persian dominion deprived many of the privileges of station. In Kemet, the most respected sorcerer in a region is called its *Haty* (what Greeks would call a "nomarch"). The Haty directs rituals and represents local Hemka. She organizes them into a functional court with scribes, warriors, and lawgivers. In the old days many Weret-Hekau were in fact the acknowledged rulers of local Sleepers, but the Persians forced them to abandon that role, and they can't agree on whether to take it back.

Oblations: Praying before images of the gods; chanting hymns; writing sacred texts; meditating in any ancient structure from Kemet, or upon the Black Land's old Artifacts.

Legacies: The Stone Scribes, who study the Ren (name-souls) of beings, and the new Thrice-Great, who combine Greek philosophy with Kemetic astrology. In addition, by studying ancient tombs, some Hemka have developed the powers that will one day be rediscovered by the Bokor. This is a matter of considerable controversy. The Weret-Hekau have always considered certain tombs fair game for plunder, but raising the prepared corpses of the dead may be a step too far.

Future Fate: Kemet proves to be less enduring than the Weret-Hekau believe. Traditional culture erodes under Greek rule. Yet Hellenization spreads Kemetic lore throughout the civilized world, and Weret-Hekau practices become the foundation for later magical traditions.

Barbarians and Enemy Witches

Elder sorcerers know that strange sects thrive in the shadows of orthodox cults and darshanas. Most of these represent local priests and mystics, and behold part of the truth in much the same way as their better-known counterparts; but a few contain immoral or alien practices too harmful to permit, but too potent to extinguish.

Baalim

Greeks call it Tartarus. Indians and Persians talk about self-deception in the soul, and how it gives birth to demon worlds. Babylonian sorcerers developed the science of communicating with and binding these gods of anti-form. They called them *Annunaki*, and associated them with strange sigils and invisible constellations. Greeks call them titans. Members of the Arcadian Mysteries know better than to worship them, but must bargain with them to perceive the Forms.

The world of shape and law cast them into the Abyss, and now their priests, or *Baalim*, communicate with them in moments of mad ecstasy. Karpani know the Baalim and their hunger to rip the skin of law and sanity from the cosmos. Outside Babylon and other ancient settlements, these renegades rarely operate in groups, and well-regarded sorcerers don't consider them a pressing threat. It will take many generations for wizards to see the Abyss as both a spiritual and cosmic condition, much less a yawning threat that requires constant vigilance. Besides, sorcerers deal with dark forces as a matter of course, so Tartarus is a magical realm to respect and exploit, not fear as a special adversary.

Yantras: Baalim utilize distorted symbols. A Baalim mystic diagram may seem as random as a child's chalk scrawl, but in fact invokes the strange geometry of Chaos as precisely as human tools will allow. Baalim High Speech utilizes paradoxical logic and impossible images. Baalim visit cursed places, carry bloodstained tools, and use self-harm, obscene gestures, and messy sacrifices. These aren't deliberate acts of evil, but

ways to transcend fixed symbolism by breaking themselves and thus, the world.

Other Systems: As the predecessors of the Scelesti, Baalim may deliberately invite Paradoxes into their spells to strengthen them. Baalim may utilize the methods of any darshana or cult, corrupted to invoke the Abyss, and may join the Scelestus Legacies that exist during Alexander's age.

Pharmakons

Associated with poisoning, healing, and human sacrifice, Greek *Pharmakons* are known for performing human sacrifices in times of urgent need. These witches drug their victims before either torturing or killing them. Other sorcerers believe Pharmakons are ritually impure and exclude them from their cults. This leads mages in Alexander's time to give this title to all solitary sorcerers. Equivalents exist in many societies.

If a Pharmakon survives her first few years, it's because she possesses an exceptional mix of knowledge, will, and magical power. Many belong to darshanas, though fellow adherents avoid them, unless they need something done that's out of bounds for respectable sorcerers — and given wizards' eccentricities, this includes some extreme services. In some regions, it has become the norm to employ a Pharmakon to administer punishments on behalf of a cult. The sorcerer wears a mask to mark herself as a representative of the cult, without her person actually belonging to it.

Some Pharmakons embrace their exclusion to such an extent that they reject all forms of ritual purity — only then, they say, will they be able to view the unmasked truths of existence. Indian sorcerers call them *Atamasi*, or those "without darkness," because they embrace filth, intoxication, and grave ash. They deny that truth lies in Form alone, and search lonely "lower depths" for power.

Future sorcerers would classify Pharmakons as the Mad or Banishers, but in Alexander's time, people don't draw a line between willfully defying social norms and becoming so soul-broken they stagger beyond them. When a Pharmakon loses control of his gifts, his cult, which may have tolerated him up to this point, usually kills or banishes him.

Yantras: Pharmakons use the same Yantras as other mages who share their training. Untutored Pharmakons (often the Atamasi mentioned above) cannot utilize written or spoken High Speech and restrict themselves to the most primitive Path tools.

Other Systems: The cultures of the age don't distinguish between Banishers and the Mad, but **Mage**'s systems do. Use them as appropriate — and know that without social supports, a Banisher transforms into a *Mad* Banisher quite often. A small number of Pharmakons are neither, but choose the role of outcast for its symbolism or as a way to discourage close relationships. This eventually transforms into the ritual position of Interfector within the Guardians of the Veil.

Reapers and Liches of the Ancient World

Although they're familiar with soul manipulation methods, sorcerers aren't habitual Reapers as often as in the modern age. It doesn't possess the same taboo-breaking thrill without a world full of monotheists to get upset about it. Driven by Egyptian insights, the average well-connected magician actually has a better understanding of the soul than her modern counterpart. Sorcerers skilled in the five subtle Archai and certain Legacies bend souls in ways that will vanish into obscure corners of Mysterium libraries, or burn under Guardian torches. By comparison, Reaping is a crude practice. Stolen souls possess troublesome sympathetic connections, turn sour under inept handling, and attract attention in a world where most people live in small communities. Nevertheless, a few Reapers travel the Empire. The Nagaraja (see below) are representative of those that do haunt the era, seizing souls and keeping to themselves.

Similarly, while sorcerers across the known world use magic to ward off disease and infirmity, and might give themselves a few extra years to pursue occult studies, not many get obsessive about it. People are more used to death and again, small communities make strange people stick out, including would-be immortals. Sorcerers are more concerned with living nobly. Many believe that death provides an opportunity to Ascend through reincarnation or divine favor, but that this comes with the risk of getting punished for hubris or shackled to the Underworld by their shades.

Timoroi: Hounds of the Furies

Timoroi, or "Frightening Ones," claim to serve primal gods of moral law. They further claim that these primal gods have decreed that in this age humanity is no longer worthy of the Art. Greek Timoroi identify with the Erinyes and are sometimes called by this name, though these sorcerers never use the name themselves — that would be foolish. Do traumatic Awakenings destine a few for the Timoroi obsession? Perhaps, but a small number acquire it through great spiritual pain partway on the path to enlightenment. It is said that if a sorcerer speaks to a Timoros for too long, he'll be swayed by her arguments and insidious spirit.

Timoroi are usually untutored by choice. They're scarcely more deserving than the wizards they hunt, so why should

The Chronicles of Darkness

Sorcerers in Alexander's Empire know many forms of monsters hiding in human guise. Greek magi describe them as *terata*, twisted offspring of Titans and divine curses, and the name (if not the explanation) is spreading with the Empire.

It seems as though every people in the world tell legends of the dead rising as ghosts, or even returning to their bodies as strange blends of mortal and spirit; Indian *vetalas* seem to arise "naturally," but other forms are the result of mystical bargains with either ghosts or the strange chthonian beings native to the Underworld. In Greece, the so-called *Ferrymen* claim kinship with Charon, the dread boatman of the Styx, and lay ghosts to rest when they trouble the living. Other dead things return through aberrant magic, such as the dusty wrapped corpses buried beneath Egypt's sand, who arise in response to astrological conjunctions or subtle conditions to obsessively seek out relics of their long-vanished empire.

Closely-related to those returning to life through bargain or curse are the multitude of creatures that drink the blood or breath of the living to steal their victims' lives; Greek legends describe *Empusae* and *Lamia*, and Greek peasants bar their windows at night against the dreaded owl-like *Strix*. In Babylon lustful *Daevas* hunger for blood, while in India, the flesh-eating *Pishacha* maintain their own shadowy society aside from humanity. Centuries in the future, these disparate monsters will think of themselves as kindred to one another, but in Alexander's time they are united only by their thirsts. Some are born or manifest with their traits, but others can embrace innocents into their night-time courts.

Also standing aside from the people of the Empire, the wild, shapechanging wolf-people of the Shadow World are described in Greek sources as the children of *Lycaon-Ur*, a mythic figure transformed into a wolf by Zeus. The Father of Wolves is vanished now, some say to take dominion over Arcadia. His sons are not the only figures out of old legends to confront the Awakened; *Galeteids*, images of men and women given life (though not souls) through divine inspiration, are rare but not unknown to the cults. These unhappy, half-alive beings strive for the chance to become truly human, guided (or so Greek examples say) by the Titan Prometheus and his gift of fire to humanity.

Occasionally, Acanthos encounter warped, twisted beings who claim to have escaped Dionysian revels or the Courts of the Rakshasa. These poor wretches warn of malignant spirits stealing human children, travelers, and others who will not be missed. Finally, other, less humanoid monsters dwell now in the deepest parts of the temenoi; the gorgons, hydras, cyclopes, and other great beasts sometimes take human form and venture out into the world of men.

they seek magical lore? The dangerous exceptions belong to a Legacy that teaches members to become immortal by eating Awakened souls. These are the only sorcerers other Timoroi name after spirits of vengeance, and know them as the Eumenides ("Kindly Ones"). One day they'll be called "Timori," after the Latinized version of their sect's name.

Yantras: Timoroi don't automatically know High Speech and cannot use its written or spoken forms without acquiring the High Speech Merit at some later point in their magical development. Thus, they're limited to Path tools and whatever other Yantras they can discover through instinct or trial and error. Due to their focus on punishing sorcerers, Timoroi typically prefer weapons over other tools.

Other Systems: Timoroi are almost always Banishers who experienced twisted Awakenings and have never belonged to a cult, darshana, or any equivalent thereof. Some Timoroi belong to a Reaper Legacy of the same name.

LEGACY: THE NAGARAJA

Even when your belly screamed hunger and your sword wept enemy blood, you laughed. The others loved you for it. You saved them from despair over many campaigns. When the holy wanderers came, the general ordered you to treat them well, to win over the locals. But you stayed up with one and as you talked through the night, the fire lost its color. The sunrise brought you no joy, but across the gray, dull heart of your camp you heard your laugh. The holy man had stolen it, but you don't care about that anymore. You don't care about anything.



We Transcend the Self by Reveling In It

The Nagaraja are a young Legacy, nominally aligned with the Mantra Sadhaki. About a century ago they were ascetics who studied Sleepers who lived as they did, devoted to philosophy and self-discipline. The Mantrikis usually stayed a day or two behind their subjects, viewing them from afar with magic to determine if their techniques offered anything promising. They tracked Udaka Ramaputta's sect and grew interested in his chief disciple, Siddhartha, when Udaka proclaimed him an equal. Siddhartha left with four other disciples. They starved themselves to the cusp of death until Siddhartha accepted a donation of food. His companions believed Siddhartha had given up and left, but when sorcerers spied on him, they noticed that while he now took better care of his body, he continued to spend most of his time in deep meditation.

Then they could no longer read his mind. They could no longer see him from afar. They couldn't even find the tree he sat under — the forests seemed to always lead them away. Siddhartha had vanished. Why? He or some ally of his could have used some sort of subtle sorcery, or perhaps some events simply aren't meant to be seen by the Awakened. Maybe the Nagaraja are lying, and use the legend of Siddartha Guatama, the Buddha, for their own ends.

He reappeared months later to preach to his old companions about his "Middle Way," which would be called Buddhism in time. Siddhartha still possessed an impenetrable mind, and sympathetic spells slipped off him like carelessly tied knots. His audience grew, so it became easy enough for sorcerers to listen along with the rest. Siddhartha spoke of *anatman*, or the viewing of the self as an impermanent formation that cannot attach itself to particular desires. As far as the Awakened were concerned only magic could separate which teachings were insightful, and which were Sleeping rhetoric.



Who Owns a Soul?

Several Nagaraja Attainments refer to a soul's "owner." In **Mage**, souls wander around, so this might be unclear. These systems define a soul's owner as whoever last used the soul as her own, primary soul without experiencing soul loss Conditions, and didn't just keep it in a soul jar or bound as a spare. This holds true even if the soul used to belong to someone else.

The sorcerers discarded the "Middle Way." Siddhartha had been a prince and a hermit. His journey made him what he was, as he experienced the extremes of existence. They decided to adopt practices they found useful, and throw them away once they threatened to become attachments. Adopting and discarding urges was the next logical step, but was still limited to desires generated by the Self. This common origin for all feelings would ebb and flow in patterns, and those patterns would themselves become fixations.

The natural solution would be to seize the passions of others — seize their souls, in fact. This became the foundation of their yoga. They declared it the Nagaraja method after cult legends and the story of the three kings of snakes: aspects of the serpent which are never attached to a single nature but swing between serving and poisoning mortals.

Origins

Parentage: Mastigos or Mantra Sadhaki

Background: Almost all Nagaraja are Asian initiates of the Mantra Sadhaki, but some foreigners practice with them. They're all rootless sorcerers who wander from place to place to avoid sentimental attachments and anyone who notices they steal souls.

Appearance: Most Nagaraja have a road-worn appearance due to constant travel, but otherwise dress according to their current tastes. They favor extremes. A sorcerer playing at nobility wears dusty finery, while one going through an ascetic phase wears no clothes over his skeletal figure. In mid-transition, a Nagaraja can be a bizarre sight: a priest in rags but tottering under heavy gold jewelry, or a warrior missing half her armor, brandishing a wooden sword.

Doctrine

Prerequisites: Death 2, Empathy 2 and Survival 2.

Initiation: To complete her initiation, the Nagaraja must cast aside all of her former possessions, walk a week's distance or more from everyone she knows except for Legacy members, and take possession of a soul using the spell "Soul Jar."

Organization: Nagaraja informally rank themselves by the number of Legacy Attainments they know. If all else is equal, they look to magical prowess and force of personality. The greatest Nagaraja in a group is its guru; her disciples owe her total obedience. Two of the Legacy's founders survive. They've given up the wandering life for a temple near the Khyber Pass and play with souls pilgrims willingly give them. They're exceedingly wise, powerful, and probably irredeemably insane.

Future Fate: Nagaraja and the Tremere

During the period of *To the Strongest*, the Tremere wander Europe beyond the Empire, keeping to themselves unless they need supplies or to replenish their numbers. They study the subtle Archai in search of the secrets of the soul, but they aren't Reapers — not yet. They keep customs they believe date from before the Fall, and are most notable in this period for possessing a full command of High Speech. They can speak and write about any subject in that language.

By 50 BC, rumors of vampires draw them to Egypt, where an ancient vampire enslaves them and sends them in search of occult resources. During one such journey they encounter the Bound that initiates them into the contemporary Legacy. The Tremere then consume and destroy other Reapers. Tremere claim the Nagaraja first, and by the 2nd century CE absorb them as a "house" within the greater Legacy.

Theory: Chained by patterns of experience and desire, people refuse to see beyond them. By looking through the perspectives of other souls and changing what they desire from one moment to the next, Nagaraja see things as they really are, beyond the fixed rhythms of Samsara. That's where Ascension awaits them. Instead of waiting for the lessons of new incarnations, stolen souls help them "die" and renew themselves as new people, so they may learn the lessons of a thousand years in a single lifetime.

Sorcery

Ruling Arcanum: Death

Yantras: Destroying a magical tool during its use (+1 in addition to the tool's bonus); impersonating a specific person (+1 or +2, depending on the degree of accuracy); using an item containing someone else's soul in a ritual (+1 Sleeper, +2 Awakened); eating elaborate meals or faeces and rotten offal (+1; +2 if gluttony or the choice of meal inflicts an adverse Condition).

Oblations: Learning another person's Virtue, Vice, or magical Obsession; acquiring a new soul; satisfying the Vice of someone whose soul the Nagaraja possesses; meditating in an "unclean" place such as a trash heap or charnel ground, or while sitting upon the throne (or other place of authority) of a chieftain.

Attainments

First: Assess the Wandering Through

Prerequisites: Initiation Requirements

You learn to sense a soul's progress through Samsara: its "wandering through" a path created by spiritual attachments. This duplicates the effects of the spell "Soul Marks" . If the Attainment must pierce any form of supernatural concealment, it automatically scores successes equal to the sorcerer's Death dots.

Optional: Mind 1

You may also emulate the spell "Know Nature," but can also exercise it upon a disembodied soul to learn its owner's psychological characteristics. If used on anyone with a body, the Attainment pierces supernatural concealment as if scoring successes equal to the sorcerer's Mind dots.

Second: Expand the Self

Prerequisites: Death 2, Empathy 3

You banish the notion of a fixed identity by taking on another soul, enjoying its foreign perspective to teach yourself that desires are only tools to grasp and abandon at need. This duplicates the effects of "Soul Jar" .

Optional: Mind 2

You may share the lesson of transitory desire with another person. You may unleash a Vice that belongs to a stolen soul's owner. This duplicates the effects of the spell "Emotional Urging" except that the urge is limited to feelings in harmony with the unleashed Vice. On the other hand, the victim suffers from the Deprived Condition except when it comes to satisfying the alien Vice.

Third: Yoke the Sleeping Soul

Prerequisites: Death 3, Empathy 3.

You can seize a soul straight from another being. This duplicates the effects of "Sever Soul".

Optional: Mind 3

Mind 3 imparts the power to master a stolen soul's Vice, acquiring inhuman satisfaction from fulfilling it. When a sorcerer satisfies a Vice possessed by the true owner of one of his stolen souls, she not only recovers a number of Willpower points equal to her Mind dots, but may add her Mind dots to her Composure for a scene by spending one point of Mana. The Composure bonus imposes transient stacking on any spell that increases Composure.

Fourth: Liberate Soul

Prerequisites: Death 4, Empathy 4

You may obliterate a Sleeping soul. It crumbles before the undisguised presence of ultimate reality. If the soul doesn't reside within its true owner, this is automatically successful. Against a Sleeper, this functions as Yoke the Sleeping Soul would except that success doesn't seize the soul, but destroys it (or so the Nagaraja believe).

This subjects a Sleeper to such trauma that the victim's player rolls Resolve + Composure twice to determine the extent to which her innermost self has been annihilated. The victim's Integrity changes to the lower of the first roll or her current rating. The victim's Willpower *dots* become the lower of the second roll or her current rating. If these new ratings would equate to advanced stages of soul loss, the character acquires the appropriate Conditions: Enervated at Integrity 1, and Thrall at 0 Willpower dots.

This Attainment requires one point of Mana to activate and doesn't function on the Awakened or beings with major supernatural templates. The Storyteller can allow or deny its use against others on a case by case basis.

Optional: Mind 4

You may liberate another person or even yourself from specific attachments and fixations. This functions as the Mind spell "Psychic Reprogramming".

Fifth: Non-Attachment

Prerequisites: Death 5, Empathy 5.

Standing at the threshold of enlightenment, you discard connections to any particular sense of self, and your presence in the world dissolves. This duplicates the effects of "Empty Presence". Each use costs one point of Mana.

Optional: Mind 5.

You may discard moral attachments instead, or in conjunction with the others shed by this Attainment. This emulates the spell "Amorality".

Adventures in the Classical World

Sorcerers from all cultures feel the effects of Alexander's conquests into the Eastern world. Western sorcerers traveling to the East and Eastern sorcerers dealing with Western invaders experience unique issues. Many speak of Alexander's hubris influencing those around him to their own hubristic acts. The following stories set the stage for the Awakened of the Classical Era, and the adventures and difficulties they face.

Abydos, City of the Dead

Called Abdju by the natives, Abydos contains Egypt's oldest tombs. To the Weret-Hekau, the city's necropolis is its oldest library, temple, and storehouse of Artifacts. Weret-Hekau enter the tombs with caution and respect, take what they need and return what they can. This isn't just a religious duty. Abydos contains the supposed tombs of Narmer, the first true Pharaoh, and the Scorpion, figurehead of the last Predynastic rulers, who shaped Sekhem and worshiped gods so spiritually poisonous the first Hemka erased them from history. The necropolis is the holy of holies, and an arsenal of demons.



Karpani followed on the heels of the Persians and raided Abydos for its treasures. Magi and Hemka exchanged destructive spells. The Egyptians knew the territory better and prevailed, but so many died that even though the Karpani fled Abydos, few Weret-Hekau remained to enjoy victory.

What is Happening?

Under Alexander, sorcerers from many nations visit Egypt in search of reputed treasures. They've heard of cursed, rich Abydos, and cautiously explore the region. They're on a nearly equal footing with the Weret-Hekau, who lost their best scholars of the necropolis to the Persian conquest.

Only priests visit the place openly. Ordinary grave robbers stick to tombs that show signs of entry. A sealed tomb is dangerous, either because wonder-workers claim it, or something inside has yet to be disturbed. Sometimes brave Sleepers break the rules and prosper. Sometimes their bodies become anachronistic décor for the ancients. The necropolis' hundreds of tombs include complexes more extensive than history will ever discover, but their dead inhabitants are more active than many Sleepers might believe. This is where the first Pharaohs allowed retainers to be sacrificed and serve them after death. Certain tombs contain Stygian Verges or passages to the Underworld, but never both. It's as if ancient sorcery cracked the roots of the world and the firmament above, leaving the dead without a clear path. Death gods and raging ghosts are just a wrong turn away.

Nevertheless, rewards await explorers, though these aren't always where even the learned might expect. The Weret-Hekau scattered Narmer's magical regalia throughout several lesser tombs and bound the resident ghosts as guardians, but there are unbound ghosts and chthonic entities who've moved things around to suit themselves, too.

Who Are the Characters?

- As Greeks establish themselves in Egypt, Arcadian sorcerers follow. Tyrannoi lead armed expeditions to Abydos in search of relics, but divided by loyalty to one Diadochos or another, fight amongst themselves. Orthodox Pelasgians look for evidence of lost Arcadia. Many of them approach the Weret-Hekau with respect, and aid them in reclaiming Abydos.

- Karpani enter Abydos stealthily to avoid another battle with the Weret-Hekau. The Persians believe the whole place is cursed with the rot Angra Mainyu loosed upon the world, but that there's some gold to dig out of bones and sand, and that it might be used to help their people slip out from under Greek hegemony.

- Mantrikis are the least likely to mount an expedition to Abydos, but might accompany other sorcerers. Asian mystics may be more valued as travelers than occultists. They count many nomads and ascetics in their ranks who might be well-prepared for the desert's hardships.

- The Weret-Hekau scramble to reoccupy Abydos. The Moroi who knew it best were killed by Karpani long ago, but inherited cultural knowledge, oral tradition, and secret writings that their successors might find. Their primary goal is to defend Abydos from other sorcerers. After that, it's time to reclaim its secrets. Outsiders who approach them with respect might be allowed to join them.

Possible Resolutions

Abydos' necropolis provides an opportunity for traditional adventure, but don't forget the context. The wider Empire gives characters their motivations, and just as in the modern world, Egyptians in this era aren't eager to see foreigners spirit away their heritage. These stories won't necessarily get resolved in any definitive sense but might lead to some interesting outcomes.

- A bracelet from Narmer's regalia will be known as the "Abydos Cipher" and surface in the modern era, where various factions fight to own it. (See the **Storyteller Adventure System** adventure **the Abedju Cipher**.) The Artifact allows its wearer to see and speak with ghosts. The rest of Narmer's possessions supposedly hold even greater powers, such as spells that bind ghosts and creatures from the Underworld. Why did Narmer need them? Who created them?

- The old Moroi of Abydos knew of passages to the Underworld, but they're supposed to be dead. Then again, not all the dead leave quietly, especially here. If a sorcerer would dare the fires and knife-bearing devils of Duat to bring back one of the departed or go below for some other purpose, the necropolis might provide passage.

- Some of Abydos' relics defy classification. The Weret-Hekau believe they hail from the time of the Scorpion lords, who manipulated raw Sekhem with spells foreign to Awakened sorcery. The Hemka used to record their locations and seal them with curses, but they've lost much of this knowledge. They remember that priests searched for these objects in the time of Unas, and dead things from the prior age crawled up to take them. **Mummy: The Curse** might describe these relics and the monsters that guard them, or the Storyteller might opt for a different explanation.

The Lost Gathas

Many Karpani believe that Zarathustra, later called *Zoroaster* by the Greeks, was Awakened and had the gift of prophesy. The other cults are more skeptical, but his prophetic visions are much studied by the Awakened. He described a single creator and god of light, *Ahura Mazda* — with those who work for him as conduits between god and humankind — as well as a single opponent and ruler of darkness, *Angra Mainyu*, with his own evil spirits called *daeva* working within

the world. Not much is known of Zarathustra except what he wrote in the *Gathas*, each hymn describing encounters with the divine and their place in the world. Much of what he wrote about involved the *daevas*. He described them at length, including detailed and complicated mathematical equations associated with each, as well as a name. For most Persian scholars, these texts are the basis for much scientific and theological debate; but for the Awakened, they hold a larger draw. Many of Zarathustra's descriptions have elements of High Speech that indicate rituals and spell circles.

Zarathustra's visions and prophecies are recorded and compiled within the *Avesta*, the original copy of which was held in the capital of Persepolis. When Alexander took the city, he allowed his army to loot and pillage for days. Among other things, pieces of the *Avesta* were removed and divided up among some of his scholars. Later, a fire in the palace destroyed the remaining texts.

A year after the initial separation of the *Avesta*, strange sightings are reported all across the country. The incidents start slowly, and are recounted several times from the original source. Then, the incidents become more prevalent, causing fear and confusion among the people.

- A dark entity appeared in a home of a young couple, stole the life of the newborn child, and dissipated into darkness. The lifeless corpse of the child was left blacked and withered.

- A group of men are attacked on the road at night. Their screams are swallowed by the darkness. One of the party is taken off into the woods, and the rest are left intact. Later, when they go to search for him, they find his lifeless body battered and bruised deep purple.

- A goat herder claims that a dark man rises up from the lake near his farm. Each night he takes one of his goats and drains it dry, leaving a dark, desiccated corpse.

Investigating these incidents shows a pattern. First-hand witnesses describe seeing snakes, spiders, and insects around the area. The vermin appear out of nowhere and disappear just as abruptly once the person dies. Witnesses never get a look at the killer, though many speculate that it was large, dark, and evil.

What is Happening?

Several *Gathas* of the *Avesta* are in the hands of a Greek Moros, Alkaios, traveling with Alexander's army. Recognizing the few fragments of High Speech integrated into the texts, he was convinced that these books were ancient Grimoires holding Persian secrets. After a year of study and experiment, he instead finds that the books are magical bindings on several ancient *daeva*: demons who serve Angra Mainyu. Alkaios is certain that if he releases them, they will reward him for his assistance by giving him dominion over Persia and possibly the entire world. His first attempt released one of the most powerful servants, Araska, into the world under his control. If Alkaios is not stopped, he will soon release more *daeva*.

Araska

Treat Araska as a Rank 3 spirit of darkness with the Materialize Manifestation and Blast Numen.. Araska also has a Numen called Soul Snatch that costs three Essemce and steals a victim's soul on a successful roll of Power + Finesse - the victim's Composure.

Who are the Characters?

Characters can come from any background, and are likely to belong to the Jnanashakti, Samashti, or Vajrastra darshanas. The Jnanashakti look to find Alkaios and study the magic held within the *Gathas*. The Samashti seek to contain whatever Alkaios has found, and possibly keep it from returning to Sleeper hands. The Vajrastra wish to seek out the evil responsible for the deaths and destroy it, making the land safe again. The Mahanizrayani are concerned about the common people and seek to secure their safety; and some may also be interested in the information Alkaios has uncovered.

- Greek and Egyptian characters are in Persia in the wake of Alexander's army, looking for power and wisdom. The appearance of the creature creates a strain between the Awakened and the Persian community, as fear of the unknown causes people to reject the foreigners. Rumors of religious texts with High Speech are widespread amongst the other Awakened, and the name Alkaios is mentioned as being the caretaker of the texts.

- Persian characters are searching for the lost *Gathas*, hoping that the possible magical texts have not fallen into the wrong hands. The deaths pose a serious problem for the characters, as someone they know or love may have been killed. Characters versed in mythology may recognize the snakes and insects as indications of Araska, though he is thought to be bound by the power of Ahura Mazda.

- Indian characters are in Persia after Alexander's retreat from India. They are interested in meeting other Awakened in Alexander's Empire, and possibly preventing the Greeks from gaining a stronger foothold in India. Though they have their own agendas, the problems in Persia could be a preamble to similar issues in India. They seek to aid the Awakened community in discovering the source of these issues and putting them to rest.



Possible Resolutions

- Stopping Alkaios: Investigating the deaths and the loss of the *Gathas* should lead the characters to him, but if not Araska will. It is not happy to be bound in the service of Alkaios, and gladly tells the characters where the Awakened can be found. He is still a *daeva* and has his own agenda. He is sure if Alkaios is killed, he will be set free to act on his own will. He attempts to kill the characters if given the chance, though he can be reasoned with as long as he believes his goals are being met. Killing Alkaios does stop him, but it also releases Araska to his own free will. Alkaios cannot be reasoned with. He worships the Supernal tyrants and believes that it is his right as an Awakened sorcerer to use whatever power is available to do as he wishes. He is full of himself, and can be tricked and deceived into revealing information about what he plans or even how he unbound the *daeva*.

- With enough time and research, the text of the *Gathas* can be used to reconstruct the binding spell used to originally hold the *daeva*, but Alkaios attempts to stop the characters if he is still around. Araska is a powerful *daeva*, and is immortal. He can be harmed, but not killed. If the characters attempt to kill him in a direct fight, they may do enough damage to weaken him before a binding, or they may even banish him for a few days. Without a powerful binding, he always returns, seeking his vengeance against the characters.

Naga Temple

The great epic, the *Mahabharata*, tells of ancient peoples who once populated India. Many of these societies, the *Deva*, *Rakshasa*, *Kinnara*, and *Naga* had vast empires and performed many acts of heroism. The story indicates that the names of these tribes were taken from even older creatures of legend, mythological beings who were half-man and half-animal, who once populated the Himalayas. Each of these creatures was once real; and all are believed to still exist deep within the Himalayas.

Very few people travel into the Himalayas to determine the truth, and those who do rarely return. Everyone knows a story about someone making an ill-fated journey into the mountains. Sometimes it is a woman who followed a half-horse Kinnara with promises of love and perpetual pleasure. She leaves in the night and is never seen again. Often, a man is tricked by a Rakshasa into making the trip in search of riches, only to be eaten when he arrives. A hero makes the trip to visit the Deva, and is rewarded with the strength to save his people and win a beautiful bride. The stories are many and varied and often sound too fantastical to be true. Yet, people make pilgrimages, and stories keep surfacing about their fates.

Xenon, a Greek Obrimos, heard these stories as far away as Babylon. His own studies and research led him to believe that these exotic creatures were not mythological beings, but instead Awakened, or at least created by Awakened magic.

Naga

Treat each Naga as a Rank 2 spirit with Countermagic as a Numen. The Naga can reflexively countermagic any form of magic, including covert spells. Spend one Essence and roll Power + Finesse. If successes rolled for the Naga meet or exceed those for the spell, the spell is countered.

He put together an expedition following in the wake of Alexander's army. He tried to get other Awakened to travel with him, but most assumed he was at best wrong, and at worst heading towards suicide. Shortly after Alexander's army entered Persia, Xenon and his expeditionary team, a group of four guides, disappeared. Three years passed without any sign of his return, and those who knew him assumed he had died on the journey.

Just after Alexander's campaign in India, Xenon was found in the city of Aornos, unconscious and in the care of Hindu monks. When he at last awoke, he told a fabulous tale of finding a ruined temple high in the mountains. A tunnel led him deep into the mountain's core and eventually opened out onto a golden city. Beautiful creatures — half-man, half-snake — greeted him and took him in. They showed him the wonders of their home and forbade him from touching anything. He obeyed and inside he saw many wonders. Magical Artifacts and lore of the ages were stored in the golden city. In a moment of weakness, Xenon attempted to pick up a book. The Naga turned on him and attacked. He tried to defend himself, but they were immune to his magic. They beat him to near death, then took him away from the city. He claims they felt pity for him since they had accepted him into their home for so long, and is sure that he could find his way back to the city if any are willing to go with him.

What is Happening?

Xenon did make it to a temple deep in the Himalayas, but he never lived with the Naga, nor did he see a golden city. He found the ruins of what was clearly some kind of advanced civilization. He spent months trying to figure out how to get in, and when he finally did, he was scared off by the man-snakes. It is true that the Naga were immune to his magic, but he never spoke with them or entered the city. The Naga exist to protect the treasures hidden within the city. They are not aggressive unless people try to enter, and Xenon was only able to see the entrance to the city. He wants to see more, and know more, and has concocted his tale to lure other mages to go back with him to destroy the Naga guards.

Who are the Characters?

Characters can come from any background and are most likely to be members of the Jnanashakti and Vajrastra

darshanas. The Jnanashakti are lured by the idea of untold treasures and magical Artifacts deep in the ruins. The Vajrastra seek to gain honor and glory by slaying the mythical Naga guarding the city. The Mahanizrayani are interested in the promise of power and fame from such a journey. The Samashti seek to discover the nature of the Naga, and eradicate the dangerous magic that may maintain them. The Ajivaka may be enticed to discover the truth of Xenon's story.

The characters have heard legends of mystical relics deep within the mountains. The lure of such a treasure trove of lore and magical energies draws them in. The locals know little about the geography of the area, or where such a lair may be hidden, only that it is guarded by mystical creatures immune to magic. Xenon's expedition has been talked about widely, but many believe he was a failure and a liar. But, his descriptions are too detailed to be complete fabrications. Talking to Xenon will get the characters the same story above, from his own lips. Those capable of forcing him to tell the truth learn that he made up most of what he saw there, beyond the creatures.

Possible Resolutions

- If the characters take Xenon up on his offer to return to the city, they will find an underground temple full of Naga. While the creatures are immune to magical attacks, they are not immortal and are vulnerable to mundane attacks, especially because they will not be expecting it. As soon as they catch sight of Xenon they will attack the group. They gave him his warning and let him live; they will not do it a second time. The characters must fight their way through to find whatever lore or magical treasures lay inside.

- The characters may attempt to find the temple on their own without Xenon. He does not have the means to follow them on his own, though he will attempt to persuade them to take him with them. Though the search for the temple takes longer, the Naga will not attack on sight. The Naga converse with the characters and warn them that they cannot enter the city. They remain peaceable as long as the characters make no moves to enter the city. The Naga are reasonable, though they will not sway in their duty. Some characters may attempt to persuade or charm the Naga, though this cannot be done with magical means. The Naga are unassuming creatures, and will divulge anything the characters ask about, such as why they are there, who created them, and what their weaknesses are.

The Death of Alexander

Upon Alexander's return to Babylon, he quickly became deathly ill then died many days later after a brief "recovery." Prior to his taking ill, Alexander hosted several parties welcoming officers and satraps from Persia and India into his home. He drank and entertained for weeks, and the atmosphere of revelry was only broken by his sudden illness. His death was so sudden that his satraps had a hard time believing it was true at first. Then came the question of inheritance. Alexander refused to name an heir, though his wife Roxana was pregnant at the time of his death.

What makes his death even more tragic is the power struggle that caused his Awakened advisors to delay giving assistance until it was too late. Three advisors stood in opposition on how to handle the situation. Theophanes was a well-known Moros Phulakeion who advised against drastic action, stating that mere mortal interference was beneath their notice. He was not opposed to investigating the cause of Alexander's illness, for fear that a magical attack would equally influence the mortals around the king. Anaxagoras, a Thyrsos Mahanizrayani, believed that his power over the Greeks, bestowed through Alexander, would dissipate after his death. He felt that no matter what caused the illness, magic could surely save him. Kleitos, a Mastigos Tyrannoi, saw in Alexander's death the opportunity to take over the Empire on his own, and urged both Anaxagoras and Theophanes to abandon Babylon and leave the well-being of Alexander to him.

The disputes of what to do and if they should investigate the illness raged for days, and as far as anyone knows the three never came to a consensus. Kleitos' attempts to get Theophanes and Anaxagoras to leave the city troubled Theophanes, who sent a request to his fellow Atlanteans in the area to assist in the decision. Before the summons went out, Alexander's condition worsened, and he died. As sorcerers flood Babylon in response to the summons, or just looking for answers to Alexander's death, his three advisors are nowhere to be found.

What is Happening?

Unlike the other stories in the section, Alexander's death is too important a factor to have only one true possibility. Presented below are three possibilities of what has happened to Alexander.

Mantrikis Plot: A few Mantrikis who had gained power and influence over Porus and his generals followed Alexander's army back to Babylon in hopes of gaining influence over Alexander as the leader of a large and expanding Empire. Alexander's court was filled with sophists and scholars, skeptical about anything they could not explain through deduction. To add to the difficulty, Alexander had several mages advising him already, and they were also suspicious of the Mantrikis' presence. Realizing they had no power to gain, the group left Babylon, but not before setting a curse on Alexander. Their logic dictated that if they could not control the largest Empire in the known world, then it should be destroyed.

Unforeseen Illness: The debate between Alexander's sorcerer advisors raged for one week. They eventually agreed to determine the cause of the illness to discover if he was sick of natural causes. A heated debate on how to proceed ensued, leading to heightened emotions and a standstill on what to do. By the time Anaxagoras decided to act on his own to save

the king, Kleitos decided to act on his own to kill him. These events lead to Alexander's remarkable recovery one day, and his sudden death the same night.

Anaxagoras knew Kleitos had to be the one to undo his good work, and challenged him to a duel. Though Theophanes counseled them both to wait for a council of Atlanteans to help solve the dispute, they fought, leading to Anaxagoras's death. Kleitos went into hiding, faking his own death at the same time. Theophanes secluded himself in shame for allowing his two friends to die.

Poison: Alexander's illegitimate brother, Ptolemy I Soter, saw the revels as an opportunity to slip Alexander a poison unnoticed. He worked in secret with help from Kleitos, who sought to place himself as sole advisor and puppet master to the new Emperor. Once the poison began to take effect, Kleitos delayed Anaxagoras and Theophanes as much as he could until it was too late to save Alexander. As it became evident that Ptolemy would not succeed to the throne, Kleitos became more erratic, attempting to bring Alexander's half-brother, Philip III, under his sway. This caused Anaxagoras and Theophanes to suspect Kleitos of complicity. He soon fled the palace, and they both followed in his wake.

Who are the Characters?

The characters are most likely to be members of the Mahanizrayani, Samashti, and Vajrastra darshanas. The Mahanizrayani are looking for answers and hoping to retain some control over the Empire as it changes hands. The Samashti are answering summons from Theophanes and seek to find their fellow, as well as ensure the fallout from the debacle does not touch Sleeper lives. The Vajrastra are either answering summons from Theophanes to assist in dealing with Kleitos and Anaxagoras, or wish to discover the cause for Alexander's illness and ensure those responsible come to justice.

Most of the characters should be part of the Arcadian cult, though the death of the king draws the Tyrannoi in hopes of taking up the reins of power after his death. Mages from other nations certainly have an interest in visiting Babylon seeking knowledge and discourse with other Awakened. The death of Alexander touches all mages, as the hope for a diverse Awakened community has the chance of dying with his Empire.

Possible Resolutions

When the characters arrive in Babylon, they should seek out the three sorcerers. In some cases, not all of them are alive, or easy to find. Once found, they will assist the characters in whatever way they can. The palace guards and revelers are a hindrance to foreign mages seeking information. The characters must interact with the many Sleepers in the palace if they hope to gain access to investigate Alexander's death.

Perdiccas, Alexander's bodyguard, has the entire palace on lock-down. He refuses to allow any, even those who knew Alexander best, to disturb the dead emperor's body until he can be embalmed. Philip III, Alexander's half-brother, has assumed de facto control over the palace, and is keeping Alexander's court until a successor can be decided. Callistenes, Alexander's royal Historian and Sleeper advisor, spends his time attempting to thwart Alexander's three sorcerer advisors. Egyptian and Chaldean embalmers are at the palace to preserve Alexander's body as soon as they can, and the characters must work quickly to see Alexander's body before the process starts.

Mantrikis Plot: Alexander's sorcerers have been investigating the route the Mantrikis used to curse Alexander. They have cloistered themselves away, but are not hard to find. They will urge the characters to track down the Mantrikis and bring them to justice. Following the trail of the Mantrikis is not as hard as it sounds. Their journey back home was halted by the news of Alexander's death, and they have returned to Babylon in hopes of gaining control over his successor. They are unapologetic for their actions, though will be unlikely to reveal their selfish motives to the characters. The characters may choose to kill the Mantrikis for their deeds, though this will not change the course of the Empire. Characters who wish to take over the Empire may recruit the Mantrikis to assist them. The characters must contend with the many Tyrannoi who have descended on Babylon and wish to take leadership of the Empire for themselves.

Unforeseen Illness: The characters must gain admittance to examine Alexander's body. They find that he was touched by magic by both Anaxagoras and Kleitos, and the true cause of his illness is obscured in the magical resonances. When the characters find Theophanes, he reluctantly relates the events surrounding Alexander's death. Theophanes admits that he does not know the true fate of Kleitos, though he is assumed to be dead. Characters who seek out Kleitos find him with Philip III, attempting to appropriate the Empire through him. Kleitos is not wholly responsible for Alexander's death, though the characters may still wish to bring him to justice for killing Alexander after Anaxagoras had taken steps to heal him. If the characters are also members of the Tyrannoi, they may wish to join him to gain power over the Empire in its state of flux, or destroy him to take over his role.

Poison: Theophanes and Anaxagoras followed Kleitos into the city, but soon lost him. Realizing that his Tyrannoi support network was vaster than they had thought, they return to the palace to await sorcerers responding to Theophanes' requests. The characters arrive in the palace shortly before the sorcerers, and have time to attempt to examine Alexander's body and discover he was poisoned. Anaxagoras and Theophanes work with the characters to find Kleitos and urge them to bring him to justice. When the characters find Kleitos, he is unrepentant, yet reasonable. If questioned, he will reveal his conspiracy with Ptolemy, and that the man knows what Kleitos is. If the characters attempt to kill Kleitos, he will not go down without a fight, and he has a cabal of Tyrannoi willing to protect him. Regardless of what the characters do with Kleitos, they must also deal with Ptolemy to make sure he doesn't spread his knowledge.

River Wardens

When Alexander's army invaded the Indus, they never made it farther East than the Vitasta River, called *Hydaspes* by the Greeks. During the battle at the river, Porus's army seemed able to see and predict Alexander's every move, paralleling him along the west bank up and down for days. Porus traveled with several wise-men and spiritualists, who claimed the ability to speak with and make deals with *Yaksha*, or nature spirits. These men were under the direction of the Vajrastra Thyrsos, Ila. Ila coerced five Yaksha from the river and forced them to work with each of her followers with promises to cleanse the river and remove the human taint when the war was won.

Already disgruntled at being disturbed, the Yaksha did the bare minimum to help Ila's spiritualists. When Alexander split his army and took a troop north, the Yaksha did not report the movement until he had already crossed the river. Porus's army went to meet him, but he was taken mostly by surprise. In a rage, Ila bound the Yaksha to the land, forcing them to remain manifest as animalistic creatures. She told each that if they helped her army defeat the intruders she would set them free. With little choice left, the Yaksha obeyed her commands. Alexander's army proved to be too well trained and disciplined for the Indian armies and soon they suffered defeat. Ila was lost in the battle, killed by her own spiritualists when they discovered she had bound the Yaksha. In the aftermath of battle the Yaksha fled the river, retreating into the forest. They hoped to regain their spiritual forms, but Ila's binding held after her death, condemning them to the material world.

In the months following the battle, travel on the road between the Hydaspes and the Ganges is dangerous. Travelers find entire baggage trains along the road, seemingly abandoned. Men never make it to their destinations, and are never heard from again. At first, the missing people were Greeks and Persians; the Indian satraps refused to investigate, assuming the men defected back to Macedonia. But as time goes on, it is clear that no one is safe. All travel in the area has been deemed dangerous, routes are blocked between the rivers, and communication between Porus and the satraps of Persia is nearly impossible.

What is Happening?

The once benevolent Yaksha are now hostile and vicious. They attack anyone who gets too close, even going out of their way to chase off travelers along roads. Ila's magic bound the creatures to the material world, but their reaction to it has cemented their fate. Her death drove the Yaksha insane. Terror at remaining material forever drove them to destroy her spiritualists and flee into the woods. Since that time, Ila's magic has faded and the Yaksha could return to their spiritual forms at any time of their choosing. Yet, insanity has convinced them that this is impossible, so they remain material. Now, in their insanity, they kill and revel in the death of men.

Yaksha

Treat the Yaksha as Rank 2 spirits of nature with the Blast Numen and Possess Manifestation. The Yaksha are permanently materialized, and if their Corpus is destroyed, they are banished to the Shadow Realm.

Who are the Characters?

Characters can come from any background and are likely to belong to the Mahanizrayani or the Vajrastra darshanas. The Mahanizrayani are concerned about the profuse number of Sleeper deaths, and wish to solve the issue to restore trade and communications. The Vajrastra wish to root out the evils killing men. The Jnanashakti want to study the Yaksha and their odd state of being. The Samashti are concerned about rogue magic in the area, and wish to see it contained.

- Greek, Egyptian, and Persian characters were with Alexander when he entered India and chose to stay to seek out the mysteries presented there. With the roads closed, supplies and communication are limited. While these are mere inconveniences to the Awakened, the local satrapies are growing hostile. Regaining the use of the roads is important for good relations, as well as the ability to return home with valuable research.

- Indian characters know that reopening the roads is important for their people. Some characters may be aware of Ila's actions at the Hydaspes River, but logic would say that the Yaksha should be returned to their normal state by now. If not, then restoring the land to its natural order is of utmost importance.

Possible Resolutions

The Yaksha do not trust sorcerers and are unlikely to want to talk to them. No magic currently binds them, so attempts to dispel or banish them will fail. Though the Yaksha are still spirits, they are permanently materialized and cannot return to their native state. They can be killed just like any other creature, though they have gained strength in the time since their initial binding. If the characters do attempt to communicate with the Yaksha, they find the creatures to be unreasonably frightened and showing signs of insanity. If they are cured of this, the Yaksha become much more reasonable, and can be convinced to return to their spiritual forms and stop killing people.

Bearing Gifts

Alexander was resolved to integrate new cultural customs and policies into the Empire and homogenize his people



under one rule. He encouraged his people to travel freely and to learn what they could about each culture. Of course, the Greeks benefitted the most from this, as they encouraged everyone to speak their language and worship their gods. When Alexander adopted Persian customs in his court, his Greek countrymen took offense and showed displeasure, forcing him to abandon the new acts.

As the Greeks entered Asia Minor and the rest of Asia, they were often met with sights and activities that were completely new experiences for them. This was true for those traveling west as well, as they sought the cultural center of the new Empire. For the Awakened community, these new experiences were often a matter of discovering new magical traditions and exploring Artifacts native to new countries. Sorcerers of different cultures within the Empire began to establish lines of communication, trading knowledge, tomes, and magical Artifacts amongst like-minded individuals.

Such exchanges occurred between the magical cults as a way to spread their own beliefs to neighbors, though sorcerers of similar schools find more in common than they are expecting as the exchanges take root. A cult of Karpani in Susa has opened its libraries to all within Alexander's Empire, accepting pledges of tomes and Artifacts for the privilege. Travel to Susa from Greece has become relatively easy, and many of the Awakened make the pilgrimage to Susa, if only as an excuse to begin expeditions to gain knowledge and power.

The Karpani have made an open invitation, though the Zoroastrian priests are discerning in which pledges are acceptable and who will actually be allowed to peruse their archives. If the gift is suitable enough, such as a magical Artifact or Grimoire, they may even offer a full exchange. Gaining a meeting with the Magi is not easy, requiring letters of introduction, and sometimes a personal introduction from a sorcerer they already know and trust. In recent weeks, gaining an audience has become nearly impossible as the Magi refuse to see anyone; it seems they have shut their doors on communications for good. Not only that, but communication has been lost between many sorcerers new to the city, and several have gone completely missing.

What is Happening?

The Magi of Susa are indeed interested in sharing and gaining new knowledge with like-minded sorcerers throughout the Empire. They are not as discerning or discriminating as rumor would make them out, though. As long as the sorcerer has something to share, they are willing to see her and at least let her peruse the library. News of this exchange of information has reached almost every sorcerer in the Empire, and many have flocked to Susa looking to partake.

The exchange of ideas and beliefs has indeed brought like-minded individuals together and caused some to begin organizing. Among the first to do so are the Diadochi. As they come together, they recognize that not all sorcerers share in their vision of mastery over the world, and could pose a danger to their goals if allowed to organize against them. To this end, a group has traveled to Susa and put measures in place to prevent sorcerers from gaining access to the Magi's library. They intentionally seek out sorcerers new to Susa and do everything they can to prevent them from interacting with the Magi. Taking advantage of the cultural differences, they attempt to persuade the travelers not to meet with the Magi. If that fails, they steal pledges, and even resort to murder to keep the sorcerers from trading information.

Who are the Characters?

The characters are most likely to be Greek, though some may be coming from Egypt or India. Most of the characters are Jnanashakti, seeking to learn about new magical wonders and share information about what they have already learned. Some may be Samashti, seeking to ensure this spread of information does not include the Sleepers, or Ajivaka seeking truth and personal meaning. The Mahanizrayani and the Vajrastra seek alliances with like-minded sorcerers, and seek to meet with the Magi to form new alliances.

The characters have just arrived in Susa with hopes to meet with and learn from the Karpani Magi. Each carries a pledge valuable enough to be exchanged for something from the Magi's own resources. As they traverse the foreign city, they are approached by Rajani and Basilius who offer to assist them in getting to the Magi. They are both members of the Diadochi, and their job is to convince the characters to abandon their quest to visit the Magi. Rajani is a Mastigos from India, and she attempts to persuade any Indian characters to abandon their desire to deal with these foreigners who have disrupted their home lives. Basilius is a Thyrsos who insinuates to the Greek and Egyptian characters that the Persians are only attempting to take their valuable Artifacts, and have nothing worth trading.

Possible Resolutions

Assuming the characters are resistant to Rajani's and Basilius' attempt to convince them otherwise, they seek out the Magi in Susa. Rajani and Basilius have been in the city for weeks, and have set up interference in the form of paid-off guards, magical concealment, and Sleepers they have enslaved to do their bidding. Attempts to find the Magi will alert the Diadochi, who escalate their tactics, resorting to attempts to steal the characters' pledges, or even kill them.

- The characters must attempt to work around the measures Rajani and Basilius have put into place to meet with the Magi. This may take some time, if they attempt to find each and every Sleeper under the Tyrannoi's control. If the characters choose to kill Rajani and Basilius, then they must discover where the two have set themselves up in the city, or set a trap for them.

- The characters may be able to trick Rajani and Basilius into revealing the location of the Magi, though this takes some cunning and double-dealing. With a little

bit of investigation and pushing them to talk, the characters can learn why Rajani and Basilius want them to avoid the Magi. Both the sorcerers are confident in their worship of the Supernal Tyrants, and will gladly offer the characters a place in their organization. If the characters accept, they will be given tasks to assist the Diadochi in their efforts in Susa. From there the characters can continue to assist the Diadochi, or they can betray Rajani and Basilius by going to meet with the Magi anyway.

If the characters finally reach the Magi, the priests are in a state of confusion as to why no one has been visiting them. Alerting them to the presence of the Diadochi will allow the Zoroastrian priests to root them out of the city, and prevent them from gaining a firm hold in the future.

The Diadochi Wars

Death is the chime of succession, but when Alexander dies in 323 he leaves no chosen successor. Roxana is pregnant when he dies. Some of his generals would rather wait to see if she bears a boy, but others fall behind Alexander's half-brother, Arrhidaeus. They compromise, crowning him Philip III, ruling alongside Roxana's son, named Alexander IV. Philip III takes over ceremonial court business and some practical affairs, but few consider him truly fit to rule. He speaks strangely and suffers from seizures. Rumors say that Alexander's mother Olympias poisoned Philip's mother while she was pregnant to keep him from becoming a rival to his half-brother. Perdiccas parleys his position as head of the cavalry into the regent's seat. Nevertheless, rebellions rise everywhere.

- In late 322 and amidst sporadic revolts, Perdiccas marries Alexander's sister Cleopatra, asserting his right to found a dynasty. Antipater, Ptolemy Soter, and others rebel against him for his presumption. After he fails to take Egypt from back from Ptolemy in 321, his own soldiers kill him. Failures cannot inherit what living gods conquer.

- In 321, general and bodyguard Ptolemy Soter seizes Alexander's corpse from its intended path to the temple of Zeus-Ammon. According to Macedonian tradition the new king buries the old. Thus, Ptolemy implicitly designates himself Alexander's true heir. Yet he moves cautiously, unwilling to risk Egypt in campaigns against the other generals.

- In late 321 Antipater takes his forces to Asia (he's chief general of Europe) and takes over as regent. He's competent and realistic about his prospects, so he lets much of the empire crumble. Yet he retires to Macedon and dies of illness in 319 and in seeming sabotage of his legacy, denies his son Cassander the regency.

What is Happening?

Arcadian Tyrannoi cultivate this disorder, and intend to stage a coup through the warlords they advise. In the new order, they'll rule by Awakened right, as manifestations of the Olympian gods. Unfortunately, the "shadow generals" or Diadochi (Alexander's warring successors will not be known as such until later) prove to be as shortsighted as their Sleeping counterparts. They can't agree on who will be Zeus on Earth. They battle each other, using the greater war as a cloak and weapon. Their factions line up behind contending forces.

- The Diadochos sorcerer Argyros stood with Perdiccas until his assassination — an event the Acanthos failed to foresee. Obviously his enemies have been clouding his foresight, so he responds by making their counter-prophecies as difficult as possible. Fleeing Babylon, he incites rebellions across Asia. He plans to build a second empire in India, strike west, and impose order with elephants and exotic sorcery. He captures a phalanx of Myrmidons, tortures the oath-tongue out of the one who knew it, and uses it to bring others under his command.

- Behind Ptolemy, an alliance of Diadochi and Weret-Hekau believe that armies alone won't reconquer Alexander's dominion. He was a god incarnate, or at least a symbol of one. They advised Ptolemy to steal Alexander's body because they believe it might be used to summon his divine aspect. They'd implant it within Ptolemy or another tractable candidate. But researching the spell will take time, and they need to ensure that they can control the result.

- The Mastigos Drakaina begins with a powerful advantage: Antipater is a Myrmidon in her service. Drakaina ushered him into Alexander's inner circle, controlling him with magic and precise commands in the oath-tongue. Through him, Drakaina commands the largest number of Myrmidons but she uses them conservatively, lest they be turned against her. Unfortunately, Antipater disappoints her through suicidal defiance. He leaves for Macedon, accepts the resulting soul loss and without it, lacks the will to fight off fatal illness. He passes succession to the general (and non-Myrmidon) Polyperchon instead of his son Cassander. Drakaina supports Cassander's efforts to take what's "rightfully his."

Who Are the Characters?

Anyone. Arcadian sorcerers have a special role to play because the Tyrannoi come from their ranks, but civil war consumes most of the known world, including its Awakened.

- Tyrannoi Arcadians line up behind Diadochi like Argyros and Drakaina. The shadow generals direct

operations through elite cabals whose members hold sway over less favored sorcerers. Tyrannoi might hide their true motives and tell contacts to kill such and such a person, or take a certain Artifact for some straightforward reward: gold, an unguarded Hallow, or some mystic scroll, say. They prefer to work within their own cult, but might reach out to foreigners.

- Most Karpani would prefer a weak Empire. They support rebellions in Persia. This makes them unwitting allies of Argyros, who wants to see the empire rot its heart out. The Diadochos wants to place his main strength in Asia, but he held more sway over Babylon than the others, and offers its secret treasures to Karpani agents. There's old magic in the city, and secret names that give anyone who knows them great power.

- Alexander gave his most distant Asian subjects near-total autonomy. Perdiccas maintained this state of affairs, and the Mantrikis believe that civil war will increase their freedom as long as they fend off Greeks looking to rule in the east. They've proven stronger than anticipated, backed by Agryros' plots and Myrmidons.

- The Weret-Hekau reluctantly support Ptolemy Soter, advising him to protect Egypt above all. They hope to keep him to the kingdom, turn him into a proper Egyptian, and through the proper rites give him Alexander's god-self, Zeus-Ammon.

Possible Resolutions

If history follows the expected course, no shadow general prevails over the others. Diadochi-sorcerers weave their conspiracies into Hellenistic successor kingdoms. They probe each other for weaknesses until Rome rises in the West, carrying a new dream of empire. Prescient Tyrannoi ally with the Romans and eventually found the Praetorian Ministry.

But it could go differently.

- Argyros' successors eventually help found the mighty kingdom of Bactria, but it splits in turn, mirroring Tyrannoi sorcerers' inability to compromise with the Mantrikis. They encourage eastern Bactrians to revolt. They support Menander, a convert to Buddhism, about 200 years later. What if it had gone differently? Bactria might form the heart of an Indo-Greek empire capable of striking westward and opposing Rome.

- Drakaina raised Cassander to be Alexander come again — but an Alexander bound by the Myrmidon oath-tongue. She sent philosophers to train him and even acted as a tempestuous, protective foster mother after the model of Olympias. Cassander knew his role and hid his eagerness to replace Alexander poorly. He killed Alexander's son and Roxana, but his father Antipater passed him over to stymie Drakaina's plans. Cassander rebelled and lost, but if he hadn't, at least part of Alexander's realm might have been ruled by Myrmidon kings.

- As far as anyone knows, the Arcadian–Weret-Hekau alliance never discovers how to transfer Alexander's supposed divinity to the Ptolemies. Sources attest to a tomb in Memphis, then Alexandria, but by the Middle Ages its location dissolves into rumors, until it vanishes from history. If the Weret-Hekau developed a ritual to deify Ptolemy through Alexander, Egypt might have become the heart of a new empire. But what would the spell require, and what sacrifices would be necessary to awaken Zeus-Ammon?

Myrmidons

After the gods defeated the titans and claimed Olympus, they grew afraid of the mortal world, whose sorcerers and heroes might one day seize their thrones in turn. They sent emanations of their full glory to Earth and devised ways to maintain their dominion. Zeus went to Aegina, where his son Aeacus reigned over a people thinned by plague. One story says Zeus created Myrmidon, the eponymous hero, and he pledged his descendants to serve Aeacus. Others believe he raised warlike men from the ants of Aegina. Whatever the truth, the Thunderer infused a people with the essence of another species. Sorcerers doubt Myrmidons are literally related to ants, but some insectile thing lives inside them.

In exchange for Aeacus' loyalty, Zeus commanded the Myrmidons to swear fealty to anyone who spoke the king's peculiar language. As one of the prehistoric Awakened, Aeacus spoke a variation of the High Speech. Aeacus taught his language to vassals and allies so they could command Myrmidons he sent. Thus, knowledge of the oath-tongue continued through the centuries, through families and cults, and now, to the Diadochi.

For the shadow generals, deploying Myrmidons is a powerful but risky tactic. The "Ants" fight to the death, following any orders given them in their oath-tongue. Combining innate magic and martial skill, one Myrmidon phalanx might rout hundreds of ordinary warriors, unless one of the enemy also knows the oath-tongue. Myrmidons obey anyone who speaks the language. It's possible to countermand these orders in turn, but that wastes time, sows confusion, and might paralyze them as a fighting force. But if they avoid their curse, they fight in ways that make the Spartans at Thermopylae look like ants.

Myrmidons are a Proximus dynasty (in this era they're called Eugenes) and use the rules detailed in the **Mage: The Awakening Second Edition** Appendix. They survive to the modern era and eventually serve the Seers of the Throne's Praetorian Ministry.

Myrmidon

Nickname: Ants

Appearance: Muscular and fierce, Myrmidons look and dress like elite Greek warriors, especially heavily armored cataphracts and hoplites. Heavy armor also helps disguise certain insect-like qualities that vary from one Ant to the next: a chitinous limb, a single compound eye, or mandibles for teeth. Sleepers see these features in tricks of the light and out of the corners of their eyes, but they're plainly visible to sorcerers and others immune to the Sleeping Curse.

Blessings: *Forces* — Influence Heat (•), Nightvision (•), Invisibility (• •), Control Sound (• •), Kinetic Blow (• •), Environmental Shield (• •), Turn Momentum (• • •) *Mind* — Mental Scan (•), One Mind, Two Thoughts (•), Emotional Urging (• •), Mental Shield (• •), Enhance Skill (• • •), Psychic Assault (• • •) *Prime* — Dispel Magic (•), Supernal Vision (•), Word of Command (•), Words of Truth (• •).

Curse: Myrmidons must obey commands spoken in their oath-tongue (which has no written form). This language can only be learned by beings capable of learning High Speech. Otherwise, it is treated as a normal language, acquired with the Language Merit.

If Myrmidons defy an order in the oath-tongue the gods (or whoever they are) seize their souls. They suffer the Soul Loss Condition and may degenerate into further Conditions for soul loss until they obey the order, receive a countermand or contradictory order in the oath-tongue, or obey another order where the commander specifies that fulfillment will forgive past disloyalty. (A Myrmidon cannot give herself orders in the oath-tongue.) Unlike conventional soul loss, a Myrmidon's soul does not appear in Twilight (or anywhere else) and cannot be stolen when lost due to disobeying the oath-tongue. It can be lost and stolen normally through other means, however.

Oblations: Pyrrhic dance, sacrifices to Zeus and Ares, the first kill they achieve in any battle.

Character Concepts: bodyguard, soldier, deserter, strategist, rebellious slave, turncoat

Inspirations

Non-Fiction

Glancing at a Wikipedia article, or leafing through a history book, might give you the impression that Alexander and the world he lived in are well-documented. The truth is that none of the nearly two dozen contemporary accounts of the man's life have survived to the modern day — the quotations from them are all that's left, thanks to 2,000 years of quotation and paraphrasing by later Classical scholars, particularly Romans. One of the main sources we have for details of the cultures and campaigns depicted in this chapter is Plutarch, who wrote 400 years after Alexander died and concentrates on making it a good parallel story to that of Julius Caesar. Plutarch was also a priest of Delphi; maybe in the Chronicles of Darkness he left overtly magical elements of the story out.

One of the best modern works on the period is Robin Lane Fox's *Alexander The Great*, which pieces together the confusing fragments into a compelling narrative and doesn't ignore the cultures of the people the King of Kings conquered. Troupes wanting higher levels of detail on individual cultures than the Internet provides could do worse than looking at Fox's bibliography as well — in particular RN Frye's *The Heritage of Persia*.

To see how the magical traditions of Greece, Persia, and India informed the 19th-century occult revival **Mage** draws inspiration from, try Kurt Selegmann's *History of Magic and the Occult*.

If you'd like to draw inspiration from the Philosophers, the *Dialogues of Plato* and the *Corpus Aristotelicum* are both available online.

Fiction

Oliver Stone's *Alexander* flopped at the box office, struggling to cram a very complicated story into a film's run-time. The "Final Cut" version on Blu-Ray is almost twice as long as the theatrical release, and yet another version is being prepared at time of writing.

Gene Wolfe's *The Soldier Cycle* (*Soldier of the Mist*, *Soldier of Arete*, and *Soldier of Sidon*) is set a century before Alexander's life, but features a Greek mercenary who, following a head injury, has no short-term memory but can see and speak to gods and supernatural creatures.



"When we came out the next morning, most of our pigs were dead. It had opened them up and took their guts away — they were all hollow." Chen Fung frowned as the nervous farmer continued. "We had been worried about bandits and set Li, the pig boy, to watch the pigs at night. We found Li yesterday morning. He was only 14…now he looks like an old man, near death. I was up early and saw something running north as the sun rose, leaving a trail of blood behind. It looked fat, but had a long, thin neck."

Chen Fung nodded. It was pleasing that her band's reputation had spread widely enough that the farmer did not question seeking aid from a woman. However, the fact that the Ghost Month wouldn't start for nine days worried her. She no longer believed in coincidences regarding hungry ghosts. If the hungry ghost was already free and hunting, it was both powerful and clever.

She listened to the few other details the farmer could provide. She frowned again when he mentioned that two weeks before, a boy from the village had seen glowing lights dancing in the air, when he'd gone hunting birds near the hills north of town. When the farmer had run out of stories, Chen Fung promised that she and her band would ward the village's houses before the sun set. "Go home," she said. "Warn your neighbors to stay away from those hills — and remain inside your homes after dark."

When she returned to her camp, Daoshi Jun looked up from sharpening his sword. "Is it the crow-headed devil we've been chasing?"

Chen Fung shook her head. "The farmer saw a round belly and a thin neck. It sounds like the common sort of hungry ghost, but if it managed all he said, it's much more powerful."

"I don't want to see what it will get up to once Ghost Month begins."

Chen Fung looked up at the sky. "It's not yet noon — we should get to the village. I said we'd have it all warded and still have time to reach the hill before nightfall."

Daoshi Jun surveyed the humble farmhouses in the distance and then glanced north. "Wu Liang and I could scout the northern hills for the hungry ghost, while you and Shing ward the village. It won't take the two of you that long." He shrugged. "You can catch up with us later, although we'll likely have dispatched the ghost by then."

Chen Fung glared at him, "In *addition to* not wanting to be left behind again, I'm concerned about this hungry ghost being loose so soon before Ghost Month starts — that's suspicious. The farmer said that the ghost had sucked most of the chi from a swine herd, but that the boy still lives. We should talk to him before you and Wu Liang go and get yourselves eaten. Remember the incident down south in that village near Yelang: a whole band devoured because they got careless. The crow-headed devil isn't the only serious threat out there, and being impatient will just get you killed again."

Daoshi Jun nervously touched his throat, no longer the bloody ruin it had been just over a month ago. "Fine. We'll play it safe and talk to the pig boy before we all go out to banish what is likely an ordinary hungry ghost."

The late afternoon shadows were lengthening when the four Wuchang Gui rode towards the hills north of the farming village. Chen Fung took comfort in that fact that even if they failed to destroy the ghost this evening, at least all the houses in the village were protected for the next week.

Shortly after they began riding, Daoshi Jun's right hand kept nervously straying to the hilt of his ghost sword. "The swineherd's description worries me. I've never met such a ghost before, but a twisted creature that's eight feet tall and has hooks at the end of its long arms — it sounds like something I read about back in my temple. I fear this creature is exceedingly old and deadly." Chen Fung said nothing.

They rode north for the next hour as the shadows continued to lengthen. Soon they were only a few dozen yards from the hill that the locals believed to be haunted. As she was tying up her horse, Chen Fung noted all of the short, slender trees near the hill were gray and blighted. In addition to feasting on organs, the ghost also drained life.

Wu Liang nervously checked that his throwing knives were all correctly placed. "This is not a hill. I think it's an ancient burial mound — a major gateway to the Underworld. I've been wondering why the ghost carried off most of the pig organs, when it could simply have devoured them in the village. I think it's using them to bribe the gateway's guardians." He paused. "I don't believe we're going to find it lurking in a cave. It's hiding in the Underworld and will come out after sunset. If it has paid sufficient bribes, this time it might bring along its friends and allies."

Chen Fung paced angrily, glaring at the burial mound. "We can't destroy this gateway, and wandering into the Underworld in a region where one or more powerful hungry ghosts have been planning an escape might well be our most foolish tactic yet. Our best plan is to wait and see what comes out. Then, we can destroy it. Or if possible, capture it, find out if it has any allies, and *then* destroy it."

The other three Wuchang Gui nodded. Daoshi Jun drew his long, peachwood ghost sword and calmly sat down, placing the blade across his lap. As the sun began to set, Wu Liang began his walking meditation, shaping his Chi into a tiger's tough hide and deadly claws. Shing and Chen Fung both called upon their Black Guards for the fortitude they would require for this battle. Chen Fung stared silently into her Black Guard's bottomless eyes, barely noting the raw grotesqueness of its flayed ox head, while Shing talked quietly to the hulking creature with the head of a burning horse that has been his inescapable companion for almost a decade.

When only their campfire's flickering flames provided sufficient light to see clearly, a twisted, hook-like arm punched out of the ground, probing around for purchase. All four Wuchang Gui rose as one, ready to again defend the boundaries between the living and the dead.

Three Kingdoms of Darkness

The Han Dynasty shudders under the weight of its own corruption. Even as its Emperor looks inwards, riveted by the ecstasies of the flesh, its officials continue to strip the country of fortunes, imposing heavy taxes and impossible demands. But the Mandate of Heaven never remains long on the shoulders of the unworthy.

No man may rule China without divine benediction, and no ruler may hold that blessing if he is not sufficiently just. In the eyes of many, Emperor Ling, who would rather drown in the company of his concubines than attend to the needs of his land, has long lost the privilege of sovereignty. But who will succeed him?

The answer would take more than a century of war to unearth.

**The empire,
long divided,
must unite; long united,
must divide.
Thus it has ever been.**

**–Luo Guanzhong,
Romance of
the Three Kingdoms**

Theme: Mandate of Heaven

During this time period, there's a very real belief in the idea that Heaven has demanded certain acts from the people of China. Whether it's that the common folk worship an emperor as their ruler or that a farmer was destined to have a terrible crop season, everything is essentially predestined and supposed to happen exactly how it occurs. This influences both action and thought during the Three Kingdoms period. The Han emperor has lost his power, and a crazed warlord has taken his place. Some believe the Mandate of Heaven says this is to be and accept it readily, while others rail against the warlord disobeying the Mandate of Heaven with his devious acts and send their soldiers to destroy his empire. The Mandate of Heaven is thought to be an invisible hand literally guiding events, but some use it as an excuse to do terrible things in the name of service to heaven's demands. Some supernatural creatures believe the same, looking to Heaven for purpose, while others see the Mandate of Heaven as an arbitrary decree for obedience. Others simply ignore it and pursue their own selfish agendas.

Theme: Heroes in the War

What does a land full of violent war and bloody conflict truly need? Money can buy much, and more soldiers only bring more death, but a hero is worth more than all the money in the kingdom and a thousand foot soldiers. Heroes serve as generals and strategists, but aren't afraid to join the front lines to tackle even the worst army alongside their comrades in arms. It is no surprise then that everyone, human or monster, hopes to one day be the hero who brings the war to an end, making a name for him- or herself. Heroes are no more virtuous than any other being, but they carry part of the Mandate of Heaven to sway world events in one way or another. Generals and lords bring in their soldiers by the thousands, hoping they'll be the one to turn the tide of the battle. Each soldier or cavalry rider hopes to take the head of an enemy lord, as bringing such a trophy before one's lord is enough to have their names written in the annals of history. Even the family each soldier has left behind hopes above all other things that their loved one returns safely to them, but also that they bring honor to the family name. Even if the hero expires in the war, those related to the hero can go on to become great heroes themselves. The world is looking for heroes. Could it be the players' characters who finally answer the call?

Theme: I Would Rather Betray the World

Cao Cao said once, "I would rather betray the world than to have the world betray me." Even as great heroes exist in the real world, so too does the underbelly of paranoia and betrayal. A local lord, once a comrade and friend, is all too likely to turn in rebels if it means additional resources are sent to his town. The Three Kingdoms period has drained most lands of resources (livestock, money, and even people to populate towns and villages), and there is little someone won't do to prosper in a land of such uncertainty. If given the choice between self and you, they'll choose self every time. This has led even heroes to kill entire villages to save themselves, only to mourn the killings they committed. One may think this oxymoronic, but it is just the way of things. Survival by any means necessary. This sentiment extends from the lowly commoner to the highest lord, explaining the mobs that surround almost anyone accused of treason as well as the high turnover in generals in service directly to the emperor (regardless of kingdom). No doubt this is why loyalty is so highly praised and rewarded, in some cases the stuff of legends — the Chronicles of Darkness are, by nature, far too treacherous.

Mood: War on an Epic Scale

There is war, depressing and destructive, and then there is the Three Kingdoms period. The war lasted almost 100 years, and in that time rained so much death on the land. Those who didn't outright desert their homes and migrate to other lands were surrounded with all manner of atrocities. The demolished buildings of almost all but the wealthiest of cities barely sustained the population's numbers. At the same time, the population dropped by the millions throughout this period, the deaths caused by war casualties, a lack of infrastructure due to the collapse of maintaining governments, and the famine and pestilence that ravaged the land. On top of all of that, several natural disasters, including earthquakes and typhoons, also struck the land. Some believed these disasters to be signs from Heaven of the lack of a righteous emperor worthy of the Mandate of Heaven. Every day, the people (soldiers included) wake up to a world of sadness, but there is a glimmer of hope. All of this is the Mandate of Heaven, a test they must pass to set things right and return to a state of true peace in China once more.

The Demise of an Era: History and Legend

Three Kingdoms of Darkness explores a tumultuous era in ancient China, the events of which were popularized in Luo Guanzhong's seminal *Romance of the Three Kingdoms.*

Glossary

Bang Huo: Another name for a Sin-Eater band.

Black Guard: Geists.

Diyù: The Underworld.

Egui: Hungry ghosts.

Jiangshi: Taoist reanimated corpses; "hopping vampires."

Kongdong: Arcadia; "the Hollow."

White Guard: Another term for Sin-Eater.

Wuchang Gui: Sin-Eaters; "Ghosts of Impermanence."

Yama Kings: Underworld Judges of the dead; equivalent to Kerberoi.

Yaoguai: General term for monsters or spirits.

As intimated by the name, the story revolves around three separate states: Wei, which was built by a cunning tactician close to the Emperor; Shu Han, underdogs led by a man who claims to be heir to the fallen Han emperor; and Wu, a southern family that demands power based on the Imperial Seal. Because the tale is stitched together from a cavalcade of accounts, political bias, superstitions, and the fallible dreams of humans, this period is steeped in mystery. No one is completely certain as to what went down, and how much of the narrative has been revised to suit the needs of the teller's time, but most can agree on this:

The story began with the dissolution of the Han Dynasty. No longer willing to endure the avarice of the government, their lives bracketed by disaster and oppression, the people gathered under the banner of three brothers, one of whom — a man named Zhang Jue — was rumored to be a powerful sorcerer.

It was he who told the populace that hope and prosperity awaited under a yellow sky. The three men preached an ideology of equality, a concept that the people had long thirsted for. Word of their teachings spread like a plague, reaching even imperial dissenters in the capital. The brothers soon found themselves at the head of what history would call the Yellow Turban Rebellion.

Twenty-one years passed, and the Han government eventually succeeded at crushing the peasant uprising. Nonetheless, the long decades of conflict left a festering wound, and the country grew thick with unrest. Matters grew even more complicated after the death of Emperor Ling and the rise of general He Jin, who brought about the defeat of the Yellow Turban Rebellion.

A bloody period of intra-court maneuvering followed He Jin's rise to power. Frightened of his influence, the eunuch

Propaganda and the Three Kingdoms

The most renowned chronicle of the Three Kingdoms was penned more than a millennium after the meat had sloughed from the bones of those who had lived through its events. As is often the case with such historical novels, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* contains numerous inconsistencies and, in some cases, entirely fictional scenarios — the Oath of the Peach Garden being the most salient example. In a similar vein, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* also assisted in the demonization of the warlord Cao Cao who, although admittedly a ruthless character, was actually a competent, forward-thinking leader.

So, how did Cao Cao become a literary boogeyman? Some believe it was a case of authorial discretion. Like any writer, Luo Guanzhong (who is often cited as the author of the book, but may in fact be unrelated entirely) required antagonists in his tale, and he borrowed from the beliefs of his generation. A few scholars attribute it to the calamitous role that the corrupt Jin Dynasty played during the War of the Eight Princes. Others say it is a question of legitimacy. However distantly, Liu Bei was of imperial lineage while Cao Cao was not, making him an usurper, and his claim to the Mandate of Heaven a false one. Furthermore, Cao Cao's harsh approach to administration, which bordered Legalism in style, stood at odds to the ideals of Confucian scholars.

This is not to say that the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms,* which has been described as mostly true to history, should be ignored in favor of its more factual counterparts. Myth can carry as much weight as the truth, sometimes a bit more. The 800,000-word magnum opus has been compared to the works of Shakespeare in scope. It has added deities to regional pantheons, contributed idioms, spawned a cornucopia of adaptations, influenced the nature of fraternal blood oaths, and subtly shaped an entire culture.

For the purposes of a chronicle, the disparity between accounts can also be framed as the machinations of the Chronicles of Darkness. Feudal China saw power changing hands with dizzying speed. Dynasties rose and fell in a night. It would have been incredibly simple for someone — or something — of power to orchestrate a narrative shift, to include or subtract a particular entity or incident.

faction known as the Ten Attendants attempted to orchestrate He Jin's assassination, only to have their attempt foiled. He Jin retaliated by petitioning for the executions of those involved, a move that would ultimately culminate in his own beheading. His followers then responded by storming the imperial palace and slaughtering those suspected of treasonous intent.

Amid this storm of violence, the warlord Dong Zhuo wrested power for his own, disposing Emperor Ling's successor and installing a figurehead in his place. Dong Zhuo rapidly proved to be an abhorrent figure. History appends a variety of atrocities to his name, including the Battle of Yang Cheng and his abuses of the palace concubines. As word of his insolence grew, warlords from a fractured China came together to challenge its new tyrant, and perhaps to take his place. But Dong Zhuo refused to go quietly. Faced with the impending threat, he first attempted diplomacy, even going as far as to offer his daughter in marriage to defuse the situation. After being rebuffed repeatedly, Dong Zhuo chose a different tack. He evacuated the residents of Luoyang before sending his men into its heart, ordering them to first gut the city of valuables and then burn the ancient capital to the ground.

Rise of the Warlords

The conflicts, along with the growth of banditry, quickly transformed China into an endless battlefield. The east became untethered from the central government and overwhelmed with rebel activity. The north turned red with a power struggle. Charismatic individuals, who could never have made such a mark on a unified society, amassed private armies. Although many sought to claim power for their own, several key figures rose to notoriety. One of them was a man named Cao Cao.

Though he would later come to be vilified in literature, Cao Cao was known as a crafty strategist, adept at military tactics and navigating the mercurial desires of a war-torn people. One of his greatest achievements took place along the Yellow River, where his army of 20,000 men triumphed over an army numbering more than 100,000 soldiers. It was here too that Cao Cao secured ascendancy over the Yellow Plains, where he encouraged education and established agricultural programs, transforming wastelands to fertile fields and repairing the damage wrought by the Yellow Turban Rebellion.

But Cao Cao was not faultless. His attempts to claim dominion over the rest of China ended in disaster, the most notable example, perhaps, being the Battle of Red Cliffs, where his dependence on numbers and ineptitude with naval combat led to a crushing defeat. Nonetheless, military incompetence could be forgiven. His Machiavellian attitude towards rank, along with his lowly birthright, was what made him into an anathema in the eyes of Han loyalists.

And while there were many such loyalists, the most recognizable are perhaps Liu Bei and his alleged oath brothers, Zhang Fei and Guan Yu.



The Oath of the Peach Garden

Legend made demigods of these men. Liu Bei reportedly had arms that extended past his knees, ears large enough to touch his shoulders, and a mouth red as a wound. Zhang Fei was said to resemble one of the big cats. Guan Yu was a red-faced giant with a monolithic beard. While future generations would extrapolate on the story of how the three would swear their loyalties to one another, a promise superseding even the bonds of flesh, no one knows for certain if such actually occurred. *The Record of the Three Kingdoms*, widely regarded as the one of the most accurate records of the time, makes no mention of such a vow, although it acknowledges their transcendent closeness.

Regardless, it remains undeniable that three made an impact on the Three Kingdoms. A poor man's child with a touch of nobility in his blood, Liu Bei played a vital role in the conflict against the Yellow Turban Rebellion, and then again in the hostilities with Cao Cao, before ultimately establishing the state of Shu Han — a nod towards the fallen dynasty.

Where Liu Bei was depicted as benevolent and humble, Zhang Fei was supposedly tempestuous and brash, quick to anger and to submit to the seduction of drink. A skilled warrior loyal only to his brothers, he treated his soldiers unkindly, issuing unreasonable demands and instigating cruelties with callous abandon. Unsurprisingly, that culminated in his murder by his subordinates, who had grown tired of his malevolence.

In a curious twist, Guan Yu's good fortunes improved after his death. Like his comrades, he was revered for his military prowess. He was held in such high regard, in fact, that Cao Cao, who stood in opposition to Liu Bei, appointed Guan Yu as a general in his own army. Guan Yu, loyal to his brothers, eventually escaped, but not before repaying Cao Cao's generosity by slaying one of the latter's opponents.

It was perhaps this ferocious sense of loyalty that led to Guan Yu's deification. Centuries after his death, he became associated with integrity, fraternal loyalty, protection, and more. In some areas, he was even canonized as the "Saint of War," which is comparable to Confucius's status as the "Saint of Culture." How one mortal man, who bled and died like any other, embedded himself so concretely into mythology is almost a wonder unto itself. The changing fusillade of dynasties, the endless battles, the technological limits of the time period, even the width of China itself — all this made the standardization of information difficult.

But that came later. First, there was war.

The Battle of Red Cliffs

Following his victory against Yuan Shao, Cao Cao turned his attention southwards, towards the area below the Yangtze River. Emboldened by his successes, the warlord pressed forward with his army, intent on finally accomplishing his goal: unifying China under his banner.

Cao Cao enjoyed an early advantage, as his adversaries had expended far too much energy battling one another. The province of Jing fell under his control without even a whimper. After the governor's death, his youngest son, goaded by

nervous supporters and a fear of fraternal retribution, yielded his territories to the encroaching warlord, leaving only the lands under Sun Quan standing in Cao Cao's way.

Messengers demanding complete surrender found their way to Sun Quan's court, but the southerner had joined in uneasy alliance with Liu Bao's eldest son, and Liu Bei would not comply. Despite the fact that Cao Cao held control of an important naval base in the area, Sun Quan still possessed tactical superiority in the water. The warlord eventually decided to test the strength of his opponent's forces, sending a forward contingent to Red Cliffs.

However, the Battle of Red Cliffs proved a failure for Cao Cao, although perhaps not to the extent suggested by popular culture. Disease, disloyalty, exhaustion from long marches, and an unfamiliarity with the local terrain all worked together to put Cao Cao's troops at a disadvantage in the initial skirmish. If that were not enough, nature itself worked against the warlord.

Upon realizing that Cao Cao's ships were tethered closely together, his adversaries decided to eliminate his fleet. Sun Quan's subordinate relayed a false surrender to Cao Cao, before leading a group of vessels, all piled high with flammable material, to where the opposing armada waited. Supported by a ferocious wind draft, he lit the ships on fire at the last minute. He rushed away with his men, leaving Cao Cao's naval forces to go up in flames. The imagery of this encounter's brutal glory was so profound that it would eventually become a defining moment within the texts.

Beaten, Cao Cao eventually made his escape. History is divided on how impactful this defeat was. *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* describes it as a crushing blow, but other scholars believe that Cao Cao's loss was less crippling, and that the warlord left garrisons in his wake. Whatever the case, the south stood against Cao Cao, and would stand for the rest of the Three Kingdoms era.

The Decay of Alliances

Although Sun Quan succeeded in removing the threat that was Cao Cao, his troubles had only begun. Not long after the Battle of Red Cliffs, his trusted general Zhou Yu, who had spearheaded the charge, died. Sun Quan found himself placing the territory of Jiangling under Liu Bei's supervision. The latter would eventually make his way to the Yi province, where he would first assist in war efforts before turning against the lord and claiming the area for himself.

Meanwhile, Sun Quan and Cao Cao remained locked in a stalemate, neither able to gain any significant advantage over the other. When the former came to learn about Liu Bei's successes, he immediately came to demand greater control of the area. This led to a confrontation, followed by a grudging settlement, with the Xiang River serving as the divide between their lands. Liu Bei forged on and, after a long period of conflict, succeeded in securing his realm against Cao Cao's encroachment.

The repercussions of Liu Bei's victory stretched across China. Cao Cao no longer resembled a god-like force. Like scavengers drawn to the dying lion, other factions crept from the woodwork to challenge Cao Cao's position, and the dominion of the once indomitable warlord began to crumble. Elsewhere, Sun Quan's fears continued to blossom as Liu Bei grew from strength to strength. The warlord and his cohorts waited patiently for the opportunity to strike, all the while maintaining cordial relationships with Liu Bei. Their opening came when Guan Yu, Liu Bei's oath brother, prepared to lay siege on a city. Quietly, amid the brewing chaos, one of Sun Quan's subordinates launched a stealth attack which would ultimately result in Guan Yu's execution.

A New World Order

Though many had anticipated otherwise, Cao Cao did not die on the field of battle. Instead, he passed on quietly, victim to what historians would later speculate to be a brain tumor. His son Cao Pi would quickly prove as ruthlessly efficient as his father.

One of Cao Pi's first actions was to force the current Emperor to abdicate, effectively ending the Han Dynasty. He then created the state of Cao Wei, over which he gave himself dominance. Though a child of war, reputedly versed in archery even in his youth, Cao Pi resembled his father in many ways. He was a poet and a scholar, and also a man involved in his kingdom. He brought back government structures that his father had abolished, and established the nine-grade controller system that would later define recruitment practices in the Three Kingdoms until the introduction of the Imperial examination system.

Elsewhere, Liu Bei was reeling from Guan Yu's death, if the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* narrative is to be believed. His followers pleaded with him to turn his attention to the threat of Cao Pi instead of Sun Quan. But Liu Bei, thirsty for vengeance, would not hear any of it. His supporters defected, abandoning him even as Cao Pi invaded their lands. Defeat came swiftly, and with devastating repercussions. Outraged by the loss, and fearful of his adopted child's martial talents, Liu Bei ordered the execution of Liu Feng after he failed to hold his position. A year later, Liu Bei ordained himself as Emperor of Shu Han, the lands which he had claimed for his own. And then a year after that, he took the fight to Sun Quan.

By then, Sun Quan had sworn fealty to Cao Pi, becoming a new vassal under the Wei empire and an even larger threat than before. While history is unclear as to whether Liu Bei attacked out of vengeance, or because it was the most logical route of conquest, one thing is clear: Many of Liu Bei's supporters were in opposition. But the warlord pressed on, even after Zhang Fei was cut down by his own subordinates after he proved himself a tyrannical leader.

Unlike Liu Bei, Sun Quan wasn't keen on a confrontation. He sent messengers to negotiate for peace, offering land as a sign of good will. But Liu Bei would not be dissuaded from his path. The first round of encounters ended in the warlord's favor. In a stroke of good fortune, he reportedly found and freed one of Zhang Fei's old followers, who had been held captive as a prisoner of war in enemy territory.

Life in the Three Kingdoms

Much like in the West, life in feudal China was not an easy one, particularly if you belonged to common stock. Peasants kept to their farms, surviving in small enclaves, while struggling to fulfill their taxes. In cities, people enjoyed a greater diversity in careers, with scholars and imperial officers being the most venerated members of the community.

The society was largely patriarchal in nature, with only rare exceptions such as the Mosuo tribe that lived on the border to Tibet. Menfolk commanded absolute authority, and the survival of the clan name was of paramount importance. Male children were prioritized as a result, whereas daughters, for the most part, were groomed to draw the attention of influential husbands.

On top of the usual tribulations of the time period, the people of ancient China found themselves afflicted with another set of challenges. Famine defined the beginning of this era. Coupled with the predations of war and the effects of disease, population numbers were devastated. It wasn't until the founding of the Three Kingdoms that a measure of stability was restored. Each of the three states — Wei, Shu, and Wu — operated differently, with Wei possibly being the most prosperous of the three. The population of the kingdoms reflected as much. According to records from the era, Wei boasted a population of over 4 million, while Shu and Wu had 940,000 and 2 million citizens respectively.

State of Wei

Situated in the heartlands of China, the state of Wei swarmed with refugees and "independent" groups, opportunistic conglomerations of bandits that sometimes took the guise of something far more innocent. Many of these flocked to the banner of a local magnate, even as the people sought access to food.

Cao Cao remedied this problem by creating agricultural garrisons where people could work on state-owned fields. Farmers were not required to work through middlemen and instead communicated directly with the government. In exchange for a share of produce, they were provided material and agricultural supplies, including much-needed oxen. Service in these garrisons came with a secondary benefit: Those involved were, by and large, exempted from military service, but also afforded the protection of the troops. Needless to say, this produced a heightened sense of loyalty towards Cao Cao's regime.

On a less successful note, Cao Cao's system of appointments saw a mixed response. The core of the idea was to assign "Rectifiers" to each region, all of whom would be tasked to evaluate potential candidates for office based on a variety of pre-determined criteria. Unfortunately, history reports that the practice wasn't immune to corruption, and men of power succeeded in cementing their positions.

Finally, and perhaps most impressively, Wei became known as a haven for intellectual pursuits. Drawn by the scholastic nature of the state's rulers, a variety of poets, writers, and academics drifted to the capital. It should be noted that this wasn't the most culturally advanced period of ancient China, but this congregation of intellectuals remains indicative of Wei's prosperity.

The Kingdom of Shu

The smallest of the three kingdoms, Shu is perhaps the nation most favored by ancient texts. Though diminutive, the state enjoyed several advantages, the first and perhaps most important being the presence of the Red River Basin. This land was surrounded by high mountains that also served to protect those living there.

The water-rich landscape also expedited agricultural efforts. Unlike in Wei, the denizens of Shu did not require careful shepherding to generate sufficient crops, especially since the small domain was crammed with both refugees and Southern workers.

The Kingdom of Wu

Similar to Shu, the kingdom of Wu possessed impressive amounts of natural resources. Unfortunately, where Shu could take its time to cultivate agricultural pursuits, Wu could not. Threatened by Wei from one side and watched by the southern tribes on the other, Wu had to keep its population prepared for war.

A naval kingdom of considerable repute, Wu operated its economy in a manner similar to Wei, with peasants and state-owned slaves attending to the arable land. Unlike in Wei, Wu allowed members of its military agrarian colonies to bring along their families. The gaudily rich dwelled in the south of the country, and possessed what land was not already the property of the government.

Nonetheless, his advantage didn't last. Once again ignoring the advice of his subordinates, Liu Bei led his army forward, installing garrisons and accreting support from the local tribes, pushing farther and farther while the Wu soldiers waited.

Months passed before Wu forces would take the offensive, first by launching an attack against a camp, and then by using fire as they tore through the Shu forces. The onslaught was relentless. When Liu Bei retreated, the Wu followed, chasing him across the country until he finally reached Baidicheng,

Traitors Within

Treachery, broken alliances, double agents — these are all reasons that plans have fallen through, that coups have failed, that heroes have been killed. Perhaps, it was also why Liu Bei fell in the end.

History is extremely clear that Liu Bei was told, repeatedly, to withdraw from his attempt at engaging Sun Quan. But he refused each time. The question needs to be asked then: What would possess a competent warlord to ignore his advisors in such a manner? Was it grief, as the *Romance of Three Kingdoms* suggests? Rage? Ambition? Or, perhaps, the work of a shadow cell within his own company. This chronicle could see a band of Lost from separate freeholds cooperating to instigate Liu Bei's downfall. The motivations behind such a malevolent act could be anything at all. A rumor. A warning. A selfless attempt to protect the state that their families belong to. The machinations of the Gentry, filtered through an innocent voice.

Southern Tribes

Not much has been written about the non-Chinese tribes that existed within, and outside of, the periphery of the Three Kingdoms. What has been stated is colored by the prejudices of the area. The historians of the time naturally saw themselves as superior to the people of the steppes.

The more scholastic troupe could potentially explore the ramifications of the oppression, and how these tribes might have stood against the Three Kingdoms. It might involve an independent freehold that has decided to defend against the invaders. Perhaps a Sin-Eater Band has grown exhausted of the conflict and, goaded by the concerns of the local spirits, has chosen to stand against an army.

thus ending the Battle of Xiaoting. Soon after, Liu Bei perished from illness, leaving only a legacy of loss, and his son to pick up the pieces.

Loyal to the End

Scholarly and resourceful, the "Crouching Dragon" Zhuge Liang was Liu Bei's confidant and often his voice of reason. Though he did not always listen to his advisor, the warlord trusted Zhuge Liang explicitly. Before his death, Liu Bei supposedly asked the Shu Han chancellor to watch over his son, and to take over the throne should his child prove incompetent. A heartbroken Zhuge Liang acquiesced.

After being put in charge of state affairs, Zhuge Liang made peace with Wu, cementing an alliance while the state of Shu Han recuperated from Liu Bei's death. Like his former lord, the chancellor desired the return of the Han Dynasty, but also wisely surmised that it would be impossible while Shu was divided. Fearing civil turmoil, he launched a campaign to quell Shu's southern territories, which proved a masterful success. The state was, for the time being, united once more. Having secured resources for his military endeavours, Zhuge Liang then turned his attention to Wei.

Sadly, success was not to be his. Wei stood strong against Zhuge Liang's assaults, losing only the principality of Wudu. His acquisition of the territory would also prove to be his final act of service. The next year, Zhuge Liang succumbed to illness and followed his former lord into the halls of Diyù.

The Passing of Lords

Unfortunately for the state, Liu Shan inherited more than his father's desire to see the Han Dynasty restored. He inherited the hedonism of Han's former monarchs — their willingness to place power into corrupt hands, to lose themselves in the pleasures of skin and wine. Some of his critics postulated that Liu Shan might have been mentally inept, although others held the theory that he prized survival over glory.

Whatever the case, Shu went into decline soon after Liu Shan assumed the throne. The new Emperor had little interest in his fiefdom, preferring instead to entrust his subordinates with the duties of state. To Shu's credit, however, not all of its officials were corrupt powermongers. The new commander-in-chief, a man named Jiang Wan, was a humble man, who did well in continuing Zhuge Liang's administrative tradition. What he lacked was an aptitude for military pursuits, something that quickly became evident to the state's enemies. In no time at all, Shu found the armies of Wei at the doorstep. Liu Shan subsequently surrendered, marking the end of Shu.

A different story unfolded in Wei. Cao Pi had died at the age of 40, leaving his son Cao Rui in the custody of four regents. All but one of the officials died within the next few years, leaving only Sima Yi to stand guard over the new ruler. The general proved a competent leader despite his inexperience with combat, maintaining Wei's borders against the continual onslaught from Shu and Wu.

Court Politics

Not every chronicle in the Three Kingdoms period needs to be a bloodbath. For every encounter between two generals, there was a taut conversation between a family of politicians. Inside the various capitals, diplomats and administrators orbited one another like predatory cats, waiting, watching for someone to slip up, and give in.

Both Lost freeholds and Sin-Eater Bands could find a lot to do here. A sample chronicle could take place right after

Sima Yi is appointed as one of the four regents for Cao Rui. Sima Yi's counterparts all died within the next few years. Was foul play involved? What if Cao Shuang was, in fact, aware of the Sin-Eaters, had tasked them to investigate, and had found evidence pointing to Sima Yi's ambition? Certainly, that would explain why he worked so strenuously to remove the general from power.

Similarly, a freehold could find itself either in opposition to or in support of the Sima's family ambition. Change is ubiquitously difficult, but more so when you suspect that your oppressors are endeavoring to stage a coup. It could be paranoia, of course — or a different freehold, or something else entirely. Perhaps your players are the ones hoping to stake their fortunes with the winning team. The possibilities are myriad.

Cao Rui did not reside on the throne for long. He died at age 35, leaving Cao Shuang, son of the former regent, and Sima Yi to rule together as regents while Cao Rui's son, Cao Fang, came of age. Neither man was willing to share their power. Cao Shuang took steps to strip his counterpart of titles, slowly but inexorably reducing his influence at court. Sima Yi tolerated the insult for a few years, before finally declaring his retirement in a fit of vexation and withdrawing from the public eye. But he was far from done with his rival.

With support from other dissidents, Sima Yi went to the prince Cao Fang, accusing his rival of irreprehensible conduct and corruption. Panicked, Cao Shang offered his surrender, on the condition that he would be able to retain his wealth. Sima Yi accepted, but quickly went back on his word, executing all of those loyal to his former nemesis. Luckily for Wei, this sudden change of power only changed circumstances for the better. While Sima Yi did work to dispose of those who could potentially challenge his authority, he also removed the corrupt officials that served under Cao Shang.

Of particular note is general Wang Ling, who sought to replace Cao Fang with his own candidate for the throne and to disrupt Sima Yi's power. His plans were foiled when they were leaked. Sima Yi mobilized before Wang Ling could retaliate, and offered the general the opportunity to surrender, only to renege on his deal, subsequently forcing his enemy to commit suicide. Sima Yi did not live long enough to enjoy the fruits of his labor, dying soon after, leaving his son Sima Shi to assume authority.

Similar in temperament to his father, Sima Shi did not take long to consolidate power. He made several attempts to take control of Eastern Wu, going toe to toe with its regent Zhuge Ke and ultimately defeating him. Then, suspicious of a budding conspiracy, Sima Shi murdered a minister named Li Feng and condemned his entire family to a traitor's death. His actions caused justifiable consternation in Cao Fang, who would later be forced to abdicate his throne after Sima Shi discovered plans to dispose of him. His 13-year-old cousin, Cao Mao, became the next ruler of Wei.

The Sima Family Claims Power

Young as he was, Cao Mao proved a shrewd player in the saga of the Three Kingdoms. A year after he ascended to the throne, the precocious Emperor made his first attempt to rid the country of the ambitious Sima family. During the new regent Sima Zhao's absence (Sima Shi had recently perished from illness, leaving his brother as his successor), Cao Mao issued a command for to him remain at his post. But the general refused and made his way to the capital, catalyzing a brazen series of events.

Sima Zhao made audacious demands of his Emperor, beginning with access to imperial raiments, and then the right to the Nine Bestowments, which he would coyly reject as a sign of humility. Finally, tired of Sima Zhao's manipulations, Cao Mao made his move. He gathered the imperial guards and led a charge against his nemesis's home. Sima Zhao fled. Despite his influence, his troops hesitated to raise arms against their own Emperor — all except one. An officer named Cheng Ji, commanded to protect the Sima name against all foes, killed Cao Mao with a spear. His valiance, unfortunately, earned him nothing but death. Sima Zhao decried him, along with the rest of his family, as traitors, and put them to the sword.

As for Cao Mao, Sima Zhao offered few honors to his fallen enemy. He forced the Empress Dowager to posthumously demote the emperor, and then appointed Cao Huan as the new emperor. This time, he made no pretenses as to his desire for the throne. For all intents and purposes, Cao Huan was simply a figurehead, unremarkable save for his role in the Sima family's schemes. After Sima Zhao's death, Cao Huan abdicated peaceably, allowing Sima Yan to take over the throne. This marked the end of the Wei empire and the birth of the Jin Dynasty. Wu's surrender in the years to come was the end of war for a time, and the Three Kingdoms era fell into legend.

The Hungry Dead

Everyone knows that history is written by the victors. But it is also molded by the influential, shaped by men and women of power: People who can ransom truth on a whim. And at times, it is also nudged along by smaller players, knots of individuals who may have had, by virtue of existences unending, to consider the long game.

The Three Kingdoms was not a kind place for commoners, although it could be said that war is never kind to the people. Although future generations would immortalize this period in a thousand books and a thousand more performances, romanticizing this era as a time of grand deeds and epic speeches, the truth was more gruesome. People died here. Hundreds. Thousands. Millions. Countless men, women, and children — each and every one sacrificed on the altar of personal glory, pulped by the hooves of horses bearing heroes or, worse yet, left to starve in ruined lands.

And all forgotten, glossed over to make room for more palatable imagery.

That much death has a way of leaving its impression on the earth, especially when it goes unrecorded. As conflict continued to boil, the countryside thickened with ghosts. Without families to placate their sufferings, without answers for why their lives had been so flippantly snuffed, the spirits held onto the only thing they had left:

Their rage.

In many cases, the apparitions simply became *yan gui*, lost souls who whimpered their miseries to anyone who would listen, content to dissipate into oblivion the moment resolution was found. Others demanded more. Hungry ghosts, whether wraiths of neglected ancestors or the damned souls of the gluttonous, trawled the world for fulfillment, often at the cost of mortal lives. More common yet, and perhaps all the more dangerous for it, were the *jiangshi*, or hopping vampires.

For as long as anyone could remember, Taoist occultists have made a business of bringing corpses back to their birthplaces. To accomplish this with minimal expense, the mediums would reanimate the bodies, allowing them to travel along the long roads without the need for horse and carriage. As an added bonus, the spell used to create a *jiangshi* also prevented the carcass from decomposing further, ensuring that their families would not have to deal with maggot-bloated meat.

Unfortunately, not all the *jiangshi* found their way home. These grim processions were frequently waylaid, the bodies

What Are the Jiangshi?

The *jiangshi* are the not-quite-dead, men and women who may have been subjected to unnecessary cruelty. Folklore places them uniformly in old-fashioned scholastic garb, with pale skin and sunken eyes.

Jiangshi who escape their captors are irrevocably drawn to the families they've left behind. It could be a sibling, a lover, even a pet dog — these undead creatures naturally gravitate towards anything they've shown affection towards. Unfortunately, while a touching idea on paper, the jiang shi's return to his or her ancestral home invariably results in hideous bloodshed. No longer able to consume sustenance normally, these sad creatures must devour chi — life force energy — to extend their stay in a world that no longer recognizes their presence as valid.

Since *jiangshi* can be made from any person, their traits vary widely. Increase their Strength by three dots; give them a point or two of armor to represent their unfeeling forms; and add a devour chi attack (Strength + Brawl + 2 aggravated damage; does one dot of Stamina damage for every two points of damage inflicted). For truly monstrous *jiangshi*, use powerful hobgoblins or other enemy statistics as the base.



Scavengers in the Battlefield

The main duty of any Wuchang Gui is to put the dead to rest, or to put down those who have strayed too far to be saved. During the time of the Three Kingdoms, the most expedient way for a Band to accomplish this was to join an army, and then complete their true duties after the violence had ended. A more intimate chronicle could explore the moralistic nature of such an approach, focusing on a single Band as it migrates from battlefield to battlefield. Such a scenario would allow the Storyteller to examine the minutiae of war, and the kind of suffering endured by those who are left behind after the armies have moved on.

From there, players may find themselves confronted with opportunities for defection, perhaps even reneging on their mortal responsibilities so as to be able to offer justice. Would the players attempt to cut down the general? Would they endeavor to turn other soldiers to their side? Equally interesting is the possibility of encountering another Wuchang Gui during their travels, someone they may have personally cut down themselves. How would an interaction between such parties play out?

The Chronicles of Darkness

The Three Kingdoms era is marked by ongoing wars spreading across a very large nation. The population, even ravaged by famine and massacre, is still large enough to hide a powerful supernatural presence. What, then, are the principal concerns of the other supernatural beings roaming China?

The burning of Luoyang caught several **vampire** elders in the fire. Their bloodlines are now in upheaval, and the most valuable territories are those farthest from the battlefield. The city-dwelling vampires pack themselves closer than ever, and are quick to exile or slay any brutish young bloodsucker that endangers their fragile border agreements. Local vampires establish covenants enforced by complicated contracts; a Kindred with a knack for legalism is much prized in these times.

The **Forsaken** are as strong in China as anywhere, if not stronger. They have a notable focus on rites, and packs often barter with each other with specialized and modified rituals as their currency. There are many parallels between their struggle and that of the Wuchang Gui, as they hunt spirits that have grown fat and bloodthirsty on the wars. Their bloody skirmishes with the Pure are frequently camouflaged as "another brutal warlord action."

The **mages'** struggle for power has also become more heated. The Exarchs' mortal emissaries had entrenched themselves well during the later Han, and are now struggling to retain control of each of the Three Kingdoms. The opportunity for rebellion is grand. Unfortunately, this is a time of many Banishers, as the terrible wars have triggered a number of warped Awakenings. Many mages establish benevolent reputations, as might the White Guard or other hunters.

Where supernatural beings hunt the night, humans band together to hunt them in turn. There are precious few compacts and no proper conspiracies in the era; most **hunter** cells are "bands of brothers," forged by close personal bonds that transcend even family loyalty. They might find some fame as local bands of heroic outlaws, and some cells cooperate with trusted mediums, including the Wuchang Gui.

Most local **Prometheans** have their origins in Taoist alchemy and related mystical practices; they don't trace their lineages back to Western creators. Golems and Muses are by far the most common, the former often created to guard tombs, the latter from experiments in immortality.

Those few **Arisen** who wander China in this time usually do so in search of knowledge. There are many clever inventors, sages, and mystics in the realm, who have something to teach even immortals. Demons speak of a God-Machine in the terms of a bureaucracy; a thousand thousand enslaved faces chant the myriad legalistic strictures of a clockwork "paradise." They are some of the few supernatural beings to think of the Mandate of Heaven as terrifying rather than benevolent — but even they can't agree if the wars are Heaven's will, or a way to weaken Heaven's control.

and their overseers stripped of valuables. Many of the *jiangshi* simply collapsed where they stood. Others, those that were a little more cognizant of their surroundings, took advantage of these situations to break free — but not before first devouring their liberators. It did not take long for travelers to begin cautioning each other about the *jiangshi*, and even less time for rumors about a disease capable of turning one into the undead to spread.

Still, not everything was mired in doom. In an ironic twist, the monumental death toll ensured that there was no shortage of Sin-Eaters, or Wuchang Gui (Ghosts of Impermanence), psychopomps bound to apparitions known colloquially as the Black Guard. Because of the circumstances of the era, many of the Wuchang Gui who emerged were either of The Torn, victims of incalculable brutality, or the Stricken, those who had perished from deprivation. To no one's surprise, the Forgotten were the rarest faction; no death is truly incidental in war.

Despite their numbers, however, there never seemed to be enough living bodies to stem the flood of the undead. Political unrest made it difficult for the Wuchang Gui, endowed as they were with an armament of unnatural powers, to traverse the breadth of ancient China. The problem was further compounded by the division of states. Opposing warlords, already beleaguered from every side, guarded their territories well. Strangers were viewed with suspicion at best, hostility at worst.

Some of the Wuchang Gui adopted a practical solution. They joined whatever army would have them or, in rarer cases, one of the bandit packs that skulked through the wilderness. Though such a move exacerbated the risk of violence, it also offered the advantage of numbers, access to the dead, and something more important yet: food, which was more precious than its weight in gold.

The Yaoguai

Demons. Minor deities. Animal spirits grown potent from devouring virtuous souls. Chinese mythology all but bristles with mention of the Yaoguai, who have as many faces and shapes as stars in the sky. As is often the case, however, the mortal interpretation is but a simplification of the truth, a shallow glimpse into the Chronicles of Darkness.

Some of the Yaoguai in the Three Kingdoms were nothing more than interstitial spirits, embodiments of nature or ideology, manifestations of violence and death. Others were significantly more dangerous. Like their Western counterparts, the True Fae of ancient China were a capricious, hedonistic bunch who reportedly took no small delight in the country's violent intrigues. Certain Lost scholars believe that the Gentry played an active role in the tribulations of the Three Kingdoms, alternatively extending or ending conflict as suited their moods. A few even go as far as to suggest the Mandate of Heaven might have been a fabrication of the Fae, their way of advertising their sovereignty over the realm.

For their part, the Lost of the Three Kingdoms, depending on the attitudes of their individual Courts, either found themselves forced to pick sides as their leaders became swept up in mortal struggles, or struggled to maintain connections with their fellows. Similarly, the attitude in the local freeholds seemed split between those who would do anything to bolster their ranks, and those who refused entry to new members entirely. A number of freeholds, notably those that existed on the borders of the warring states, even downsized, excising anyone incapable of pulling their weight.

Courts of Chaos — Changeling: The Lost

As the swords clash and armies roar during the Three Kingdoms period, the world of the Lost is also in a state of unrest and upheaval. The Courts of the Azure Dragon ruled for too long during the Han Dynasty, only to have their power overturned when the wars began. The destruction caused in the wake of the Yellow Turban Rebellion and the emotions stirred up in the conflict made their way to the Hedge, peeling away the layers that protected the realms of faerie, causing an influx of fledgling wanderers returned from their durances to a time of upheaval. Too many men die by the sword, and too many children from starvation. Too many women lose their families, and too many communities are torn asunder from the weight of the wars waged over so many lands. With the addition of the Huntsmen to that list of tragedies, it is a bleak and empty world with little to hope for unless you are entitled enough to be above it all.

Directional Courts

For the changelings of China, there is one clear way to stay hidden and avoid being dragged back to their faerie masters... the Mandate of Heaven. What some call "fate," others see as the course heaven has designed for every creature, every individual, every community, every kingdom. Even this war-torn time is exactly as it must be under the Mandate of Heaven, giving rise to both heroes and villains to act their parts in the plays before the immortals.

The Directional Courts are a reflection of this very ideal, encompassing five Courts (North, South, East, West, and Center), each following the winds of change demanded by the Mandate of Heaven. Each possesses its own philosophies on how to act and what is right, but none of them is outside of heaven's control. They all play their parts, and this is crucial to how they avoid the Huntsmen; acting in accordance with the Mandate and ensuring it is upheld.

This means, of course, that the Directional Courts are much more tempered by the actions of the people around them than other Court structures. In times of war, the Western Courts are called to action, while the Eastern Courts thrive in time of prosperity. The Northern Courts contemplate what it means to suffer at the hands of fate, while the Southern Courts were created to rail against fate.

The Center Courts are brought in when quiet reflection is in order. The Directional Courts all rule simultaneously and work together to maintain balance.

Warring Freeholds

If the chaos of the period comes from a ruler defying Heaven, then every changeling needs to make a decision on which ruler is truly deserving of heaven's grace. Would they serve at the mercy of the newly appointed emperor of the Wu Kingdom, Sun Quan, or the warlord Liu Bei of the Shu Han? Those who chose neither could always join the forces of the Wei and the Cao family line. What one couldn't do was ignore the bloody conflict entirely, regardless of where she ran.

This idea of choosing sides affected the once harmonious Courts by splitting their numbers. This turned changeling against changeling as allegiances were tested and a red mist covered the land. Three distinct changeling movements were born, each with its own set of Directional Courts that believed it backed the correct ruler under the Mandate of Heaven. The Seven Claws support the Shu, founded to serve the Emperor of Shu Han; the Still Pond served the Wei and its immense holdings; and Heaven's People moved their Courts to the Wu lands.

The chaotic state of the world broke down the barriers holding the Hedge at bay and released thousands of changelings from their Fair Folk prisons. Now each set of Directional Courts wages secret wars to gather the young changelings as they exit their durances in order to bolster their numbers against the others. Of course, many of these changelings will die in the battles to come, as not all are destined to become heroes of the era. Some are simply sacrifices to the Mandate of Heaven, their blood demanded for the greater glory of the kingdoms they serve.

In many ways, changelings become the most stalwart believers in their leaders, willing to follow them to the ends of the Earth. Some scholars among the Lost believe the loyalty of the changelings, and their strict adherence to their own mandates, actually extended the Three Kingdoms period longer than it would have gone naturally, as they rallied and battled for their lords, bringing their human compatriots along for the ride.

Hall of Endless Doorways

The Directional Courts assemble in freeholds hidden within the Hedge on the fringes of their kingdoms. Entrance to the freehold can only be gained with possession of a medallion of the freehold, and usually by invitation only. A Seven Claws medallion resembles a seven-fingered claw holding a sliver of jade. The Still Pond medallion is in the shape of a simple droplet of water crafted out of metal, usually worn at the end of a long chain. Heaven's People carry a long bronze brooch with three jewel slots, though only two are filled; the third will only be filled when the true emperor is back in place. The interior of the Hall is decked out in whatever colors are attributed to the Court, with all the hallways lined with a series of doors, each one shining silver with jeweled handles.

What is special about these locations is that they are the doorways to destiny. The doorways are portals in constant flux, meaning walking through one may teleport the changeling to a random place in China. It is believed the location is decided by Heaven only, so the changeling ends up exactly where she was meant to be. These portals feature in many trials, with the changeling judged guilty choosing a door to walk through. Sometimes she is never heard from again, but if Heaven wishes to give her another chance at redemption she will arrive in a peaceful region. Some changelings have learned to affect these doorways to take them nearly anywhere of their choosing.

Harvesting Glamour

While the mortals may have trouble finding food to satiate themselves, a changeling has no such problem with Glamour. Emotions run high during war, especially those closely related to the Directional Courts. Those of the Northern Courts often feed on the limitless suffering that can be found by tossing a stone in any direction — that stone either connects with someone who is suffering...or just created some of its own. Changelings of the Southern Courts find it easy to mingle with the commoners who have no hand in the war, feeding off their need for change, often taking the opportunity to spur them to action. Eastern-facing changelings have no lack of envy to harvest as Glamour, as the politicians all strive to take one another's positions and wealth, killing entire family lines in the process. Western-facing changelings have the constant tests of their honor in the face of the enemy, especially as opportunities arise to take strategic advantages which may be deemed dishonorable. Centered changelings can always find someone needing a shoulder to cry on, a kind word or embrace to brighten his day and give him perspective on his life.

Unfortunately, few changelings during the period have time to forge long-lasting relationships with those from whom they harvest Glamour. Instead of investing into large meals that guarantee a supply of Glamour, Directional changelings are more prone to travel from town to town snacking on the readily available and ambient emotions they find. They must be as ever-changing as the war itself, so planting roots to indulge in their fetishes for emotional manipulation often takes a back seat to simple survival. Regardless of how far they travel, all changelings eventually return to their freeholds to rest, and so that others can take the opportunity to travel. This ensures a well-protected home in an otherwise chaotic world.

Threats at the Edge of War

As the Directional Courts attempt to exist both within and removed from humanity, so too must they continuously look over their shoulders for the Huntsmen. Shadow wars

between the separate Directional Courts can end instantly when all changelings have a single enemy in common — the Fair Folk who want nothing more than to rip them from Earth again to serve in terrible realms. This, of course, doesn't mean rivalries die; they're rather put on hold for a brief time.

Many of the changelings recently arriving through the Hedge actually have a special camaraderie, as they all may have escaped from the same Fair Folk's realm. Those who had already escaped have their own stories.

Goddess of the Salt River

This True Fae often appears as a beautiful woman who springs from bodies of salt water to seduce men into her bed at the dark bottom. In actuality, she is a parasite, taking the form of a swarm of flies large enough to blot out the sun; she can obliterate life with a glance. She enjoys keeping her captives "pickling" in underwater cages, the better to improve the flavor as she slowly takes their life force a bit at a time.

Odd-Arm

A truly deformed member of the Fair Folk, this hobgoblin has only one arm and three eyes that allow him to see in day or night. Odd-Arm is a creature of loneliness, wanting only to be accepted; he expresses his longing by capturing mortals and turning them into other creatures like him. His single arm possesses enormous strength, and he has a strange gift for creeping up on people in utter silence.

Kung Kung

This draconic monster is of the worst True Fae to be kidnapped by, from accounts of those who experienced the horror. Kung Kung was once a creature so strong he destroyed a mountain that served as one of pillars that held up the sky. Other Fair Folk trapped him away within his own dimension, but he occasionally reaches out to catch small, fragile playthings to amuse himself.

Court of the Black Tortoise

Northern Courts

Life is suffering. It is a simple proverb, with heavy meaning...especially for the changelings of the Court of the Black Tortoise. They have broken free from the bonds of their Fair Folk masters to return to their old lives, most finding death and ruin upon their return. These changelings learn from their suffering, not only the suffering endured in the Hedge, but also the suffering of everyone else in the world they encounter. Most pour themselves into the various texts of the many libraries the world has created. Some can be found protecting these scarred buildings from entire armies, as the loss of even one tome would deprive the world and cause even more suffering.

Though instinct tells the changeling to covet pleasure over pain, wealth over poverty, love over apathy, only through suffering can true enlightenment be discovered. They refuse to indulge their senses, and turn to suffering as a way to view and understand the world. One must endure these harsh times to truly appreciate life and avoid the Huntsmen. Some think the Huntsmen may feel bad for the Tortoises, and take pity on them. Why drag them back if they are doing such a good job torturing themselves?

The Court of the Black Tortoise is known for its members' calm under fire, making them important leaders during time of great suffering and stress. The changelings turn to them for strategy, wisdom, and clarity of vision. Northern-facing changelings adorn themselves in little more than is necessary for warmth and protection in their region, revealing their self-inflicted, ritual scars which can be quite beautiful to some and hideous to others. The Northern Court of the Still Pond keeps a secret freehold in the remains of burned Louyang, feeding on the echoes of past suffering. Within Heaven's People, the Northern Court has taken refuge in the Jadepure Monastery, offering help to those in need and collecting Glamour more directly.

Suffering

It should be noted that being attuned to suffering doesn't make the changeling any more inclined to enjoy the suffering of others, or cause it themselves. On the other hand, while one can feed by contemplating suffering they happen upon by chance, some members of the Black Tortoise lose all humanity. The Court's members usually either take the roles of superb healers and defenders of the sick and poor, or they become world-class interrogators and warlords, always looking for their next victims.

Mantle

The Mantle of the Northern Court consists of piety and composure above all other things.

•	The character often leaves a trail of ashes as she travels, but may ignore all penalties from fatigue or deprivation, as her mind stays sharp regardless of her body's condition.
••	Grant the courtier a dot of the Goblin Vow (Suffering).
•••	The changeling develops scars in a tortoise pattern, and his eyes may turn completely black. Penalties resulting from wounds are reduced by –1, allowing him to push himself further.
••••	The courtier gains a Personal Approach, usually related to a lesson she has learned from her studies, what she has suffered through, or from meditations with wise sages. A Huntsman cannot gain Yearning from a Court Approach unless it fulfills the Personal Approach first.
•••••	The changeling perfectly personifies endurance, often appearing to have a halo around himself

that deflects attacks. His skin often takes on a black or gray sheen, and once per day he may use his Resolve as Armor against an attack.

Court of the Vermillion Bird

Southern Courts

From destruction springs new life in new forms — which may frighten those in power. The Court of the Vermillion Bird makes its home within this concept: rebellion against what is and the creation of what will be. In these troubled times, rebellion serves the Mandate of Heaven. It means bringing the common people up and the nobles down. It means turning the world upside down, and looking at it from a new direction. It is an art to these changelings.

These Lost suffered their durances at the hands of cruel masters, but their fights aren't over just because that single battle has ended. They are the most vigilant in following the Mandate of Heaven, using it as a cloud to hide themselves from the Huntsmen. Sometimes the best way to ward off enemies is to dare them to attack in hopes they won't call your bluff.

The Court of the Vermillion Bird often arrives after great destruction has passed — the collapse of a temple, thousands buried in fresh mass graves, even the utter defeat of an army. Regardless of what side they are on and which kingdom they serve, Southern-facing changelings are there to bring about change. Because of their ever-changing nature, few are alike in demeanor or appearance. Some are warriors, bringing change to the battlefield, while others are performers putting on a show for the widows left behind.

The Southern Courts are well known in the Shu Han Kingdom, where they feed on the almost constant rebellion by the Nanman tribes under the rule of Meng Huo. Their numbers were captured a dozen times, but the tribe continued the fight and eventually became a valuable asset for the kingdom.

Rebellion

Rebellion is a hard emotion to pin down, as it can mean many things. One can even rebel against too much rebellion. In short, it means stirring up the status quo. If that need be done with an assassin's blade, then so be it, but many South-facing Lost as readily become healers or jugglers. Peasants rebelled against their lords; soldiers turned on their cruel commanders. So much death and suffering, with nothing even to show for it. After years of rebellions, the Wei eventually succumbed to their force and the kingdom was ruined at the blade of Sima Yan. Those in power should never underestimate the power of rebellion.

Mantle

The Mantle of the Southern Court is about the struggle.

•	The courtier reeks of the struggle of the lower classes and always seem like she is dirty, even fresh from the bath. This causes nobles to ignore her, creating a –1 penalty for any upper-class citizen to notice her.
••	The courtier gains a dot of the Goblin Vow (Rebellion).
•••	The changeling wears the war on his sleeve and gain an understanding of true loss and tragedy. Nobles cringe when they look at him, and peasants feel the need to follow him. He gains Allies •• (Commoners) and is able to call in favors from everyday citizens who oblige for reasons even they don't understand.
••••	Grants a courtier a Personal Approach, usually related to the personal trials she has experienced in her climb to power within her Court. A Huntsman cannot gain Yearning from a Court Approach unless it fulfills the Personal Approach first.
•••••	The character becomes a paragon of survival and rebellion, having fought through hardships. Nobles spit at him and commoners serve him, as he serves the people and not the hierarchy. The Southern courtier develops broken chains around his wrists and ankles, grit hangs on every word he speaks, and his skin turns a shade of red or purple. He may choose either +1 Health or +1 Willpower.

Court of the Azure Serpent

Eastern Courts

When one thinks of power, the mind often drifts to the musculature of a spear-wielding warrior or the sturdy hamstrings of an impressive athlete. But there are few things more powerful than jade, gold, coin: money in all its forms. This is where the Court of the Azure Serpent differs from the Courts who see suffering or war or art or understanding as the real path to power. These changelings have risen above the squalor many others find themselves in when they return from the Hedge, either through birthright (if they are lucky) or through sheer, unforgiving, underhanded plots that landed them in the lap of luxury.

Connecting with humanity as a whole is not something that comes naturally to most Serpent changelings. They've simply removed themselves from the problem, hearing stories of terrible clashes through the grapevine and throwing money at the problem to keep it far away from their gates. The gates they bought with all the money they have, the money they've taken from those less powerful. This is how they hide from the Huntsmen; they simply hide away from everyone.

The Court of the Azure Serpent also exists separate from the other Directional Courts in a way. They rule in areas of prosperity and wealth, right where they want to be. Their role is to use the machinations of humankind to advance the Mandate of Heaven, and adorn themselves with expensive trinkets and silken robes along the way. Often, this means they pass laws to benefit one side or the other, or send soldiers to destroy an impoverished, but well-located city to hasten one kingdom's ascension to power — an ascension they will gladly ride to the top.

Some blame the Azure Serpents for causing the Three Kingdoms period, as many of their members fed on the ascension of Dong Zhou even while publicly scorning his rule. The Court founded the powerful Seven Claws freehold there in Luoyang to feed off the people's lingering envy years after Dong Zhou's death.

Envy

No Eastern-facing changeling will argue with you: She wants things, and she isn't ashamed of it. She'll do whatever it takes to get the object of her desire, even turning to her darker urges. However, Eastern courtiers are also keen on creating this yearning in others. This is can be accomplished inspiring by envy, but courtiers are also known to help others gain positions of power to salt onlookers' wounds. The Serpents aren't incapable of charity and compassion, but even when their most virtuous heroes fight battles against the rich and powerful, they feed on the envy of the oppressed populace as they go.

Mantle

The Mantle of the Eastern Court revolves around money and power.

•	The changeling receives +1 die to Investigation rolls to get herself acquainted with her prey.
••	The courtier gains a dot of the Goblin Vow (Envy).
•••	The courtier's clothing is impeccable, her teeth are often jewel-encrusted, and the sound of jingling coins can be heard as she walks. Above all else, she becomes well-versed in dealmaking, gaining +2 dice to Subterfuge to swindle, connive, and cheat someone out of his valuables.
••••	Grants the courtier a Personal Approach, usually related his favorite type of deal to make or treasures to collect. A Huntsman cannot gain Yearning from a Court Approach unless it fulfills the Personal Approach first.
•••••	The changeling's skin often turns either gold, silver, or a bright, scaly green like that of a serpent. At this stage, she's learned that everything has its price. Once per day, she may add her Resources score to any Social roll as bonus dice.

Court of the White Tiger

Western Courts

The world is at war no matter where one looks, and the Court of the White Tiger has unapologetically stood up to take the fight to its enemies. A Western-facing changeling's durance was likely short-lived, as he fought hard to get out regardless of what obstacles stood in his way. When he returned to a world torn apart by the war of Three Kingdoms, it was as if he had never left. This Court respects



martial prowess above all else: the ultimate form of artistry, judgment, and destiny.

As war surrounds them, the Tiger changelings take to the front lines, fighting as they always have. Many believe this aggression is what shields their presence from the Huntsmen, as they are just as violent and bloodthirsty as the humans they fight beside. They laugh and drink and cavort with humans, and by all rights are the closest to humanity of all the Directional Courts. Stories tell of a Tiger who chose his human comrades at the Battle of Jianwei over those even of his own freehold. The changeling's story didn't end well, after the members of his freehold pulled him into the Hedge for retribution.

In these tumultuous days, more changelings belong to the Court of the White Tiger than to any other Court. It's easy to be recruited, as the generals will take anyone who can hold a sword without trembling and will don the uniform of the kingdom — and there is no lack of places to fight.

A Heaven's People freehold of the Western Court can be found in Wuchang, always accepting new changelings into the fold. Turning the newly arrived changelings into epic heroes can do nothing but increase the power of Heaven's People against the other kingdoms.

Honor

Honor is a finicky emotion, mostly due to the definition of what honor is changing from one person to the next. Even though there is a social contract that tells each person what is honorable and what is dishonorable, the choice of which tenets to adhere to and



which to ignore is a very personal thing. Honor is paid a lot of lip service during the Three Kingdoms Period, but is a tough emotion to pin down when loyalties are split. How does a man choose between his fealty to his lord and his loyalty to his family name? Even the greatest heroes end up abandoning duty in moments of desperation. A hero who can remain constant in her honor is a powerful weapon for hope, but also a great target.

Mantle

The Mantle of the Western Courts is centered on the war at hand.

•	The changeling adopts an air of eerie cold around himself. Wherever he travels, others try to look away, as locking eyes with the changeling fills the onlooker with dread. He gains +1 die to Weaponry rolls when wielding a chosen weapon type.
••	Grants Western courtiers gain a dot of the Goblin Vow (Honor).
•••	The changeling's body begins to develop scars after every kill, each one deeper and more intimidating. Her eyes glint like the shine off a blade, and she roars with the howl of a war god (take 9-Again on Intimidation rolls).
••••	Gives the courtier a new Personal Approach, usually related to his past kills and triumphs. A Huntsman cannot gain Yearning from a Court Approach unless it fulfills the Personal Approach first.
•••••	The changeling becomes the embodiment of honor as her skin turns a stark white or silver color. She is able to dole out justice at a moment's notice; any weapon becomes deadlier in her hands, and they can ignore one point of Armor with any Weaponry attack.

Court of the Yellow Dragon

Center Courts

A people can war for only so long before their soldiers grow weary and need rest. A people can only suffer so much torment before they are in need of comfort. One can cast green eyes at someone else and find she needs to take stock of what she has. One can only fight against the powers that be for so long, before he needs to accept some things are here to stay. This is the role the Court of the Yellow Dragon plays within the Mandate of Heaven, the center resting point between the extremes the other Courts represent. During their durances, many were often at ease with their places in whatever hierarchy their Fair Folk masters created, perhaps being a favored pet. If they weren't, they were quick to use another changeling as a distraction to escape punishment.

Some say the Centered changelings hide themselves from the Huntsmen within the extremes of other changelings. They may venture into jealousy or war or self-abuse or art, always to return to a balanced life once more. One need not hide completely, just not be as overt as others.

The changelings of the Court of the Yellow Dragon arrive wearing dark-colored robes to contrast their bright skin tones. They often ascend to power after one Court or another has concluded their ventures. They believe their brothers and sisters work so hard to make their visions come true, and they deserve love and comfort and to be consoled. This often takes the form of hedonistic displays or festivals, which are never open to greater humanity. Unlike other Courts, which exist to interact with the humans they have returned to, Dragons know their place is with other changelings. They help balance the Directional Courts and keep them on the mend.

Yellow Dragons within the Still Pond possess a freehold within Hanzhong, a strategically located city with heavy military value. Every ruler, from Liu Bei to Cao Cao, came to regret his decision to rule this city and both contemplated ending the war entirely. Sadly, the Center Court's presence was never enough to sway the generals outright.

Reflection

Dragon changelings exist for a task few take time to perform. Hours spent in deep meditation over their deeds, good and bad, give them an appreciation for life, love, and the pleasant things in life. Of course, bringing others to a state of reflection can be tougher, unless their hardened edges have been softened. Center-facing changelings use any tools at their disposal, from opium to sexual pleasures to outright coercion. While these may inspire desire, fear, or joy respectively, the changeling is going for something more fragile... reflection on past deeds to cause an epiphany of some kind.

Mantle

The Center Court focuses on soothing the hurt of the past and helping others move past their pain.

•	Grants a courtier an aura of acceptance, allowing her to become a great confidant. She gains +1 die for Empathy rolls when attempting to console another.
••	The courtier gains a dot of the Goblin Vow (Reflection).
•••	The changeling begins to develop soft features and eyes of swirling light. Some say he even alters his looks to suit the individual he wants to console. He receives Striking Looks ••.
••••	Grants the courtier a Personal Approach, usually related to her favored way of helping others. A Huntsman cannot gain Yearning from a Court Approach unless it fulfill the Personal Approach first.

••••• Makes the changeling the perfect intimate confidant, even on a physical level. His body sheds its flesh tones for bright yellows and oranges, often appearing as serpentine scales along the folds of his body. Once per day, he may heal another with a touch, taking on the damage healed this way (up to half his maximum). For example, a Center courtier with 10 Health can take up to 5 damage to himself, healing that same amount in another.

Contracts of the Directional Courts

These Contracts have been long rooted in the foundations of the Directional Courts, aiding the changelings in finding their way along the roads set forth by the Mandate of Heaven. This can sometimes mean a literal control over the cardinal directions (north, south, etc.) or sometimes the destiny of the situation or person at hand and the changeling's place within the grand scheme of the universe.

Heart's Desire (•)

The simplest expression of direction is how to get to the thing the changeling wants most, be it a person, place, or object.

Cost: 1 Glamour

Dice Pool: Survival + Mantle (vs. target's Wits + Wyrd)

Action: Reflexive/Contested

Duration: Scene

Roll Result:

Dramatic Failure: The character's spirit becomes unbalanced, pulled in several directions at once. The changeling suffers a –1 penalty to all rolls until he rests for (6 – Stamina) hours.

Failure: The changeling fails to get a sense of direction to the things he desires.

Success: The changeling perceives a faintly illuminated trail or a tug on his spirit, showing him the direction of the person he wishes to meet, the thing he hopes to acquire, or place he desires to visit. If the target moves or changes location, his perception of the correct direction changes accordingly.

The character should be single-purposed in his pursuit. While this contract is in effect, the changeling suffers a –2 die penalty to any actions that would distract him from his goal.

Exceptional Success: The penalty for distracting activities is removed.

• **Beasts:** Being in tune with their animal sides gives them an advantage while tracking. They may add Wits to their dice pool when activating Heart's Desire.

• **Darklings:** The targets rarely see the Darklings coming, and resist with Wits alone.

Catch: The changeling possesses a fragment of what they seek (i.e. a lock of hair, a chipped corner from a precious heirloom or a souvenir).

Shifting From Center (•–•••••)

By gazing into a person's very soul, the changeling can throw someone's spiritual balance off track, usually creating dire consequences.

Cost: 1 Glamour

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Mantle vs. Resolve

Action: Contested

Duration: Varies

Roll Result:

Dramatic Failure: The changeling's energy is directed inward, causing herself the same penalty she attempted to place upon her target.

Failure: The target successfully avoids having his soul shifted.

Success: The changeling nudges the flow of fate, shifting her target's soul in several directions at once. This causes a dice penalty equal to the number of dots she possesses in Shifting From Center to one type of roll (Physical, Social, or Mental). Flooding a target's senses can make him fumble around aimlessly, cause him to become tongue-tied and socially inept, or cloud his judgment in times of peril. This penalty lasts for a number of turns equal to the changeling's successes rolled.

Exceptional Success: Enjoys a longer duration based on a higher number of successes.

• **Beasts:** These changelings can affect the souls of animals as well.

• **Wizened:** After learning the machinations of the soul, the Wizened may add Crafts to activation checks for this Contract.

Catch: The changeling looks the target directly in the eyes while using the Contract.

Direction's Grace (•–•••)

One's direction always puts the changeling on a path, but with Direction's Grace, a changeling can alter that path to take her places others could never venture. This contract directly affects the way the changeling may travel.

Cost: 1 Glamour

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Athletics + Mantle

Action: Instant

Duration: Scene

Roll Result:

Dramatic Failure: The changeling becomes affixed to the ground, and is unable to move from her position for (6 – Mantle) turns.

Failure: The changeling may continue to move normally, but gains no real benefit.

Success: The character moves with beauty provided by the Mandate of Heaven, defying what others can do. Depending on her Court, she may launch herself into the air and fly at



her normal Speed (South or North), continue moving on land at Speed +5 (East and West), or tunnel beneath the ground at Speed – 5 (Center). Her rate of Speed increases to +10 at two dots, and +15 at three dots. Movement in this new medium feels normal to her (she suffers no additional penalties due to movement speed), even though it's truly astonishing to most onlookers.

Exceptional Success: The player can pick a mode of movement outside of the character's own Direction.

- **Elementals:** Elementals also ignore environmental penalties (up to –5).

- **Ogres:** Using their unmatched physical prowess to propel themselves, Ogres may choose to use Strength instead of Dexterity to activate this contract.

Catch: The changeling performed one hour of uninterrupted meditation within the last 24 hours.

The Hundred Steps (•••)

With this Contract, the changeling blesses his place of rest for protection. It need not be his own home. The ritual involves taking 100 steps in each of the major directions, as well as around the center of the home.

Cost: 2 Glamour + 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Resolve + Mantle

Action: Extended (each roll represents 1 minute of prayer, with a number of successes dependent on size of the domicile: 5 successes for a single room, 10 successes for a small home, or 15 successes for a large home).

Duration: 24 hours

Roll Result:

Dramatic Failure: The area becomes cursed for the changeling instead. He is banned from entering until the effects pass.

Failure: The four directions ignore his plea for protection.

Success: The changeling has called on the Mandate of Heaven to protect his abode. First, the contract makes it much harder for others to enter by force; it requires an exceptional success to pick the lock, smash the window, or otherwise break in, assuming there are walls and locks to keep others out.

Those who enter the protected area are immediately sickened, and their Defense and Initiative scores are halved. Of course, the changeling can select a number of targets up to her Wyrd who are immune to these limitations. Tokens, as well, are not rendered useless by this Contract.

Exceptional Success: Victims also cannot access Contracts within the space, but leaving the area and attacking from the outside is perfectly acceptable. Other supernatural creatures may be cut off from their special abilities as well, at the Storyteller's discretion.

- **Fairest:** A Fairest may pick a single victim; that victim's Defense and Initiative are reduced to 1 (instead of being halved).

- **Beasts:** No lesser creatures may enter the protected area of a Beast, not even insects, dogs, or other animals.

Catch: The space being blessed resides on land officially belonging to the changeling or someone who is of blood relation.

Harmony of Portals (••••)

A changeling can use this Contract to pass through one door and appear out of another a mile away in the blink of an eye.

Cost: 2 Glamour

Dice Pool: Stamina + Mantle

Action: Reflexive

Duration: Instant

Roll Result:

Dramatic Failure: Instead of appearing where she wanted, the changeling is teleported to a hostile region of the Hedge.

Failure: The changeling steps through the doorway to simply reach the other side with no magical effect.

Success: The character enters one portal, either on her feet, her hands and knees, or even through the air, and materializes out of another within a number of miles equal to her Wyrd score. Both portals must be large enough for the changeling; she cannot enter through a door only to exit from someone's pocket. She must also know the doorway she plans to exit, having seen or used it before in the past. Attempting to exit through a random doorway has the same result as a Dramatic Failure. Some savvy nobles have started installing false doors within their estates, hoping to thwart changelings' attempts to use the Contract to enter their mansions.

Exceptional Success: The second portal can be anywhere within a number of miles equal to three times the changeling's Wyrd.

- **Wizened:** By spending 1 Willpower (in addition to Glamour), a Wizened can also take a number of others with him through the portal equal to his Intelligence score.

- **Elementals:** The changeling can pass through her element like a doorway, such as diving into a lake to instantly appear on the other side, or jumping into one bonfire to appear out of another.

Catch: The changeling uses a door to his Court's Hall of Endless Doorways as either starting location.

Winds of Change (•••••)

The changelings of the Directional Courts believe they know the truth about the Mandate of Heaven, even learning how to influence the outcome of events to be more in line with their beliefs.

Cost: 2 Glamour + 2 Willpower

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Mantle

Action: Instant

Duration: Until resolved

Roll Result:

Dramatic Failure: Tampering with fate and failing damages the changeling's soul. The changeling loses 1 permanent Health.

Failure: The changeling's soul has no bearing on fate in this situation.

Success: The changeling gains the ability to perceive major moments in what is to become history, and influences the Mandate of Heaven to make a given event (such as a battle, a raid, or a festival) coincide with the teachings of her Court. Depending on the emotion implemented, that flavor of Glamour becomes easier to Harvest in the area: Any changelings from the caster's Court in the area gain Harvest •• until the situation has resolved.

Envy: The event ends with one party attempting to take something from another, either through force or coercion.

Honor: The event ends in an honorable resolution, which doesn't always mean pleasant. There would be no questioning of motive at least.

Rebellion: The underdog in the situation is bound to rise up, and probably win. In any case, those assumed to be weak become strong.

Reflection: Those involved in the event take a second to contemplate exactly what they are doing and why. Sometimes it ends the conflict entirely, otherwise it reinforces ideas and makes the punishment worse.

Suffering: The event ends in suffering, but the contract does not predict whose suffering.

If a village is being raided by soldiers, using Winds of Change (Envy) may embolden the soldiers to also pillage. If another changeling used Winds of Change (Rebellion) it may have the opposite effect. If used together, it could be the villagers steal the soldiers' weapons to use themselves. The Storyteller and players should discuss how the specific emotion affects the scene, if at all. Rarely does it counteract any specific ongoing act, but rather it nudges it in one direction or another.

This is not the kind of Contract to be used on small events that affect only a single person or even just a handful of people. These events should ones that can go on to cast a shadow over entire villages or cities based on the outcome. The span of this Contract is limited, of course, and cannot decide the fate of the entire Three Kingdoms period. The changeling using the contract must also be caught in the event herself, so this cannot be used to affect situations occurring anywhere else but in the character's immediate area.

Two changelings who use this Contract on the same event do not counteract each other. In fact, the effects combine to produce a brand new variation to the outcome. If two changelings invoke the same emotion on the event, the situation doubles in intensity, which may go on to become something world-changing. For each character also using Winds of Change with the same emotion, the Harvest score for the area goes up by one dot (maximum of five).

Exceptional Success: The Harvest bonus granted lingers for an additional three days following the event's resolution.

- **Fairest:** The changeling may pick one person in the crowd to bear the brunt of the effect, often creating a martyr or possibly a hero in the process. That target suffers a –1 die penalty to any roll in the situation.
- **Ogres:** The outcome of an Ogre's use of Winds of Change always ends with death, regardless of the type being used. Anyone affected who shows aggression gets a +1 die bonus to their actions.

Catch: The changeling allows herself to take the brunt of any negative outcome which may occur. This could potentially mean sacrificing her own life to affect change in a major way.

When Night Falls the Monsters Come – Geist: The Sin-Eaters

In ancient China, Sin-Eaters are known as *Wuchang Gui* (Ghosts of Impermanence). Those knowledgeable in occult matters understand that they are two-fold beings, composed of the White Guard (the Sin-Eater) and the Black Guard (the geist). Their official duties, which they claim were assigned to them by the Jade Emperor, were to escort spirits to *Diyù* (the Underworld), to transform hungry ghosts back into ordinary ghosts when possible, and to return or destroy hungry ghosts who escape into the mortal world. In this era, their krewes are known as *Bang Huo* or Bands.

In the more peaceful and orderly days of the Han Dynasty, hungry ghosts and vengeful ancestors were uncommon. Ordinary mediums, Taoist monks and exorcists could handle most problems. During this era, Wuchang Gui were also relatively few in number and primarily dealt with helping ghosts resolve problems with their descendants, recapturing hungry ghosts, and occasionally battling some of the inhuman monsters from the lowest depths of Diyù. However, those peaceful days are gone. War and famine now slay entire families, even entire villages, while corrupt officials neglect their sacred duties.

New hungry ghosts arise daily. Thousands of hungry ancestors, furious at their neglect, lack anyone to propitiate them. But all this death and chaos has also given rise to new Black Guards, who in turn create a growing number of new Wuchang Gui. Just as war and chaos grips the mortal world, these newly reborn Wuchang Gui must now fight terrible and deadly battles against hungry ghosts, Underworld creatures no longer bound by centuries-old rituals, and even terrible, inhuman beasts summoned by foolish sorcerers.



Dying For Power

One unusual option is for one or more characters to be "self-created," usually Taoist monks or professional exorcists faced with problems too frequent and dangerous for ordinary mortals to handle. A desperate individual might respond by seeking out ancient and forbidden rituals to increase her power by gaining an ally from the Underworld. In short, the character (or characters) underwent a ritual to become a Wuchang Gui.

This ritual requires the subject to drink a swift alchemical poison or to undergo some equally fatal ordeal, and then to call upon a Black Guard to bond with them and return them to life. Most individuals who perform this ritual simply die, but one or more characters in the chronicle were both sufficiently dedicated and sufficiently lucky that they survived and became Wuchang Gui. Such characters would have had extensive knowledge of the Underworld and the occult well before they returned from the dead.

A Familiar Role

No one except the most knowledgeable supernatural experts — the very best of mediums, exorcists, sorcerers, occultists, priests, and monks — understand what Wuchang Gui truly are. But even illiterate farmers who have never traveled farther than the nearest weekly market know of exorcists and mediums. Depending upon their region of origin, some exorcists are shamans and a few are Buddhists, but most are Taoist priests and monks. Some wander from one town or village to another seeking people in need of their services, while most dwell in temples or monasteries where they provide their services to the surrounding populace. Mediums typically have a more humble position and are simple ordinary people born with an unusual ability, and most live in a village, town, or city and help local people who seek out their services.

Most Wuchang Gui lived lives like any other. But because they were born touched by the Underworld, many were either drawn to becoming exorcists or were approached by shamans, monks, or priests well before they returned from death. Others worked as mediums and have been speaking to the dead for most of their lives. A few Wuchang Gui continue working as mediums, and conceal the full range of their powers. Most take on the role and title of exorcist once they return from death, and many who have not had previous training study with a shaman or Taoist priest or monk so that they can better perform their new roles. This allows Wuchang Gui to openly proclaim that they are exorcists, and know that most will understand at least some of what that job entails. While some mortals who claim to be exorcists are frauds and charlatans, Wuchang Gui have little difficulty demonstrating their power.

Some Wuchang Gui freely perform their services, asking for little more than food, lodging, and acknowledgement of the help they provide. Others ask for or even demand payment, sometimes in advance. While farming villages provide little of interest to these greed-driven exorcists, cities and market towns contain individuals wealthy enough to seek a few more moments with a lost loved one, information about the location of a will or hidden treasure, or safety from hungry ghosts that afflict them or their families.

A few Wuchang Gui stray far from the difficult paths their Black Guards demand of them and become corrupt and terrible necromancers. These wicked individuals take high payments from bandits, merchants, and officials to use ghosts to terrorize or even kill their enemies or to call up swarms of lesser shades to demoralize unruly peasants or servants, forcing them back into grudging obedience with threats of supernatural torment. Most Wuchang Gui believe that the existence of these corrupt individuals is another sign of how far out of balance the world has become. Many consider it their duty to hunt down and destroy corrupt members of their own kind.

Character Creation

In some ways, creating Wuchang Gui in the Three Kingdoms era is very different from creating modern Sin-Eaters. This era is many centuries before the Industrial Revolution; more than 90% of the populace farmed, and while literacy in China was high compared to most other nations, the vast majority of people could not read. When creating a character from this era, one of the most important points to consider is what social class she was born into and what her status and profession was before she died and returned.

Characters who either were or are currently Taoist monks or priests should have at least two dots in Occult and one dot in Expression. In addition, even if they never took or seriously studied for the civil service exam, any character who grew up wealthy or even moderately well off would have had at least some formal education and so possess at least one dot in Academics.

Characters currently working as exorcists or priests should possess at least one dot of the Status Merit, and priests who are more than novices should have at least two dots. Many Wuchang Gui who live in one place and work as priests or exorcists have mortal assistants and servants, and would possess one or more dots of Retainers. In addition, most successful exorcists have at least one dot of the Fame Merit.

Unless they are quite wealthy and have someone they trust managing their estates, wandering Wuchang Gui almost never have more than two dots in Resources. The troubled times mean that wanderers cannot count on wealth they do not carry with them remaining out of others' hands for very long. Also, even the most powerful Wuchang Gui understand

that carrying a pack horse loaded down with gold and jade is beyond foolish. In vivid contrast, a group of Wuchang Gui who live in a city might all be well off professional exorcists with three or four dots in Resources and several dots in Fame, Retainers, and Status.



Ghosts in the Three Kingdoms Era

In this era, even illiterate peasants know at least a little about ghosts. Ancestor worship is almost universal and the vast majority of ghosts are simply ancestral spirits, who might be helpful, annoying, or occasionally problematic. Almost all problems with these ancestors can solved by cleaning their tomb, providing them with the correct offerings and otherwise honoring them. The ghosts of these ancestors dwell in Diyù, and those who had committed wrongs are being punished for their misdeeds. However, sufficiently generous offerings can reduce the amount of time a particular ancestor was to be punished. If families properly perform all of their ritual duties to their ancestors, these grateful ghosts periodically visit the mortal world where they provide their descendants with good fortune and other minor forms of supernatural aid.

However, failure to observe the proper rituals can have horrific consequences. Families who do not make sufficiently generous offerings risk creating *egui*, or hungry ghosts. Even worse, if all members of a family have been killed, no one living can provide offerings and all of the dead are doomed to become hungry ghosts. Hungry ghosts are also often created when someone is killed and no one brings their murderers to justice. Some who die without having performed an urgent task can also become hungry ghosts until this task is performed.

The only exceptions are ghosts who are old enough to have either passed on or lost their connections to the mortal world. Ancestors that have been dead more than three generations (75 years) almost never become hungry ghosts. However, if created before the ancestors become quiescent forever, hungry ghosts can persist for many centuries and sometimes grow in power, becoming ever more hideous and deadly.

If the offerings are merely insufficient or irregular, at first ancestors become restless and upset, but also still mostly continue to fulfill their duties and appear much like they looked in life to those who can see them. They may inflict bad luck on family members who offend or ignore them, and some may occasionally knock over valuable objects, letting their wiser descendants know that a medium or exorcist may be required to resolve the difficulties.

If their offerings or other needs are ignored long enough, the normally peaceful and helpful ghosts of ancestors transform into twisted, monstrous beings bent only on attaining their desires. Some of these hungry ghosts are pitiful; others are horrific and deadly. But all of them are driven by hunger and desperation. They forget their love of and their duty to their living relatives and lose whatever wisdom and compassion they previously possessed. Instead, they can



now think only of their own needs. Some wreak vengeance upon those who wronged, neglected, or ignored them, while others indulge their corrupt and insatiable appetites in the mortal world.

If a hungry ghost's murderers are brought to justice, or if its descendants return to making offerings and tending the ghost's grave, it swiftly ceases being an inhuman monster and returns to a peaceful existence as an honored ancestor. However, almost all of the older hungry ghosts are too tainted by their deeds and can no longer change their natures. While ghosts whose families have been wiped out can be temporarily pacified with offerings made by either Wuchang Gui or kindly strangers, they soon return to being hungry ghosts because their normal connection to the mortal world no longer exists. Without families to honor them, hungry ghosts can only be imprisoned, destroyed, or forced to pass on.

Hungry ghosts appear physically warped and are filled with anger, hunger, and greed. Over time, they become increasingly desperate, vengeful and inhuman. The cleverest find ways to sneak or bribe their way past the guardians at the gates of the Underworld, venturing up to the mortal world anytime they want. All hungry ghosts can gain access to the mortal world on certain days. Once in the mortal world, hungry ghosts attempt to take what they have not been given. Those that survive long enough grow in power, eventually becoming formidable, inhuman monsters who can pose a deadly threat for a band of experienced Wuchang Gui. While most hungry ghosts are recent, a few are centuries or even millennia old and are now terrible monstrosities with no remaining connections to humanity.

In the orderly and harmonious days of the Han Dynasty, the guardians of the Underworld attempted to keep the most powerful hungry ghosts in check, and new hungry ghosts were rare. Today, those guardians who have not abandoned their posts are often easy to bribe. Also, a few of the most powerful and devious hungry ghosts have purchased high office in the hierarchy of the Underworld.

Families who are forced to flee for their lives must abandon the graves of their ancestors. Some who do not or cannot flee are instead slain, leaving no one to perform the rituals. As a result, new hungry ghosts are created every day. Recently, some of the more powerful hungry ghosts have begun recruiting gangs of new hungry ghosts to serve them in return for a percentage of stolen offerings and other bounty taken from the mortal world. Other hungry ghosts enslave ordinary ancestors and steal most of their offerings, forcing dutiful family members to provide even more offerings to prevent their ancestors from becoming hungry ghosts.

Diyu (The Underworld)

During the Han Dynasty, Diyù was a truly horrific realm, but it was also extremely well organized. The vast majority of ghosts were there only temporarily. All ghosts were judged harshly but fairly by one of the ten Yama Kings who ruled this realm. Those who were sufficiently virtuous were swiftly granted reincarnation or nirvana. Ghosts who were less virtuous were condemned to suffer in one of the 18 hells. Which particular hell a ghost was consigned to and how long she remained there depended upon the type and severity of her offenses. Attempting to atone for various misdeeds while still alive often reduced the severity of a ghost's punishment. At the end of each ghost's period of suffering, the Yama Kings permitted them to reincarnate. The only exceptions were the most heinous offenders who remained in the lowest portion of the Underworld for an indefinite period of time, eventually becoming twisted horrors.

Unfortunately, when the Emperor lost the Mandate of Heaven, the resulting supernatural chaos also affected Diyù. Some of the Yama Kings now keep ghosts well beyond their time; other ghosts are able to bribe various Underworld officials in the various hells with offerings to gain various advantages, including access to the mortal world. Even the Yama King in charge of the lowest level of the Underworld, known as Avici, has been permitting the ancient and terrible monsters that dwell there to visit the mortal world, in return for the correct price.

Some ghosts now suffer for many years longer than their misdeeds should merit. Others either pay for the chance to pass on to another existence, or escape from the Underworld and roam the mortal world. Some of the most powerful and clever ghosts bribe their way into positions within the Underworld's hierarchy. These villains now serve as corrupt and greedy guards or ministers rather than spending years or centuries boiling in oil or hanging from hooks.

What Do Hungry Ghosts Look Like?

Properly honored ancestors look much like they did in life. However, when they become hungry ghosts, they warp and change. Most recent hungry ghosts visibly display their hunger. Some have bloated bellies and necks thinner than a finger, others have mouths are wreathed in flame, and the most hideous possess rotting mouths and jaws. Older and more powerful hungry ghosts appear far less human, and often have grotesquely long arms, claws, fangs, and a host of equally inhuman features, like a prehensile tongue that can extend up to 10 yards, wart-covered skin that is tougher than steel, or the heads and limbs of animals.

The Yama Kings

Known to Western Sin-Eaters as Kerberoi, the ten Yama Kings are the judges of the dead. The first of the Yama Kings

separates the virtuous dead from the vast majority who must work off their bad karma through suffering, and the last judges how they should reincarnate. The other eight each presided over different types of offenses, from corrupt officials to murderers. During the Han Dynasty, and other eras when Heaven and Earth are in balance and the Mandate of Heaven is secure, the Yama Kings were bound by the will of the likely mythic Jade Emperor. They were harsh and merciless, but also honorable and incorruptible.

As the social order in the mortal world continues to decay, the Yama Kings grow lax and greedy and their inhuman guards become easier to bribe or intimidate. In this era, most care more about what a ghost can offer them than the degree of punishment the shade would normally merit. Also, some of the Yama Kings and even a few of their guards and servants now claim dominion over the Wuchang Gui, forcing them to either pay bribes or sneak around the Underworld. Some Wuchang Gui now break their own rules and swear allegiance to a single Yama King, others either pay regular bribes or negotiate deals with several of the Yama Kings, sometimes attempting to use them against one another.

Underworld Politics

Even amidst its corruption, the Underworld of this era remains bound by laws and accepted protocols. Wuchang Gui have the ability to flaunt these rules, such as using their Pass On ceremony to permit a ghost to journey to whatever destination awaits it without obtaining any of the proper papers and approvals from the Yama Kings' ministers. However, Wuchang Gui must also be prepared for the consequences of such independent and unapproved actions.

During the Han Dynasty, many Underworld ministers understood that some Wuchang Gui were worthy of respect and did not question their decisions, while others simply demanded that all Wuchang Gui fill out the appropriate paperwork and provide just reasons for their decisions. Today, Wuchang Gui can do as much as they ever could, but the consequences are somewhat different. For all but the most honorable Underworld officials, the correct bribe or favor can be used to justify almost any action. The few remaining honorable officials attempt to forge alliances with equally honorable Wuchang Gui.

Most of the Yama Kings only take an interest in especially powerful Wuchang Gui and regard others as not being worth meeting without special bribes or some other excellent reason. However, all ten possess ministers and guards who can be bribed, threatened, or negotiated with. Most Wuchang Gui who spend large amounts of time in the Underworld forge business relationships or other mutually beneficial arrangements with individual Underworld guards and ministers, providing bribes and services in return for these officials forging the appropriate paperwork. Some occasionally form strange and often grudging friendships with specific guards and ministers.

The Ghost Festival

The Ghost Festival, on the 15th day of the seventh month (in the summer), is when ghosts of all sorts can return to the living world. The entire seventh month, known as Ghost Month, provides ghosts with somewhat easier access to the mortal world. All across the Middle Kingdom, people honor their ancestors with offerings of hell money, feasts, and other offerings. Some especially generous and honorable individuals also make offerings to nameless hungry ghosts who have been forgotten by their families or who were never given proper burial rituals.

When the Mandate of Heaven was secure, all ghosts except the most wicked that were condemned to the lowest level of Diyù were able to visit the mortal world to partake of food and drink, enjoy themselves, and visit their relatives. Even hungry ghosts could visit the mortal world and beg for scraps, but powerful protections kept them from causing harm. Some cities and towns held plays or musical performances on the Ghost Festival and left the first row of seats vacant, giving the returned dead a place of honor.

Today, returning ancestors are joined by monstrous creatures who have bribed their way out of Diyù and hungry ghosts who are free from any limits on their actions. Many these creatures seek revenge or to slake their thirst for blood. Some powerful ghosts keep recent ghosts from leaving Diyù and take their places, and others visit the mortal world so that they can take vengeance upon mortals or attempt to possess someone and thus remain in the mortal world indefinitely.

Ghosts During Ghost Month and the Ghost Festival

The barriers between the Underworld and the mortal world and between Twilight and the mortal world grow thin during Ghost Month, and largely vanish during the day of the Ghost Festival. During the entirety of Ghost Month, ghosts in Twilight who otherwise lack Numina that allow them to affect the mortal world temporarily can gain the Reaching or Materialize Numina by spending three times the Essence these Numina normally cost to activate.

During the day of the Ghost Festival, all Underworld Gateways automatically open from sundown on the previous day to sunrise on the day after the end of the Ghost Festival. Ghosts who can bribe or sneak past the guardians on these gateways can freely enter Twilight during this time and from there can interact with the mortal world as easily as any other ghost during Ghost Month.

While it had always been a difficult and busy time, most Wuchang Gui now dread Ghost Month. Even relatively peaceful regions can suffer from dozens of hauntings, while towns near recent battles can be almost overwhelmed by the returning dead. Ancient and powerful horrors that have been festering in the depths of Diyù since the Bronze Age are now most likely to free themselves from the Underworld and rampage through the mortal world.

Other Underworld Festivals

Chinese families are expected to visit the graves of their ancestors on both the three days of the *Hanshi Jie* (Cold Food Festival) in the Spring and the *Chong Jiu Jie* (Double Ninth Festival) held on the doubly unlucky day of the ninth day of the ninth month, in the fall. On these days, people were expected to clean and decorate the graves and to leave offerings. These festivals helped keep the mortal world and the Underworld in balance. In far too many portions of China, these festivals have been abbreviated or even abandoned as the impoverished and embattled populace struggles to pay excessive taxes imposed by corrupt magistrates, attempts to fight off bandit gangs, or flees conquering warlords. However, when Wuchang Gui can convince local people to perform these festivals or help keep the people sufficiently safe so they are free to perform these festivals, the level of supernatural problems in the region decreases. The Underworld remains out of balance, but within the region where these rituals are performed fewer hostile ghosts are able to escape into the mortal world.

Storytelling

There are two primary types of **Geist** chronicles in this era. In one, the characters remain in their home city or county and deal with local hungry ghosts and Underworld threats. In the other, the characters travel widely and attempt to deal with the many serious problems occurring throughout China.

Settled Bands

In local chronicles, the Storyteller and players should work out the characters' relationships with their families and the nature of their other local obligations. Most of the characters should have strong emotional ties to their city or home network of towns and villages. In these chronicles, the characters will soon gain a reputation for their work. After a short while, people from all across their region will begin coming to them for help with ghosts and monsters. Certain scenarios work especially well for settled bands of Wuchang Gui.

The characters will regularly be called in to adjudicate problems between ancestors and their living descendants. In some cases, one or more characters either knew the now-deceased ancestor or knows their descendants. Both sides will attempt to sway the characters' opinions and play on their feelings.

Once the characters are moderately powerful and sufficiently famous or infamous, Storytellers have several options for keeping the chronicle exciting. Both involve the events of the rest of China intruding on the characters' region. The characters may gain sufficient notoriety that someone hungry for power or revenge seeks them out and asks them to send a deadly spirit to attack one of this person's rivals. The characters may decline, but if the person asking is a powerful and corrupt official or an ambitious and dangerous warlord or bandit leader, declining this offer could involve the threat of retaliation against the characters' home, unless they are willing to directly confront and deal with the person who approached them. Regardless of what the characters decide, they have begun moving out of the purely local sphere and are becoming important people on the larger political and military stage.

Becoming Mundane Powers

One of the most important aspects of a settled campaign is what the characters do when their home, which they have spent the first portion of the game protecting from supernatural threats, faces a serious mundane danger. No matter how well the characters perform their assigned duties, they live in an era of chaos and war. A new and exceptionally corrupt official may demand usurious taxes and threaten dire punishments to anyone who refuses to pay. Bandits can raze prosperous villages and slaughter the inhabitants, or simply attempt to extort them into starving poverty. At worst, a brutal warlord or even just one of the various national factions may decide to conquer the characters' home, with all of the terror and destruction that brutal pre-modern conquest entails.

Wuchang Gui can be extremely powerful and deadly characters, and their ability to summon and control ghosts and creatures from the chthonic depths makes them even deadlier. The chronicle can unfold in very different directions, depending upon whether the characters decide to subtly attack their foes with a series of terrifying but mostly harmless hauntings, unleash hideous chthonic monsters on their foes, or publically announce that they are this region's protectors and openly use their Manifestations to intimidate or destroy their foes. This latter option works best for characters who have at least one four- or five-dot Manifestation. Certainly this would immediately cause other powerful figures, including officials, warlords, and bandits, to pay an uncomfortable amount of attention to the characters.

Nomadic Exorcists

In a more nomadic chronicle, the characters often spend much of their time in the Underworld and may regularly travel vast distances in the mortal world using the Sepulchral Gateway ceremony (**Geist: The Sin-Eaters**, pp. 167–168). The characters rely on the Twilight Network (**Geist: The Sin-Eaters**, p. 35), as well as a network of mortal and ghostly allies and contacts to alert them to the presence of various supernatural problems in the mortal world. Characters in

this sort of mobile chronicle are typically wanderers who frequent the less controlled regions of China. Here, people who can successfully fend off bandits can travel with relative freedom. However, these troubled locations are also places where the characters are more likely to encounter the most dangerous ghosts and Underworld creatures, since no one else is attempting to keep them in check.

Wanderers are prone to be more out of touch with much of the mortal world around them. Many of their long-term allies and contacts may be ghosts, since the characters travel to a new village or town every few days or weeks and may not return for months or years. At the chronicle's start, the characters are rootless wanderers traveling from one village or town to the next, seeking inhuman problems and deadly monsters, but spending little time with the local people.

As the characters grow in experience and reputation, they find that less experienced or isolated Wuchang Gui call upon them via the Twilight Network, and ghosts they know may request help for descendants troubled by Underworld monsters. However, one of the challenges in this type of campaign is that the characters are relatively isolated from the lives and experiences of the mortals they save. In addition to brief scenes of grateful villagers occasionally showering the characters with profuse thanks and holding a feast in their honor, Storytellers should also periodically challenge the characters' isolation. Perhaps they destroy or banish a hideous monster that has been terrorizing an entire county, only to have nervous villagers approach them asking for aid against the bandit gang that regularly comes by to strip the village of anything and anyone they wish to carry off. Are the characters willing to help people they barely know resolve purely mortal troubles?

The characters might also become more involved in mortal affairs via other means. Perhaps a band of corrupt Wuchang Gui are using their abilities in the service of a brutal warlord or a corrupt official. Are the characters willing to defend mortals against the depredations of their fellows? What if a just and good provincial governor learns of the characters' exploits and asks them to help protect his province against bandits or warlords? On a somewhat smaller scale, a local magistrate might ask the characters to protect the small city that he governs. Are the characters willing to give up their wandering lifestyle in return for a home they value? In these options, the characters should have visited and dispatched hungry ghosts and other creatures in the province or city several times before anyone makes this offer to them, so that the characters have had time to see and perhaps learn to value the region.

The characters might also face an even more difficult decision. They may find themselves allied with a faction or protecting a region, and discover that they are now fighting against either friends and companions from their mortal lives or Wuchang Gui they respect and have worked with in the past. What will the characters do if faced with the choice between betraying their current allies or fighting people they respect and care about?

It's also worth considering why the characters are wanderers. Are they simply looking to help the people in the villages and towns they travel through, or is there some greater purpose to their travels? One or more characters may be seeking to atone for some ills they committed in their previous lives. Maybe these characters were bandits or corrupt officials in their previous lives. After becoming Wuchang Gui, their Black Guards informed them of the necessity for atonement if they wish to avoid a lengthy stay in one of the many hells after their deaths. A Black Guard may insist that the character attempt to work off some of his karmic debt by directly aiding people whom he harmed in the past. How will the character react when confronted with people he wronged, and how will these people react to their oppressor becoming their ally or savior?

Another possibility is that the characters are not randomly wandering from one village or town to the next, but are pursuing a single impressively dangerous and powerful chthonic creature which can release others of its kind from the Underworld. This creature may travel the countryside inflicting horrors on the inhabitants of any settlement that it passes near. Alternately, perhaps the characters are seeking a corrupt Wuchang Gui who uses his powers to make others suffer for his gain or who serves a powerful bandit lord.

There might even be an entire band of rogue Wuchang Gui who have turned their backs on the needs of both mortals and ghosts and seek to enslave and oppress both in the service of their endless greed and unquenchable rage. To succeed, the characters would first need to eliminate the various ghosts and mortals serving these corrupt Wuchang Gui or their mortal masters. The characters would seek out ever more powerful foes, until their final confrontation with the Wuchang Gui. In the course of their travels, the characters might also recruit allies to help them during this confrontation.

Wuchang Gui aren't common. If their foes are a band of outcast White Guards, the characters may face farmers, shopkeepers, and even soldiers who distrust them and seek to thwart their goals. It's easily possible that the only other Wuchang Gui these people have encountered are the wicked individuals that the characters are pursuing. To gain trust, the characters may first need to right the outlaws' wrongs. If the characters succeed, the local people may volunteer information about where the outlaws have gone or what their plans are. However, fully gaining the trust of a village can be quite challenging in an era when any group of strangers riding or walking into a town or village could prove a deadly threat.

China is vast and the war and chaos of the Three Kingdoms era affects the entire nation. However, powerful and determined characters can perhaps protect a specific region from harm. For more ambitious and larger-scale campaign, the characters might eventually work towards the goal of restoring balance and harmony to one of China's 1,000 counties or perhaps even to one of its 19 Provinces.



Organizations & Tiers

In an era where both transport and communication travel no faster than the speed of a swift horse, Tier Two and Three Bang Huo are considerably smaller and more localized. A Tier Two Faction only requires more than 20 members in more than one city or county. Tier Three conspiracies are rarer in this era than in the 21st century. Each one requires more than 50 members in two or more cities or counties in two or more of China's 19 provinces.

Although factions can simply be a local organization of Wuchang Gui, each of China's currently existing Tier Three conspiracies has a religious basis and is organized around a particularly esoteric branch of Taoism or Buddhism. Some are small and secret sects that focus on exorcism and the dead. Others, similar to the Yellow Turban rebels, are simply one of the many religious sects spawned by this chaotic era. Several of these Tier Three conspiracies only have a few dozen Wuchang Gui, but their members also include dozens of mortal mediums, priests, and exorcists. In this era, Tier Three conspiracies often function as religious secret societies. Some seek only to reestablish the Underworld's balance, but others go further and attempt to restore order to the mortal world and establish a new emperor.

A character who attempts to found her own conspiracy swiftly gains the attention of the other conspiracies and may encounter both threats and offers of alliances, depending upon how their goals align. As both bandits and hungry ghosts continue to run rampart over growing sections of China, some conspiracies are recruiting armies of mortals as well as legions of loyal ghosts. These conspiracies are planning to attempt to pacify portions of both China and Diyù by force of arms. Depending upon their choices and loyalties, the characters might join or oppose such an effort, or they might respond by building their own armies of the living and the dead.

If they successfully found a Tier Three conspiracy, the characters can easily find themselves in the midst of a battle for the control of portions or eventually all of China. Characters in this position must first face the logistical necessities of supplying living troops with money and food, and ghosts with offerings. However, Wuchang Gui who seek to create a politically powerful Tier Three conspiracy must also understand that they can most effectively build loyalty in the mortal members through demonstrations of impressive supernatural powers, and religious doctrines which convince the mortals that the leaders of the conspiracy are working for a just and sacred cause.

Revised Rules

The biggest change in the rules for Sin-Eaters is of course the Industrial Key. This is an era when the water clock and the crossbow represent the height of advanced technology. Most houses contained no items of machinery, and so the use of this Key was extremely limited compared to using it in the 19th, 20th, or 21st centuries. The most common examples of simple machines were windmills, water wheels, wheelbarrows, carts, crossbows, looms, and potter's wheels. However, because the pace of technological advance is sufficiently slow in this era, unless a device is specifically a recent invention, all uses of the Industrial Key automatically gain a +3 bonus.

Similarly, Ceremonies described as using radios, telephones or similar mechanical or electronic devices instead use simple objects like compasses or mirrors. For example, the Ceremony Listening to the Spectral Howl (**Geist: The Sin-Eaters**, p. 155) uses a map and a flute instead of a map and a radio. When using this Ceremony, the Wuchang Gui plays a single note on the flute while running her finger over the map. When using this Ceremony, the ghost's howl replaces the flute's sound. Finally, regaining Plasm when in the Underworld typically involves the characters devouring offerings of food made to the dead, or acquiring hell money or other joss paper offerings.

Mediums

Mediums form an important part of Chinese folk culture. Some people are born with the ability to hear and speak to ghosts (the *Medium Merit*, **The God-Machine Chronicle**, p. 173), while others study occult rituals and learn to summon ghosts (the *Evocation Merit*, **Second Sight**, p. 108 or the *Invocation Merit*, **Second Sight**, p. 112). Most mediums are effectively counselors who mediate for a fee between the living and their deceased ancestors. Living clients seek to placate angry ancestors, obtain advice from the deceased, or ask a special blessing from their ancestors.

However, some mediums turn their abilities to corrupt purposes, seeking out hungry ghosts and Underworld monsters. They either use these creatures for their own purposes, paying them generous offerings to kill or steal, or they offer these foul services to criminals, warlords, and the wealthy. A few of the most vengeful mediums even use their occult powers to compel ordinary ghosts to attack their families. The most foolishly corrupt attempt to control powerful Underworld monsters and may end up possessed.

Regardless of their goals, almost all mediums also possess one or more dots of Resources and a dot of Status. Well known mediums also possess a dot of Fame. A moderate number of Wuchang Gui were mediums before their rebirth.

Ghost Sword (•••)

Fetter

Anchor: The Torn (Death by Violence)

Key: Stygian

Channeled Numen: Blast (special) Dexterity + Melee

Swords are the traditional weapons for exorcists in China, and a few extremely skilled Daoshi (Taoist priests) have learned the secret of forging a ghost into a special blade. These blades are either carved from peach wood or made from strings of copper coins bound with wire and red thread into the shape of a sword. Neither style of blade can effectively be used as a conventional sword against a living opponent. When the Wuchang Gui wields the ghost sword and channels the weapon's Blast Numen, the sword does 5(L) damage to ghosts, regardless of whether the ghost has materialized or is in Twilight. This sword ignores ghostly armor equal to half the Wuchang Gui's Psyche (round up). In addition, this weapon can be used to attack ghosts who are possessing humans or animals without harming the host. Once activated, the wielder must use the weapon as a sword and strike the ghost, but the Numen continues to deal this damage for the remainder of the scene.

Inspirational Works

The following are a short list of books and movies that can be helpful for creating a **Geist** chronicle in this era.

Novels

Water Margin (traditional Chinese novel; also called *Outlaws of the Marsh*): While set in a different era, it also takes place in an era of large bandit gangs and open rebellion: A wonderful inspiration for a nomadic band of Wuchang Gui. Some characters are deemed sorcerers, while many others have an effectively supernatural level of martial ability.

Celebrated Cases of Judge Dee by Robert van Gulik: This is the first of a series of many novels by van Gulik featuring Judge Dee. Van Gulik based these novels on the character Judge Dee and his adventures in a series of 18th-century Chinese novels. The originals had a wealth of ghosts and supernatural elements, but van Gulik removed most of them. However, the stories can still serve as an excellent inspiration for the adventures of a band of settled Wuchang Gui.

Movies

The following films are all high action romps in a vaguely historical China, where the characters battle (or are) ghosts, demons, and similar creatures.

A Chinese Ghost Story (1987)

A Chinese Ghost Story II (1990)

Green Snake (1993)

The Sorcerer and the White Snake (2011)

The Four (2012)





Octric ran from the slaughter, tears cold on his cheeks, which were flushed as much with shame as exertion as he stumbled through the trees in the dark. His first chance to prove himself in battle, and he'd panicked like a green boy. But in all his dreams of warfare he'd always imagined himself fighting shoulder to shoulder in a shield wall on some field of glory, not waking in the dead of night to the sound of screams and the scent of fire. Anyone would have run, he told himself. Anyone.

Especially after the damned howling began.

"Octric, son of Asculf."

Octric whirled so fast he nearly lost his grip on his axe. A woman stood before him clad in chain-mail, a string of black claws on a leather thong around her neck and a tattered black cape draped from her shoulders. The hem was smeared with mud and she leaned on a spear to keep her balance on the uneven ground. Her eyes were large but shadowed, her skin fair but scarred, her brown hair brushed with gray. A young woman, but one gone old before her time.

"How, how do you know me?" Octric asked.

"The spirits told me, as they told me where to find you." She spoke well enough but with a thick accent, like the traders who had come to Octric's village not long ago.

"Devil! Go to Hell!"

"Hel?" the woman sounded puzzled. "I think not. Nor can I promise you Valhalla. I only offer you peace." From the trees came the sound of howling again, much closer. "It is the last such offer you will receive, I promise you."

"What? Peace? What do you savages know of peace?" Octric gripped his axe so tightly his hands hurt. "I'm warning you, I'll not go quietly! I will fight!"

The woman grimaced, as if his answer was no more than she expected, but a disappointment nonetheless. "Remember that I offered."

"Witch! I'm not afraid!" Rage cut through Octric's daze, made him forget his wound. He took a step forward. "I will —"

What came through the trees just then might have been called a man, though only in poor light. He towered a full two heads taller than Octric, holding a long spear the size of a mighty tree branch carelessly in one hand as Octric might have held a child's wooden sword. He was stripped to the waist, his warrior's body adorned with ink and scars like the night sky with stars, his long hair and shaggy arms making him look as much a beast as a man. The warrior smiled at Octric with a mouthful of pointed teeth. "This the last?" he growled.

"He is," the woman said softly.

The big man leaned forward and actually sniffed at Octric like a dog scenting a trail, his mouth curling downward with distaste. "Pah! Not much Glory here." As he spoke, a burly man in a bearskin cloak strode from the woods, great axe in hand, followed by two massive dogs. No, not dogs. Octric felt his throat tighten.

Wolves.

"I'm not afraid of you," Octric said. He meant it to sound bold, but it came out more of a whisper. His axe dipped, and he wondered how he could have gone to sleep thinking of Aelfred's sister only to wake up to this.

The big man shrugged his shoulders. "If you say so."

"The Wolf Must Hunt," the man in the bearskin said, as if reminding the big savage of an unpleasant but necessary task. The wolves to either side bared their bloody fangs in eerie imitations of the warrior's own grin. To the side, the witch-woman said nothing, just gave the slightest shrug of her shoulders.

"Until a better challenge," the big man said, hefting his spear.

Octric was going to ask what that meant but something struck him, drove the breath from him. He gaped down at the spear, which had sprouted from his chest faster than he could have imagined. For the first time since he ran from the village Octric thought I can't feel my heart beating; as the realization of what that meant passed through his mind, he died.

"Done, then." Amaroq pulled his spear from the boy's chest with a wrenching twist. He looked at his fellow Black Claws. "You sure the Beshilu nests are dealt with?"

Brum nodded under his bearskin. "Nothing lives." One of the wolves growled assent, blood dropping from its lips to patter on the roots at its feet. "Brienus and Aulwrak saw to that."

"There will be a response to this," Hrafn said, looking at the dead youth but meaning something greater.

"Of course," said Amaroq, his grim smile fixed in place. "Let them come. But for now, we hunt." The five wolves left the corpse where it fell, wide eyes staring empty at the sky, until the only thing stirring in the trees were the ashes on the wind and the distant howls of the raiders.



The Wolf and the Raven

Cattle die, kinsmen die, you yourself die. I know one thing which never dies: the judgment of a dead man's life.

Hávamál, stanza 77

For more than 200 years the Northmen prowled the waterways of northern Europe, raiding and plundering Christian shores for their wealth, growing ever more bold and powerful. As the Vikings rose, so did the Forsaken among them. The Uratha became wolves among the hounds, loosed on unspoiled lands full of strange spirits and unknown dangers. An age of exploration began and the Vikings, blessed by Odin, established outposts across the hemisphere. Their trade spanned all Europe and their jarls and their lands grew until their own ambition turned them against one another.

The Battle of Clontarf was the breaking of the Viking wave, and the turning point that serves as the focus of this era. This battle on the outskirts of Dublin took the lives of thousands of ordinary men and dozens of nobles. Great kings fell on both sides and while the Christian households of Ireland were able to endure, the Norse and their allied tribes did not. Their society, stretched thin across nations and seas, lost its identity and crumbled. The Viking peoples either returned to their homelands or dispersed into the indigenous populations of the kingdoms they once terrorized, where they eventually integrated with the native people.

Theme: Outlanders

People can be outsiders for generations. Though by the Battle of Clontarf the Viking raids have slowed and the Danes have built their villages, the native peoples still see invaders on their soil. They tolerate the unwelcome guests, but only as long as they seem strong enough to intimidate organized opposition. In the past the crucified god of the Christians was seen as a symbol of weakness compared to mighty Odin, Frigga, and Thor. Now the message of peace has won over the majority. Glory everlasting, once reserved for the mightiest, is within reach for anyone who can pledge her soul to God and demonstrate simple faith.

While they were never accepted by society, missions to hunt down heretics and convert them to join the pious intrude more and more into the ways of wolf packs and clans. The very existence of Sin-Eaters is anathema to Christian belief. Though church leaders write missives insisting that witchcraft is impossible under the watchful eye of God, superstitious and frightened people still act with violence, justified by zealotry.

Mood: Crossroads Fury

The world is changing and not in the Vikings' favor. Villages in foreign lands are torn by alliances to the old country and the new. Armies clash as kings expand their realms or eject dissidents. Faiths are shifting and the doctrines of subservience and peaceful devotion to the will of God replace the old ways of self-reliance and Odin's rewards for the bold. The Vikings feel these "growing pains" of the changing age and lash out in retaliation. A great battle is coming that may decide who is the real power at this crossroad of nations.

Viking Fact and Fiction

Much of what we know of Vikings comes from sources writing centuries afterward. Contemporary accounts were written by monks and church scribes whose chapels, decorated with gold, silver, and precious gems, were prime targets for

plunder. These chroniclers were in no mind to be generous in describing the Northmen. Myths and stories have persisted for so long that they are considered common knowledge, but a story being old doesn't make it true.

Horned Helmets: Viking helmets weren't different from others of the time. A pointed metal bowl covered the crown and a nose guard also protected the cheekbones. Monks described the raiders as beastly, and the horned helmets were invented by artists to make the Vikings more imposing and frightening. As iconic as they may be, no practical warrior would go to battle with such awkward headwear; as a rule, it's a bad idea to put grips on your gear an enemy can use!

"Filthy" Barbarians: By the standard of their day the Vikings were obsessed with cleanliness, washing their hands and faces every morning, combing their hair each day, and having a full bath once per week, weather permitting. The Viking interest in cleanliness surprised observers, who in turn, feared that the Vikings were too attractive and liable to lure married women astray. As a result in stories written by their enemies they are described as unclean and disgusting; such is often the case with societies considered "barbaric."

Blond-Haired and Blue-Eyed: The stereotypically Aryan look of Vikings might first have been chronicled by the Roman historian Tacitus, whose awestruck description of Germanic peoples created an "übermensch" myth that is still the foundation for some appalling racism. On the whole, the Vikings had the same assortment of hair, eye, and skin colors of other peoples of Europe in their times. Many Vikings did have red, strawberry blonde, or blonde hair, but that was because Vikings washed their hair with powerful soaps, so that dark shades gradually bleached lighter and over time these became their preferred colors.

Shieldmaidens: Historians are still divided on whether Vikings went to war with young women in their ranks. Tombs of Viking women have been found to contain swords and some battlefield surveys found women's remains alongside those of their menfolk, so even if some could be explained as signs of wealth or status, it seems evident that at least some women raided and fought alongside men. By the time of the Battle of Clontarf, though, most Viking women would likely have settled into the domestic roles of other women in the Middle Ages. Fortunately for our stories, Forsaken and Sin-Eaters are not "most women!" The Uratha and Sin-Eaters are extraordinary beings and defy the mundane status quo, using the gifts of their true natures to become whatever they desire.

Liberty and Freedom: While personal liberty is an important part of their beliefs, Vikings did not believe in universal freedom. Slaves and slave trading were the backbone of their economy through the eras of raiding and exploration. Slaves came from neighboring tribes and vanquished enemies, were captured on raids, or traded for "exotics" with visiting merchants. If a master allowed it, a slave could earn money to purchase his freedom, though even after that he would still be tied to his master's family. He would need to get permission to move house, and had to include a portion for the master in his inheritance. A master was allowed to reverse the deal if the slave showed insufficient gratitude.

Inspirations

Sampling some of these works will give you more of the flavor you need to put your chronicle into the Viking world. It's good to be able to throw in a few references to the gods and heroes, as well as offer an evocative description of a windswept village on the stony shores as the icy fog parts before the prow of the longboat.

Television and Film

Vikings **—** (2013) A show centered on Ragnar Lothbrok, depicting the beginning of the Viking's raiding era through the settlement phase. Ragnar's eagerness to expand the sphere of his homeland elevates him from lowly farmer to Viking nobility. Mixing legends with some partially fictionalized historical fact, the series condenses events but gives a good accounting of what Viking life felt like, underscored with plenty of Early Middle Ages violence and drama.

The Vikings **—** (1958, dir. Richard Fleischer) Starring Kirk Douglas, Tony Curtis, and Janet Leigh, this film features all the twists and turns of a Middle Ages soap opera. The story follows two half-brothers, one the heir to the kingdom and the other a slave in his service as they feud over the love of a Christian princess. The film features all the longboats, sieges, death-traps, duels, rape, murder, and disfigurement that could get past the ailing Hays Code.

The 13th Warrior **—** (1999, dir. John McTiernan) Michael Crichton's infamous retelling of the Beowulf story as a semi-historical tale. Not satisfied with simply recreating the old poem, Crichton also adds the historical figure Ahmad ibn Fadlan, an Arab emissary who spent time with the Vikings. The result is a bit of a mess, but one peppered with exciting ideas for a chronicle.

Valhalla Rising **—** (2009, dir. Nicholas Winding Refn) A film about a Scandinavian slave who falls in with a band of would-be crusaders on their way to Jerusalem. The boat drifts, and they arrive in a land of green hills and mist. Some call it heaven, others hell, and the crew fall apart as they try to make sense of their situation. A slow-paced story with achingly beautiful cinematography and outbursts of gruesome violence, it provides a good reference for a trip into Twilight, as the Vikings are lonely wanderers set adrift in an otherworldly land.

Erik the Viking **—** (1989, dir. Terry Jones) Jones turns his comedic talents toward Viking legend. The milquetoast Viking, Eric (Tim Robbins), sets out on a magical journey to ask the gods to stop ending the world, please.

Books and Literature

Vinland Saga **—** (2005) This manga by Makoto Yukimura presents a fictionalized retelling of the Danish Vikings' rise to power in England under Cnut the Great. Freely mixing invented characters and subplots with historical events, it serves as a good inspiration for stories, if not good study material before history exams.

Eric Brighteyes — (1890) Victorian author H. Rider Haggard composed a story of fictional Vikings written in the style of the old sagas. At the time of its writing, new translations of the sagas were freshly available and his emulation of the style means the book still feels "authentic."

The Broken Sword — (1941) Another pastiche saga, this one written by Poul Anderson, diving deep into the magical worlds of elves, trolls, faerie, and demigods. The child Skaflock is kidnapped, and the changeling Valgard is left in his place. If you're looking to bring high-fantasy magic or the Fae folk into your stories, this may be a good place to seek inspiration.

Beowulf — An anonymous Old English poem composed sometime between the 8th and 11th centuries. The heroic Beowulf travels to beleaguered kingdoms and rids them of monsters in epic fashion. There are numerous translations and annotations to choose from, from the scholarly to the pulp.

Njál's Saga — A saga of honor and revenge through 50 years of a family's history. This Icelandic tale provides insight into the legality of dueling and feuding within Viking society. Like most other sagas, this was written in the 13th century but set in the 10th, meaning some artistic license has been taken. If you want a story steeped in revenge you'll find good material here.

The Poetic Edda and the Prose Edda — These two works collect the stories that provide our understanding of Norse mythology. Tales of the gods of the Norse pantheon and their dealings with important mortals, as well as the creation and eventual destruction of the world, are found in these anthologies of verse and text. The originals are more suited to the history scholar but varied translations, annotations, and artistic retellings can make the content more accessible.

GAMES

Sagas of the Icelanders — (2012) A tabletop RPG by Gregor Vuga, this game uses the Apocalypse World engine to create stories of early settlers struggling to survive the harsh environment of Iceland. Focusing on small-scale drama, the game is a good contrast to epic chronicles of the supernatural.

The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim — (2011) A video game set in the northern lands of the fictional empire of Tamriel. With snowy mountaintops, designs that mimic Scandinavian art and fashion, and characters with vaguely Norse names, this is an interesting take on a Viking RPG. The soundtrack by Jeremy Soule is an excellent score to your adventures. One of the DLC add-ons allows the player character to be afflicted with the werewolf's curse.

MUSIC

Götterdammerung (Twilight of the Gods) — If you want something bombastic and melodramatic, you can't go wrong with Richard Wagner's Ring Cycle. Hours upon hours of Norse mythology translated into epic operatic music. Wagner's sound inspired the first generation of orchestral film score composers and his influence continues through heroic cinema today.

Nordland I and ***Nordland II*** by Bathory — Scandinavian metal influenced by Viking stories.

Cluain Tarbh by Mael Mórdha — Gaelic doom metal with heavy historical influences.

THE WOLVES OF THE SEA

The Vikings and the ferocious Uratha who dwell among them rose to power during the later centuries of the first millennium, emerging from the frozen reaches of northern Europe to surprise some of the great powers of the time with their cunning and ferocity. Their journeys were legendary as well, taking them all over Europe and into the Middle East, even to the shores of North America. For ease of reference, the rise and fall of the Vikings is divided into three eras: raiding and trading; exploration and settlement; and at last, integration.

RAIDING & TRADING

In the waning years of the 8th century, a new power sweeps across Northern Europe. The Vikings scour coasts and waterways, plundering monasteries and coastal communities before disappearing back across the seas. Within a decade they spread east across the Baltic, as far west as Ireland, and south down the rivers of France — and this is just the beginning. The priests whose riches they stole and whose brothers they butchered describe them as savage, bestial, and call them the wolves of the sea. Whether they knew it or not, the description was apt, for among these Northmen lurk even deadlier predators: the children of Father Wolf.

The first known Viking activity occurs in 789 off the coast of Wessex, when the royal reeve, trying to collect taxes from foreigners mistaken for merchants, is murdered. In 793, the monastery at Lindisfarne falls victim to the first raid in Britain, an event preceded by storms, whirlwinds, and reports of dragons in the skies. In 795, Irish monks record raids on monasteries on the Isle of Skye, Iona, and Lambay Island. The first raids hit France in 799. Iona is raided repeatedly, and in 806 its inhabitants flee to Kells after 69 of their number are killed. Conflict between Danish and Norwegian leaders in 813 leads to a sharp decline in raiding, but by 820 it begins again. Iona is struck again and destroyed in 825. In France, the warring Carolingians employ Norse mercenaries, and all of Paris pays ransom to the Vikings in 845.

Early in this period, most Vikings are poor farmers. Arable land in Scandinavia is in short supply, with either cold rock or cold marshland predominating, and raising crops or livestock is a considerable challenge. Communities supplement their income by raiding others, but robbing your fellow poor folk is hardly sustainable, and they soon look further afield. First they sail east to cut their teeth on the Baltic coasts, then west to more prosperous lands.

These western islands have rich, fertile soil, and their leaders give gifts of silver and gold to their priests. Many

religious centers are isolated and poorly defended, relying on the fear of God's vengeance as safeguard from other Christians. Plunder from these raids makes a harsh life more tolerable, and might see a family through a bitter winter they would not otherwise survive. Thus the appetite for raiding abroad increases.

The motivations of Uratha raiders are not dissimilar. After all, The Wolf Must Hunt. Ask the members of any pack why they raid and they will remind you of the **Siskur-Dah**, and this age of exploration offers exciting new possibilities for the Sacred Hunt. Not since Pangaea has the world been so open to the Uratha. The seas once offered protection to their prey, but no longer. Strange and remote lands and cultures offer new spirits to find and territories to explore. As summer begins, and their human brethren offer **blót** to Odin, Norse Uratha name their prey.

Of course there are material benefits to this kind of hunt. Despite its baneful touch, silver is increasingly a means to build power and influence. It can put men at your back, land beneath your feet, and bring an end to feuds or legal disputes. Though they're loath to admit it, it also aids some Forsaken in conflicts with their Pure cousins. A few Lunes even accept the metal as chiminage, though many Forsaken believe silver offered to their Mother's fickle envoys will only return to do them harm.

But this prevalence of silver is not without its problems for the People, and its possession can be controversial. Arm rings are popular as statements of wealth or a jarl's favor, as well as a practical means of carrying currency. Rejecting such a gift can cause great offence, leading to duels or feuds. Long sleeves or strips of cloth or leather generally spare the Uratha the unsettling touch of the metal against their flesh, though a rare few refuse outright to carry it. The Pure deal with this in a number of ways, from using gloves or Wolf-Blooded intermediaries, to trading only in gold and precious stones.

As with any European society of the day, slaves are an important part of the Scandinavian social order. Thralls are those born, captured, or legally bound in service; they form a significant part of the population, doing the least desirable jobs and having virtually no rights. Captives taken on raids might end up serving those who murdered their families, but will more likely be sold at markets an unimaginable distance from their homes. The Uratha interest in slaves is primarily in expanding the pack and breeding stock, and raiding packs will often seek the scents and Tells of the Wolf-Blooded among potential captives.

A variety of factors push this outward expansion, from internal disputes to military pressures from Charlemagne's empire to the south. But what truly drives these voyages of carnage and looting are advances in travel. Trade between Scandinavian communities has exploded, centered on the towns of Ribe and Hedeby in Denmark. These new ships, by necessity, have developed beyond anything seen previously; they're lighter, more flexible, and can sail the shallowest of rivers or the open sea.

Early raiders use communally owned **karvi**, general purpose vessels carrying up to 20 men. Later longships are designed for carrying men in war, ranging from 30 to 100 warriors. Cargo ships, **knarr**, carry over 100 tons with a crew of over 20. Navigation has also advanced, through learning and observation, and through the use of tools such as magnetic lodestone. Out at sea, away from the eyes of the Herd, the Uratha can enlist the aid of agreeable spirits to empower their vessels or guide a path through treacherous conditions.

Despite appearances, most raids are not random. Ships follow trading routes established only a few decades earlier. Wealthy targets are identified through conversations with traders and sailors who know local coastlines. Vikings might pose as or indeed be merchants, stowing their weapons, shields, and prow to trade fish and fur, all the while gathering information. Political divisions, border disputes, and outright conflict are all of interest, and are used to determine where raiders will encounter the least resistance. A pack's **Ithaeur** will likely take stock of the local Shadow, while the **Irraka** might seek signs of local packs to assess their strength and range. Once they're satisfied with what they've learned, they sail over the horizon, attach their prow and return. If a region seems particularly lucrative or under defended, the Norse might establish a **longphort**, or fortified harbor, as a base of operations; from there they can strike at multiple locations, and the Uratha can initiate **Siskur-Dah**.

Packs engaged in raiding take a variety of forms. Most stick to a single ship in a larger fleet, with their Wolf-Blooded packmates and maybe extended family members as crew. A pack with sufficient ambition and resources might spread across several ships manned by more ordinary folk from their territory. The totems of such packs are generally of a sort resonant with the ship or the sea, whether it's a raven or eagle perched on the mast, a serpent cutting through waves alongside, or even the Awakened vessel itself. Avian totems are popular for their pathfinding and exceptional vision, as are weather spirits who grant swift and stable journeys. A pack's ship is often intricately carved with abstract tributes to its totem, and the fierce prow will likely depict the spirit's nature.

Equipment carried by Uratha in such packs depends on their background. Most raiders carry an axe or a spear, tools with a purpose such as carpentry or hunting but which function secondarily as weapons. Particularly proficient hunters might carry a bow while raiding. Swords are expensive, but a man is expected to buy one after a few expeditions. Armor is usually limited to a shield and maybe a helmet; mail slows a man down, limits the amount he can carry, and spells certain death if he falls overboard. Some Uratha prefer to surge ahead in **Urhan** or **Urshul**, chasing down escapees or following scent trails to those who have hidden. Others stick to **Hishu** or **Dalu**, but disregard shields in favor of their own skill and regenerative abilities.

Precisely what a pack might encounter when it descends upon a settlement is anyone's guess, but monasteries in particular can contain some nasty surprises. These holy places



can house loci, providing a vital source of Essence to those who've been on the move for weeks or months at a time. Of the Uratha, the Fire-Touched are the most likely to establish territory near monastic sites; the austerity, zeal, and self-flagellation of medieval Christianity calls out to them. For whatever reason, vampires sometimes hide among priests, though rarely in cells larger than two or three. Claimed are not uncommon, especially where the Pure are concerned. A few abbeys hide strange cults to old gods or newer heresies, but it's equally likely there's little more to deal with than a collection of bewildered monks.

The spoils are primarily silver and smaller amounts of gold. Anything larger than a small broach is chopped into shards fittingly called hacksilver, allowing for easy transport and division among the crew. Metal book mounts, torn from the covers of manuscripts, account for much of the haul taken at monasteries. Livestock and captives fill any space in the hold that boxes of precious metal have not.

These materials would be of little value without somewhere to trade. As their network extends, Vikings encounter more towns and cities too large or profitable to raid. Initially they trade goods from their own territories — fish, fur, bone haircombs and ivory — but soon this expands to include amber from the Baltic, jet from England, glass from Germany, and slaves from Ireland or Scotland. These goods are paid for in more silver or livestock to bring back to Scandinavia, and the Norse soon rival the wealth of their neighbors.

Exploration and Settlement

To the horror of their Christian contemporaries, Vikings of the mid-9th century do much worse than hit and run; they stay. Temporary **longphorts** allow raiders to winter, soon becoming permanent settlements. This period marks rapid expansion of Viking territory, and the Uratha are there to claim it alongside them. Across Europe they explore and conquer new terrain, each with its own merits, threats, and challenges. The land they occupy reshapes these communities as much as they do it, and this determines their role in broader Scandinavian society.

New Frontiers

As the Vikings push past the horizon, new territorial opportunities present themselves to the Forsaken.

The Danelaw

In 865, an army of over a thousand Vikings arrives in East Anglia, capturing York the following year. Fed by regular reinforcements from Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Ireland, the Great Heathen Army ravages England, seemingly on the verge of total conquest until its defeat by Alfred of Wessex in 878. Despite the defeat, the ensuing treaty leaves a third of England under Viking control. This area becomes known as the Danelaw, with York as its capital, and it offers agricultural prospects undreamed of in Scandinavia.

This invasion creates new opportunities for the Forsaken. The constant flow of new troops allows a large number of packs to travel to England, and a wandering army provides support in dispatching or driving back native packs. As entire kingdoms fall, the Uratha eagerly claim and settle new territory. But though the soil is fertile, it's not without its risks. Rivers and wetlands across the east are ideal breeding grounds for the **Beshilu**, while vast forests are home to both **Azlu** and the **Ninna Farakh**. Deep woodlands also hide pagan holdouts who've escaped the spread of Christianity. Though these families worship the same gods as the Vikings, many have been led astray by spirits allied with the Pure, or even Bale Hounds.

Iceland

Scandinavians begin settling Iceland in significant numbers in the 870s. The island is sparse and volcanic, harsh in winter but with a long and pleasant summer. The only previous inhabitants were monks who fled when the Northmen arrived. The vast open land offers herds to hunt and soil enough to grow wheat and raise livestock, and its waters are teeming with fish and whales. Rather than jarls, Icelandic Vikings appoint community leaders known as **goðar** to represent them in day-to-day affairs, and the national **Althing** is founded in 930 to set laws and hear grievances.

The Uratha in Iceland are breaking entirely new ground; isolation and lack of previous human habitation makes them the first werewolves to set foot here. Many old and powerful spirits reside in Iceland who have never felt the yoke of the Uratha, and they're in no mood for that to change. Iceland offers secrets and mysteries that the Bone Shadows are eager to explore, and winters the Storm Lords are proud to endure. The **Meninna** find no shortage of **Azlu** here, and believe their thick webs may contribute to the barren landscape.

Eastern Europe

In the east, Swedish merchants and raiders have made their way down great rivers, capturing settlements such as Kiev to form vital links in the trade route to Constantinople. Byzantium, known in Sweden as "Greece," received its first "Varangians" in 839, but sees a significant influx in the 870s. In 874 they are incorporated into the Byzantine Army, and in 988 Emperor Basil II creates the elite Varangian Guard to protect him from disloyal subjects. Varangian Uratha are perhaps the wealthiest in this period, whether rewarded for military service or paid for carrying silk and spices back to Scandinavia. Their journeys bring them into contact with many native packs and spirits, and few are welcoming. Constantinople is a draw for all Tribes of the Moon, from Blood Talons seeking Glory on the Aegean Sea to Bone Shadows seeking hidden Wisdom in the city's Imperial Library.

Normandy

In 911, a Viking army invades Frankia, attacking Paris and Chartres. Though they're soon defeated, a treaty is signed between Charles the Simple and the Viking leader, an exiled



Scandinavian noble known as Rollo, allowing Rollo to keep much of the land he had captured. Norman Uratha are perhaps the most Christianized among the Vikings, owing to Rollo's baptism. Though their territory is largely agricultural and they have peace with their Christian neighbors, they see no shortage of conflict. Romans, Celts, and Frankish knights have fought and died here, and the Shadow is steeped in bloody history from past invasions.

Towns

As they spread out across Europe, the Vikings establish or sometimes capture towns at key strategic locations. The following are some notable towns in this period.

Hedeby

The southernmost town in Denmark, Hedeby dates back to the 770s, but gains prominence in 808, when the Danes destroy nearby Reric and forcibly relocate its merchants. The town's walls form part of the **Danevirke**, an earthen wall defending Denmark from invasion by Charlemagne. As such, Hedeby is a nexus of trade between Scandinavians and European Christendom. The Forsaken here have sharp eyes, vigilant for both deceptive merchants and Fire-Touched posing as Christian missionaries.

Dublin

Founded in 853 as a staging-ground for raids, Dublin soon grows into a port for slave-trading, sprouting a small manufacturing industry for amber, glass, and jet traded there. It forms a close relationship with York, becoming an important economic hub trading with Viking settlements on the Shetlands, Orkney, and the Isle of Man, and the last stop on the journey to Iceland. The Danes call the town **Dyflin**, after the local name, Dubh Linn. The Vikings are expelled by native forces in 902, but return in 917. The Uratha of Dublin are diverse, cosmopolitan, and comparatively wealthy, but the town's network of rivers and mudflats hides many **Beshilu** nests. Native packs say the Rat Hosts came with the Danes, but whether that's true is anyone's guess.

York

Captured by Vikings in 866, this town dates back to Roman times. Despite an influx of Danes, it remains primarily Anglo-Saxon, ruled by the Viking elite who rename the town **Jórvík** (which is eventually corrupted into York). Christianity is tolerated due to cooperation from the clergy. The town is prosperous, minting its own coins and trading in goods and currency from as far away as Asia. Among the Uratha, Storm Lords and Ivory Claws vie for political supremacy, while both Danish and surviving Anglo-Saxon Iron Masters share secrets and explore the impact of rapid urbanization. This doesn't last, however, and between 927 and 954 the town repeatedly changes hands between the Anglo-Saxons and Vikings from Norway and Dublin. The death of Eric Bloodaxe, dethroned King of Norway, marks the end of Viking rule in 954.



WARFARE

Raiding doesn't cease in this period, but becomes far more organized. Ships and fleets are larger, turning raiding parties into ravaging armies. While they can't match the size of native armies, speed over sea and land allows raiders to harry foes and choose their battles. Most packs still occupy a single ship, but whole protectorates form across large fleets. Many fight as mercenaries in Christian kingdoms; members of the warring Carolingian Dynasty pay Vikings to raid the lands of their brothers and cousins. Blood Talons have little trouble finding such work, lurking among the ranks of mercenaries while looking to battle Uratha of ill repute. The Byzantines, having a friendlier relationship with the Scandinavians, offer similar employment. Mercenary work and growing wealth mean Viking experience and equipment frequently outweighs that of conscripted peasants mustered against them.

Military equipment has also evolved. Spear blades and axes are significantly longer, giving greater reach and effect against the shield walls which now define mass combat. The **Suthur Anzuth** revel in the clash and proximity of the shield wall, waiting for the perfect moment to shift to **Gauru** and smash through enemy lines. Through inheritance, increased wealth, and battlefield looting, swords become increasingly common. While some earlier swords had a single edge, by now almost all are double-edged. Pattern welding compensates for impure Scandinavian iron, and a single, broad fuller lightens the blade. Silver inlays are a popular status symbol, particularly on knives and axes; while they lack the bite of silver blades, deep wounds with such weapons sometimes trigger **Kuruth**. Shields are light and disposable, accompanied by leather or metal helmets; professional warriors might also own a shirt of mail or be provided one by their jarl.

On a local level, personal and familial disputes continue much as they have for centuries. Blood feuds are common, and influential houses bring considerable force to bear on one another. Households of Uratha and their Wolf-Blooded kin are usually sufficiently feared to avoid these disputes, but hot tempers and ancestral duties can produce an insult or injury that cannot go unanswered. The Uratha do no small amount of violence to each other, and feuds between packs are the bloodiest affairs of all.

For its part, Norse law takes measures to reduce such hostility, from honor duels to financial settlements. But when the law fails, or a settlement is refused, things can only get worse. The final recourse in some feuds is hall-burning: A longhouse is set alight, and its occupants killed as they flee. More than one pack has fallen victim to a burning by fearful enemies, and though the Uratha often survive, most are driven beyond madness by the loss of their families.

TRADE

Larger ships and greater geographic knowledge lead to an economic boom in the Viking world. Trade routes stretch down the rivers of Eastern Europe and around the Iberian Peninsula to reach the Mediterranean. Imported goods include silk and spices from distant parts of Asia, while the long-established export of slaves continues to grow. The exchange of weapons and armor with foreign leaders allows prominent Vikings to demonstrate ties and influence abroad while acquiring higher-quality iron and steel. This practice is common among the Storm Lords, Iron Masters, and Ivory Claws, who use similar exchanges to bind treaties or honor fellow tribe members in foreign lands.

Ironically, Western Vikings are rapidly becoming victims of their own success, as robbery, extortion, and a booming economy lead to shortages of silver. This is something of a boon to the Uratha, who are less bothered by the touch of coins and jewelry with an ever-declining silver content, and even the Pure begin using it as currency. The practice of scratching bullion is common, while unfamiliar coins are bent; the purest silver bends easily, but alloys tend to break. The quality of arm rings and coin distributed by a jarl can impact significantly on his reputation, and even Uratha leaders are wary of giving gifts of excessively diluted metal. This is not a problem for Swedish or Varangian Vikings, as coins originating in Byzantium and the Middle East retain their comparative purity.

SOCIETY

Despite detractors decrying them as savages, Viking society is sophisticated for its time. Almost every community has a **Thing**, a gathering of local freemen to discuss politics, hear new laws, and settle disputes. The law is sacred, ensuring honor and stability, and Scandinavian **Meninna** regard the place it is spoken as equally sacred. The site of the **Thing** is usually an imposing landmark; the Icelandic **Althing** centers on the tremendous **Lögberg**, or Law Rock, while in Dublin's **Thingmote** is a mound over 40 feet high. Those who reject the judgment of the **Thing** or refuse a duel might forego its protection or even be outlawed.

One benefit is the resolution of disputes through honor duels, **hólmganga**, which evolve from earlier **einvigi**. While the latter is unrestricted single combat, **hólmganga** are ritualized duels with strict legal protocols. Each fighter has three shields and a short sword, and fights to first blood in a marked area. These swords are prone to bending, and strapping a second to the shield arm is popular. Most are fought at crossroads, or on an island **(hólm)** or a boat to avoid interference. Uratha consider it dishonorable to use Gifts or fetishes in duels with humans, though if silver is used in an **einvig** all bets are off. **Hólmganga** require skill, and inexperienced warriors can be offered **einvigi** to first blood.

Society consists of three main social classes. Thralls are property, but can buy their freedom, and Forsaken consider freeing a **nuzusul** thrall a minor deed of Honor. Karls, or freemen, might be farmers or tradesmen, and most Uratha fall into this class. They may speak at the **Thing** or pledge themselves to serve eminent households as housekarls. Jarls are the nobility, and potential kings, who govern districts, command men, and reward loyal service. Social class is more fluid than in other societies; thralls can become free, karls

in debt can become thralls, and jarls can be made or broken based on support from freemen. While women do not strictly have the same rights, in practice women with influence and resources can claim any of these positions.

RELIGION

Coming into this period, almost all Scandinavians are pagans in the sight of their Christian neighbors, worshiping the Aesir and the Vanir. These are not the distant gods of other faiths, but living beings who wander this world and others pursuing their own agendas and creating new stories. The religion centers on Uppsala, a holy site where pilgrimage and sacrifices are made every nine years. More regular sacrifice, **blót**, is made around each solstice and equinox. Despite their own knowledge of the Shadow and its deities, the Forsaken are none the wiser about the nature of the gods of Asgard. Some worship out of tradition or political convenience, regarding genuine faith as leaning towards the Flesh. But almost all revere Mani, the moon god, as an embodiment of Luna.

Regardless of the truth of the gods, the Uratha know their own history has permeated Scandinavian mythology. This is not that unusual; every human religion seems to touch on some form of truth. But while the details may not be entirely correct, for some the parallels are too great to ignore, particularly the monstrous wolves known as the **vargr**. **Fenris-Ur**, the Destroyer, is destined to bring about Ragnarök by consuming Odin. He is bound by a mighty chain, interpreted as a ban, preventing him from doing so. Mani and his sister Sól are pursued through the skies by the **vargr** Hati and Sköll respectively, to be consumed during the same period.

Most Forsaken identify Sköll as Winter Wolf, and see Helios' demise as a coherent if hubristic aspiration for that Firstborn. Hati, the Hateful One, is viewed as Rabid or Silver Wolf, though their tribes reject Hati's epithet, **Mánagramr** (Moon-Hound). Other tribes lack direct connections, but share tales of **Kamduis-Ur's** exchanges with Odin or the respectful distance kept between Loki and **Sagrim-Ur**. To most Uratha, the Twilight of the Gods is but the end of an age, a far-off Sundering of a different sort for a different people, and few regard the issue as particularly pressing.

Closer at hand, Christianity is rapidly taking hold among the Vikings. Missionaries are dispatched and chapels are built near sacred pagan sites. Much to their chagrin, Christ is initially viewed as one new deity among many, though subsequent generations are more faithful. In the 10th century, gravestones in the Danelaw identify men as Christians who honored Odin in battle, while in Dublin, smiths cast crucifixes and amulets of Mjolnir in a single mold. This blending of faiths sits easily with some Uratha, who've already reconciled their Flesh and Spirit faiths. The process of converting kings, often a boon to the Church, has mixed results; Christian kings are still expected to honor the Aesir, and those who force conversions face rebellion and assassination.

Church patronage wins over many tradesmen, however, and Scandinavian knotwork soon becomes a feature of masonry and metalwork in Churches across Northern Europe. Aside from the **Izidakh**, Scandinavian Uratha are broadly divided over what to make of Christianity, and most base their views on its impact on their territory. As the Vikings sweep across Europe, the growing number of Christians among them begs the question: Who is conquering whom?

THE BATTLE OF CLONTARF

Dublin was first settled in 841, when Vikings wintered on the River Liffey. They were driven out the following year, and their camp burned, but in 853 some 60 ships sailed up the river again. The town was founded by Imár, also known as Ivar the Boneless, and his two brothers, who ruled together as kings for a number of years. In the following decades, Vikings settled in Cork, Limerick, Waterford, and Wexford; and Ivar's descendants, the Uí Ímair, wielded considerable influence across Ireland and Britain. The dynasty's dominance and wide distribution allows several Uratha lineages to marry into different branches, staking territorial claims to their lands and spheres of influence.

In 902, the occupants of Dublin are expelled again, not returning until 917, when it's reclaimed by Sihtric ua Ímair, King of York. Sihtric's young son Olaf converts to Christianity, and after losing York becomes King of Dublin. He marries the widow Dunlaith, sister of the High King of Ireland, and later Gormflaith, sister of the King of Leinster.

The political situation in Ireland is very familiar to the Vikings. Though Christianized centuries earlier, Ireland is divided into warring kingdoms. Chieftains raid neighboring territories not for silver, but cattle, and a pack can garner a solid reputation taking part. The most powerful and influential ruler is declared High King, but this means little in practice. The Danes know constant internal conflict prevents a united effort to expel them, and side with different Irish factions in their wars. Intermarriage with natives is also encouraged, and the Uratha use it to strengthen their lineages.

In 980, the High King is Máel Sechnaill, Dunlaith's son by a previous husband. After defeating Olaf's army, he extracts a humiliating ransom from Dublin and places his half-brother Glúniairn on the throne. Glúniairn is murdered in 989, causing a contest of succession between Sitric Silkbeard, another of Olaf's sons, and his cousin, Ivar of Waterford. This conflict between the Uí Ímair drives a wedge between the relatively cooperative Uratha hidden amongst them.

Sitric is supported by his uncle, Máel Mórda of Leinster, the kingdom directly south of Dublin, and finally secures power in 995. Meanwhile, the High King is weakened by his own power struggle with Brian Boru, King of Munster. Both kings regularly ally against the Vikings, but Boru steers the conflicts to weaken Sechnaill, deposing him in 1002.

Boru spends the next decade consolidating his power. To ensure peace, the elderly Brian marries Gormflaith, Sitric's



BREAKING THE DANELAW

Across the sea in England, raids have been on the rise since 980. In November 1002, King Aethelred orders the ethnic cleansing of the Danelaw. This begins on a Saturday, when Vikings traditionally bathe, to catch them unaware. The St Brice's Day Massacre rocks the Viking world, and the death of his sister prompts King Svein Forkbeard of Denmark to invade England. Svein becomes King of England on Christmas Day 1013, but dies the following February. Is your character caught up in the massacre, fighting to the bitter end or going to ground when the cause is lost? Or is she part of the subsequent invasion, looking to avenge the fallen, reclaim territory, and seek powerful fetishes thought lost?

mother, while Sitric marries Brian's daughter Sláine. But a series of conflicts between Irish kingdoms give Sitric and Máel Mórda the opportunity to raid Máel Sechnaill and Boru's territories. Gormflaith, mistreated by her husband, flees to join her brother and son. Boru surrounds Dublin in September 1013, but withdraws in the winter. As he prepares another siege, Sitric travels to other Viking kingdoms recruiting mercenaries, promising them the title of High King should they defeat Boru. In the spring of 1014, the armies of the Viking world descend on Dublin.

HUNTING GROUND: EARLY 11TH-CENTURY DUBLIN

By 1000 CE, Dublin is a major economic hub, perhaps the foremost slave market in Western Europe. The central fortification is barely a square kilometer, with a great wooden palisade around it, but the population has outgrown this. The Norse call themselves Ostmen, and intermarry to promote peace and integration. With a population of several thousand the town should only support a pack or two, but with the sheer quantity of trade and traffic there are many more, with all the resulting tension that brings. The water and ships are an excellent breeding ground for rats, and when they're not scrapping over turf, the Uratha are usually dealing with **Beshilu** infestations.

The town's name comes from Dubh Linn, "Black Pool," the Irish name for the body of water the Vikings use as a harbor, which the Danes have corrupted to **Dyflin.** The River Poddle flows through it and into the Liffey, the swirling current stirring up dark mud to obscure anything more than a few inches beneath the surface. The focal point of the settlement, the swirling pool has become a potent locus of water and darkness. Its physical focus is unknown, forcing Uratha to cross the Gauntlet to draw Essence, but old Uratha discourage the young from seeking answers at the bottom of the lake.

Just north of the pool is Sitric's castle and fort, forming the western end of the main settlement. The surrounding streets are claimed by the **Steinnvorðr**, a seasoned pack of Storm Lords and Blood Talons, named for the granite pillar that marks Ivar's landing. The fort serves as a meeting place for local Blood Talons, while nearby the **Iminir** keep an eye on Sitric's court. The pack watches the comings and goings of the harbor, but interferes minimally with trade, exerting political influence only when necessary.

West of this is the town proper, built on the southern shore of the Liffey. The **Silfrmál** (Silvertongues), composed primarily of Iron Masters, patrol the town's industrial quarters: shipbuilding, cooperage, and trade take place by the shore; workshops for jewelry and combs are located south of that. Their territory stretches further south to include the blacksmiths, who keep a distance from the settlement to avoid fires. The pack controls a good deal of trade in Dublin, particularly slavery and amber. The native Irish are not above selling their captives into slavery, and so the pack has close contacts in Leinster. A monastic settlement to the west, Átha Cliath, hosts a pack of **Izidakh** who've been encroaching as Christianity takes hold in the town.

On the north shore is a forest of oak, and beyond it Fine Gall, farmland occupied by the Norse. In the forest is a Glade, tended to by the **Eiðreik** (Pact of Oak). The pack's **Meninna** tend to the Glade and the nearby **Thingmote**, while its Bone Shadows explore the strange preservative qualities of the forest's soil, and the secrets hidden beneath it. The **Izidakh** upriver claim an earlier Viking cemetery which they are particularly interested in investigating. The pack occasionally contends with raids from Máel Sechnaill's Kingdom of Mide.

To the east of the town, across the Dubh Linn, stands the **Thingmote**, a 40-foot mound on which the Norse gather to witness law. At its foot, by the river, are the **haugen** or burial mounds of great men. All of this is neutral ground among the Forsaken, though members of the **Eiðreik** hold a particular affinity for this hallowed site, where the Protectorate of the Black Lake convenes. As both other packs possess small loci, the pacts that bind the Protectorate give the Dubh Linn locus to the **Steinnvorðr**, but allows access to the others in times of war among mortals or Uratha.

GOOD FRIDAY

Two mercenary brothers, Brodir and Óspak of Man, are approached by Sitric to support him. Brodir agrees, but Óspak declines. Learning Brodir plans to kill him, Óspak sides instead with Brian. Similarly, the Uí Ímair of Limerick and Waterford join Boru against their cousin Sitric. In addition to Brodir's 1,000 armored men, the forces of Dublin and Leinster are soon bolstered by ships from Orkney, the Hebrides, Norway, and freshly conquered England. Their

fleet begins gathering in Dublin in mid-April, and with it many packs drawn by promises of silver and Glory.

Superstition influences both sides; the Church brings holy relics and bestows blessings upon Boru's army, baptizing their Viking allies, while Sitric's forces boast of older magic. Brodir, a Christian apostate and reputed sorcerer, advises Sitric to stall the battle until Good Friday, predicting that the battle will be lost but that Brian will die, the most favorable outcome. Boru's forces scour the Viking farmland on the northern shore. A handful of packs hold their ground, striking from both sides of the Gauntlet, but Sitric heeds Brodir's advice, and it soon becomes obvious no help is coming. In his late seventies, Boru is reluctant to fight on a holy day, and is too frail besides, but on the morning of Good Friday the Vikings and Leinstermen force the battle shortly after dawn.

Sitric remains in his fort with a garrison of troops, so the Dublin vanguard is led by Brodir and Jarl Sigurd of Orkney. They mass on the northern shore of the river, two miles northwest of the town. The battle begins with single combat between champions, both men dying in the same stroke before the two armies converge. While initially it seems Sitric's forces are vastly outnumbered, Máel Sechnaill holds back his troops, and the battle rages throughout the day.

Brodir charges ahead, his armor reputed to turn all blades aside. After leading his men deep through the lines, killing several leaders, he is confronted by Wolf the Quarrelsome, one of Boru's staunchest supporters. Wolf strikes with enough force to break bones through Brodir's mail, and the mercenary flees, though his men continue fighting.

Óspak and the Vikings of Waterford fight on the far end of the battlefield, alongside the men of Connacht. These fight Viking troops from Dublin led by Sitric's brother and nephew. Óspak's own two sons are cut down before he's gravely wounded, but they force the Dublin Vikings to retreat. This section of the field is so bloody that from several thousand participants, only 20 Dublin men and 100 Connachtmen survive. Early in the day, the conflict involves the clash of massive shield walls, but as casualties mount it turns to small skirmishes. The carnage drives many Uratha to **Kuruth**, and a few to acts of cannibalism in order to keep fighting.

Jarl Sigurd's men carry a raven standard, a gift from his sorcerous mother, said to bring victory to his side at the cost of the bearer's life. This allows his forces to hold their position, but soon so many bearers die that his men refuse to take up the banner. Cursing them, Sigurd picks up the banner himself, and is soon cut down by Brian's son Murchad. Fighting with two swords, Murchad is said to cut down over a hundred armored Vikings before falling himself. Other dead include Máel Mórda and Ragnall mac Gofraid, the Uí Ímair ruler of the Hebrides.

As evening arrives victory seems inevitable for Boru's forces, and Máel Sechnaill commits his troops to rout the remaining forces. As the foreign Vikings retreat, the tide prevents them from reaching their ships, and they're hacked down in the water. The Uratha notice strange shapes in the water, pulling men down, as the bloodshed thins the Gauntlet and allows spirits to manifest. Goblins and stranger creatures stalk the battlefield, killing and capturing from both sides. On the walls of Dublin, Sitric's wife Sláine mocks his men for their inability to swim. Caught up in the slaughter, Boru's teenage grandson, now his heir, is swept off by the rising tide and drowns in his armor.

Brodir, having fled into the woods with several men, stumbles into Boru's camp. They dispatch the High King's guards and Brodir kills Boru while he prays in his tent. As he declares Brian dead, they're captured by Wolf the Quarrelsome, who guts Brodir and pins him to a tree.

Máel Sechnaill's forces are relatively fresh, but Sitric holds a garrison in reserve. Rather than laying siege to the town, a tribute of silver is hastily agreed. Máel Sechnaill returns to Tara, seat of the High King, and reclaims the title taken from him by Boru 12 years earlier.

Aftermath

Boru's death does little to change the political landscape of Ireland, but the battle leaves power vacuums across the Viking kingdoms. The Hebrides, Orkney, and Man are left leaderless. Scores of ships are destroyed and thousands of men are dead. Packs are scattered, forced to merge for survival, and prime hunting grounds across Northern Europe can be claimed by any pack with the initiative. Sigurd, last of the great pagan Vikings, lies dead, and control of the Viking world is finally in Christian hands.

Despite surviving, Dublin faces fresh problems. The town is stricken with disease in 1015, leading to an explosion of **Beshilu**, and Máel Sechnaill burns its suburbs the following year. The battle and continuing violence leave the Gauntlet in tatters, and while Uratha losses are stemmed by stranded mercenaries, this does little to reduce tension and overcrowding. Sitric's alliance with Leinster crumbles after he blinds their new leader, his cousin Broen, in 1017. But the town begins to grow again and even Sitric's fortunes improve for a time. He raids Kells in 1018, plundering the monastery and selling many captives into slavery. But after the death of Mael Sechnaill in 1022, Dublin becomes a prize for warring kingdoms. After a profitable raiding alliance with King Cnut in England in the 1030s, a renewed feud leads to Sitric executing the King of Waterford. The ensuing conflict forces him to abdicate in 1036, and he dies in 1042 with no surviving heirs.

Dublin's economy continues to expand, but Norse influence slowly declines as they intermarry and integrate, and they cease to be the town's leading faction. When the Normans arrive in 1070, the Hiberno-Norse barely recognize their cousins, leaving to found Ostmanstown on the north shore.

Integration

As the Vikings assimilate into broader Irish society, the same is happening in England. After Svein Forkbeard's death, his predecessor Aethelred returns from hiding in Normandy. But in 1016 Svein's son Cnut invades and conquers England,



and allegedly murders his brother to claim Norway and Denmark. Harald Bluetooth, Cnut's grandfather, was the first Christian King of Norway and Denmark, and while his people broadly rejected the faith, he still fostered its growth in both kingdoms.

Following this example, Cnut strengthens ties with the Church, traveling to Rome to meet the Pope. This secures his rule in England, and helps integrate Christianity in Scandinavia. However, his preoccupation with England foments rebellion, and by his death in 1035, Norway is independent. His son inherits England and Denmark, but dies in 1042, and Edward the Confessor takes England's throne.

Norman Vikings have spent much of the last century adopting Frankish custom, their weapons and warfare evolving considerably, and they have watched England carefully. In 1066, Norway's King Harold Hardrada invades England. Hardrada's army is repelled by King Harold Godwinson, but before English forces recover they face another invasion from Normandy. With Godwinson's death at the Battle of Hastings, William II becomes William the Conqueror, ending the Viking era in Western Europe. A few shrewd Uratha take advantage and bend the knee to secure high station, but there are packs among the Normans as well, and competition for territory is fierce.

In Scandinavia, Christianity begins to dominate, becoming considerably more aggressive. The largest **blót** happens every nine years at Uppsala, and Swedish Christians have long been taxed for exemption, but after the **blót** in 978, tensions rise. In 984, the Christian King Inge declares pagan rituals illegal, but his people rebel and he is exiled. His brother-in-law, Blot-Sweyn, is elected king on the condition that sacrifices continue. But in 987, Inge returns and kills Blot-Sweyn in a hall-burning before desecrating Uppsala and outlawing rituals there. The decline of the Norse faith puts many Uratha under scrutiny, and they're forced to adapt their practices as tradition changes.

In Denmark, King Canute IV (Cnut's grandson) institutes a tax to build churches and cathedrals. When he abandons regional **Thingi** to issue new laws, he's martyred by his own people. The Church canonizes Canute, which ironically leads to broader acceptance of the faith. By the end of the 11th century, Iceland is one of the few places with pagan holdouts; though the **Althing** had declared Christian observances mandatory in 1000, it guaranteed that pagan observances could continue in private.

To the East, Swedish towns band together to form new states, while in Byzantium the flow of Scandinavian immigrants continues. The Varangian Guard is the most prestigious military body known, and though its membership has diversified, Norse Uratha continue to climb its ranks. By the end of the century, however, the Varangian trade routes have become the warpaths of the First Crusade, and travel in the region will be forever changed.

The final phase of Scandinavian exploration began in 989, when Erik the Red led the settlement of Greenland, sending expeditions further west to Newfoundland. The cultures they encounter lack the wealth seen in Europe, but have no lack of ferocity defending themselves from raiders. The quality of the land, difficulty of the voyage, and broader decline of the Viking age provide little impetus for further expansion. With no new territories to explore, even adventurous Uratha return to fighting for established hunting grounds.

As countries consolidate and Christianize, declining silver supplies lead to a shift to monetary economies. Even coins from Asia and the Mediterranean decline to the point that the Pure are willing to handle them.

The scale of war in this period makes it difficult for the Uratha to fight as openly as they once did. Rather than engage in pitched battles, for the most part they return to skirmishes. Raiding declines considerably after Cnut's death, ending in the years after Hastings, though some Norse Uratha continue to travel as merchants and mercenaries. Some oppose the aggressive conversion of the period, but there's little they can really hope to accomplish. To the shock and horror of some Uratha, Ragnarök has come and gone without the howls of **Fenris-Ur**.

Auspices

Luna's blessing shapes the way any Forsaken views her role in the wider world. This is no different in the Viking age, where the Auspices share their own stories and interpretations of war, society, and religion.

Cahalith

Scandinavians share an unusual blend of oral and written history, and their **Cahalith** embrace both, composing epic sagas or committing brief, boastful statements to stone. They're skálds and seers, telling tales of past and future alike, superstition and belief allowing them greater liberty to speak of their visions. They are craftsmen and prophets, forging the tools of fate and placing them in the hands of those destined for greatness.

For **Cahalith**, the raid begins before they even set sail. Before raids or battles, they incite boasts and wagers at feasts about glorious deeds to come. They cast their sight ahead, hounding their prey in dreams, spreading fear of their arrival. When the pack strikes, **Cahalith** howl unholy terror and watch for the deeds of their brothers. As they leave, they sometimes choose a survivor to spare in order to spread the story. The raid only truly ends when recounted around the autumn fires of home.

Many **Cahalith** feel affinity with the **Nornir**, the spinners of fate, and Bragi, god of poetry and music. Some recklessly call on Valkyries to watch their pack in battle. Others prefer to concern themselves with plunder, not lusting after silver but the bragging rights it brings.

Elodoth

The laws of the Norse are based on the precepts of Honor, and the **Elodoth** respect that, involving themselves more in

human law than they might among other cultures. Many serve as lawspeakers at **Thingi** or as advisors to discerning jarls. Others make successful merchants, with a reputation for honest trade and a knack for spotting its absence. Among the Forsaken, they convene their own courts based on similar grounds, to settle disputes and stand over honor duels.

On raiding trips, the **Elodoth** are calm and collected, weighing information gathered to determine where to strike. They are mindful of the pace of the raid, lest reinforcements arrive or bar a pack's return to its ship. If called upon they tell which captives are lying about hidden silver, or negotiate ransoms for safe return or tribute to leave settlements untouched.

Some **Elodoth** associate their auspice with Odin, with one eye open and one eye empty, while others identify with and pray to Tyr, god of law. They are often more tolerant of Christianity than their fellows, waiting to see its impact locally rather than rushing to judgment. Regardless of their human faiths, duty and Honor are always their prime concerns.

Rahu

The Norse aspire to be great warriors, something which comes to the **Rahu** innately. And yet many of this auspice crave deeper fulfillment. While some seem as reckless as any berserker, they keep their wits about them, for even if they meet a glorious end, many question whether the gates of Valhalla are open to the Uratha.

In the heat of a raid the **Rahu** seek worthy prey, those men and women who would rather stand and fight than flee. These warriors go to Odin after facing certain death with a blade in hand. But for many **Rahu**, the raid alone is not enough; it must serve a greater purpose, and **Siskur-Dah** must be invoked. Fortunately most packs agree with this sentiment, or at least pay lip service to it, lest they anger their Full Moon.

Human berserkers have a strong connection to Odin's warrior aspect, and Norse **Rahu** honor him for the same reasons. Often to the surprise of their packmates, many **Rahu** are intrigued by Christianity, which offers Purity of purpose beyond wealth or a glorious death. But whatever their human religions, in the din of battle their faith in Luna is what truly matters.

Irraka

Despite their reputation for savagery, the Vikings have no shortage of guile, and the **Irraka** embody both qualities in equal measure. From rigging scales to burning halls, the No-Moons of the North do not balk at acts which further the hunt. They often make a living as hunters, scouts, or even spies. When raiders pose as merchants to gather information, it's the **Irraka** who sits to one side and does the listening.

When the raid begins, the **Irraka** surge forward, finding sentries who might raise the alarm. With these threats dispatched, the rest of the raiding pack can move in, while the **Irraka** circle, on the lookout for escapees and stragglers. They are adept at finding hidden treasures, concealed where no mortal raider would think to look.

Other auspices and the Pure associate the **Irraka** with the trickster Loki, much to their annoyance — but they do not deny it. Instead they play to the role in subtle ways. It's said that Loki knew that distrust could be exploited through perfect honesty, and some Norse **Irraka** follow this example by speaking only the truth. Some say an **Irraka** known for Honor is the one you really need to watch.

Ithaeur

The Vikings believe there are nine planes, but the **Ithaeur** garner their Wisdom from another. Those who are open about their engagement with unseen powers are typically regarded as seers, runecasters, or as practitioners of **seidr**, the weaving of spells. Those who are more secretive still tend to take on lay religious functions in their homes or communities, leading sacrifices and honoring the spirits with minor rituals.

Odin's **blót** marks the beginning of summer, and for the **Ithaeur** marks the first step of any raid. As they sail, they commune with their totems, seeking out loci and tending to the supply of Essence. When their feet touch land, they howl silently to the spirits to discourage their intervention in the coming slaughter. While their packmates seek silver, they seek somewhere to cross, as they've often gone days without doing so.

Norse **Ithaeur** are perhaps the most mindful of the gods, and honor many. Odin, wise in runes, and Freyja, who taught Odin the ways of **seidr**, receive regular offerings. Many **Ithaeur** are intrigued by Christian rituals, but they are also guarded; the purported exorcism of "spirits," while potentially useful, hints at greater power than humans should wield.

Blood Talons

His last two brothers fell. Koli was still moving, but Eirik's skull had been parted. The foemen circled, raising spear and sword and shield. Ingólfr's own shield had been sundered, but even still they were afraid to strike first.

One of the men spoke, and the circle parted on one side. "Enough. Go home, and speak of how your kinsmen entered the glorious hall."

Ingólfr spat and laughed. "And miss my chance to follow?"

You are the wolves of war. You strike with claws of bone and a howl of blood. You are as cold and inevitable as death. Through the clash of blades and broken bones, you remake yourself and prove your battle prowess. "Offer No Surrender You Would Not Accept"; you fight on, and for that the North is yours.

The Blood Talons of the Norse are first among warriors in a culture where the gods themselves seek mortal soldiers for the end-times. These Uratha dedicate themselves to battle, striving to be ever greater. They raid, they train, they serve greater warriors, and one day lead their own followers and

kin into the fight, ever improving. They make their livings as housekarls, soldiers, and mercenaries, traveling far for fights and fame, or as armorers or tacticians, girding and guiding their brothers in war. Even in times of peace, they sharpen their claws and toughen their leathers, waiting for the next great clash.

When the Blood Talons go raiding, they're spoiling for a fight. The kind of Glory found in large coin hoards and cattle herds is not entirely to their liking. The absence of Uratha doesn't distract a Destroyer when raiding, but they're always on the lookout for signs of the Pure (or worse), favoring attacks on settlements which bear their mark. Regardless of the target, they learn as much as is reasonably possible, and strike with precision. Even a single ship of raiders led by a handful of Blood Talons can ravage a monastery in short order, and present a formidable shield wall if confronted by organized opposition.

Of course the tribe does not always need to travel far to find their sacred prey. The islands and inlets of Scandinavia hide many a pack, and in times like these, there are no shortage of Pure, or even Forsaken, who've "lost their way." Strange, unspoken things happen on raids. Cut off from loci by their travels, some Uratha turn to eating the flesh of fallen victims for Essence. Some are tempted by corrupting spirits out at sea or on distant shores. These stains never wash away, not truly, and some carry the taint back to their territories. The Blood Talons are aware they're just as exposed to corruption on their travels, but also know their fellow Destroyers are watching their backs.

Fighting is not just limited to land, and the Vikings are well used to war at sea. Whether fighting foreigners or each other, they bind ships together with hooks and ropes. In large sea-battles, this allows infantry to charge across multiple vessels as if they were on land. The claws and forms of the Uratha are particularly useful on an unsteady vessel, and sea-borne Blood Talons are adept in this style of warfare, bounding across decks, shifting to larger forms as they land to cause ships to list violently.

The most famed and feared of warriors among the Norse are the **berserkir** and the úlfhethnar, who forgo shields and clad themselves in the skins of bears and wolves in battle. Whether the Blood Talons had a hand in the origins of these warriors, or simply make the most of it, some of them don such garb on raids or in battle. While mortal berserkers imbibe hallucinogens, the Blood Talons see little need to muddy their minds given their own rage. Some Uratha consider this a violation of the Oath, but the **Suthar Anzuth** deny any risk to the People. Tales of the berserkir obscure the Uratha, they say, and after all, between Lunacy and the fog of war, it's quite easy to mistake the **Gauru** form for a bear on the battlefield.

Another tale the Blood Talons are all too familiar with is that of Fenrisúlfr, the hellwolf born of Loki and bound by the gods until Ragnarök, when he will consume Odin and finally be slain by Vidar. While human storytellers have clearly taken liberties, few Uratha doubt the tale relates to **Fenris-Ur**. Of course the bindings in the tale are not physical, but a ban, though the Firstborn's role in the doom of the gods confuses some members of the tribe. Norse warriors aspire to feast in Valhalla until called upon to fight at Ragnarök, but why would the Blood Talons fight on the side of the gods?

Ragnarök will be the fall of gods and men, but some of each will live into the next era. There are those who call it the Sundering of Man, reducing humanity to what they were before the death of Father Wolf. This says little about the role of the Uratha, or the destination of their Glorious dead. The tribe's **Cahalith** assure them that these events are far off, and that more of the story will unfold with time.

Berserkers of the tribe pray to Odin for guidance, knowing he keeps two wolves by his side. Despite his role in binding their tribal totem, the Blood Talons hold a deep respect for the god of justice and war, Týr. His unflinching sacrifice of his hand to the jaws of **Fenris-Ur** captures the essence of the tribe's Oath. Men mark his rune on weapons and shields to guide them to victory, and plenty of Uratha follow suit. Vidar is understandably less popular, though one heretical speculation has surfaced — that the role of Vidar is actually reserved for a Blood Talon, destined to bring down their tribe's rampaging totem, just as the **Suthar Anzuth** bring down their rabid brothers and sisters.

Concepts: Aspiring Valkyrie, Berserker, Far-Flung Mercenary, Pragmatic Armorer, Grizzled Shieldbearer.

BONE SHADOWS

"See? I told you the Christians were hiding something," bellowed Bjorn, knocking back wine from the altar he'd just desecrated. Sven wasn't sure if he was talking about the silver at his feet or the corpse next to it. As the sun's rays reached the thing's blood, it began to boil and burn on the snow.

"I wonder what they did to anger Helios?"

"I wonder where I can find more wine," Bjorn declared. As he kicked in the door of the next chapel, Sven stayed behind and prized the fangs from the corpse's maw. The Helions might take them as payment for the answer he sought.

You are the wolves of two worlds. You strike with claws unfelt and a howl unheard by Flesh. You are as sharp and inquisitive as a whetted knife. Through enigmatic discourse and calm reflection, you enlighten yourself and prove your insight. "Pay Each Spirit in Kind"; you atone, and for that the North is yours.

The Norse say the dead go many places; Hel, Valhalla, Fólkvangr, and Sindri. The Bone Shadows hope that they are right, because it gives them more places to delve for secrets. Among the Norse, the Bone Shadows hold all manner of Wisdom and magic. They cast and read runes, consort with spirits, know the lore of herbs, and delve into the mysteries of **seidr**. Their power and knowledge garner them respect... and fear.

The scope of the spirits they commune with requires that Bone Shadows be amenable to diverse hunting grounds. Passage between the worlds can occur anywhere, through the thin Gauntlet of the deepest wilderness or bloodshed on the narrow streets of a sprawling town. In choosing where to hunt their sacred prey, the Bone Shadows must be mindful of where that prey can do the most harm, and where they might grow the most dangerous.

When it comes to the act of raiding, invading spirits are rarely a priority. The tribe is broadly optimistic about the advances made in travel, though they're not particularly interested in material wealth. To travel across vast seas, to discover new lands and hidden places, to hunt spirits who think they've outrun the Uratha, these are the possibilities which drive the Bone Shadows to the waves. Raiding inspires and funds these journeys, the lust for silver pushing the Norse on towards the horizon; the **Hirfathra Hissu** raid to travel with them. At least, that's what most Uratha believe.

In truth, the Bone Shadows have much to gain raiding, but unlike their brothers, they're far more concerned with the contents than the trappings. While other raiders scour monasteries for precious metals, **Kamduis-Ur's** children seek the relics of saints and martyrs. Released from their gold and silver bindings, the right bones can make potent fetishes, fuel Gifts and rites, or be used to bribe spirits. The most revered items might be focal points in the flow of Essence. A few even prove to be genuine, and can provide insights into the lives of holy men and women, or better still, knowledge of the mysterious angels who inspired them. Thus, when gathering information for a raid, the Bone Shadows often present as pilgrims or recent converts seeking shrines to pay their respects.

Magic plays an integral role in Norse culture, and the Bone Shadows dabble in a variety of forms. Divination, prophesy, and the carving of powerful runes are respected crafts. **Seidr** is something different; the weaving and unweaving of fate, and placing curses upon your enemies. Women who practice **seidr** are known as **völva**, and are afforded much respect and even wealth. Despite Odin's own practice of **seidr**, it's deeply taboo for men to openly practice it, as legend says a man must commit taboo sexual acts to learn his powers. This can result in accusations of **ergi**, or unmanliness, which can result in expulsion from mortal society. The degree to which this belief is entrenched in the tribe varies, and besides, the **Hirfathra Hissu** understand the power of taboo.

Similarly, the Bone Shadows are deeply familiar with the burial practices of the Vikings. They participate in burial and cremation alike, placing grave goods and markers to assist the passage of the dead to whatever afterlife they've earned. Mounds and stone ships attest to the memory of the dead and the influence of their family, and are important locations in any Bone Shadow's territory. But aside from honor, the purpose of these burials is to ensure the safety of the family; the dishonored dead tend to rise to take revenge.

To this end, even thralls receive decent burial, though this cannot be said of raid victims. The restless dead feature



heavily in Norse folklore, and not without reason, so the Bone Shadows tend to keep a close eye on the graves of those who did not go peacefully, lest some spirit claim the body for its own. Cremations leave no body, but carry short-term complications, as the swirling blend of Resonance given off by a burning pyre or boat can feed and facilitate undesirable spirits. Prominent funerals can include the sometimes-voluntary sacrifice of one of the deceased's thralls, and Bone Shadows have been known to take the role of "Angel of Death," guiding the victim to his or her fate.

The tribe tells a number of stories about the Norse gods, particularly how they relate to its totem. Some observe that tales of **Kamduis-Ur's** discussions with Odin are not much different from her exchanges with Father Wolf, or indeed discussions between Odin and his drinking partner Sága, an wise, obscure goddess some members still honor. To this the Bone Shadows reply that all mythology touches on truth. Freyja, and to a lesser extent Hel, both of whom divide the dead with Odin, also receive attention from the tribe. The Norse gods are known to wander, and a rare few **Hirfathra Hissu** take it upon themselves to find and question them, though none are known to have succeeded.

Concepts: Godseeker, Herbalist, Rune Reader, Shadow Navigator, Völva.

HUNTERS IN DARKNESS

The murderer fell to his knees. Hralf could smell the man's piss.

"H-he killed my brother. Honor demanded I avenge him."

"You had your chance in the duel. You swore to accept the outcome."

"I'll...I'll pay the weregild. His family needs the money, and the law allows it."

Hralf spat. "I don't care for your laws. I care less for your money. You swore where the three roads meet, and you dishonored that pact. That price is paid in blood."

You are the wolves of the deep woods. You strike with claws unwavering and a howl of dread. You are as daunting and perilous as any forest. Through the drawn-out hunt and the sacred kill, you condition yourself and prove your vows. "Let No Sacred Place in Your Territory Be Violated"; you purify, and for that the North is yours.

Norse **Meninna** are the monsters in the dark, the eyes at the edge of the woods. They remind people not to stray too far from the road, not to let young children out of their sight. In their human guise, they take roles that allow them to maintain a calculated distance, often seen as wanderers or hermits. They might be hunters, disappearing in the wilderness for long periods, returning with fur and meat to trade, or merchants and storytellers who travel widely to source new material and practice their crafts. Some take to the seas to deepen the sense of isolation, and a few among the tribe are outlaws, banished from human society for upholding the duties of the hunt.

The nature of their sacred prey exposes the **Meninna** to all manner of environment. From colonies of **Azlu** in remote woodlands to nests of **Beshilu** in the bellies of ships, pursuing the Hosts is a vicious and costly hunt, and the rapidly expanding settlements of the Norse are not making it any easier. The narrow streets and low buildings of these towns allows **shartha** to slip into places few Uratha can follow, and the clustered buildings of wood and thatch turn the traditional weapon of fire into a terrible liability. Growth in both the size and number of ships vastly increases the points of entry and escape the **Meninna** must consider in their territory, and pursuing shards that survive a hunt can drag an obstinate Hunter in Darkness halfway across the known world.

This tribe is perhaps the least inclined to take to raiding, preferring to stay and tend to their territories. But there are those factors which will drive the **Meninna** towards the horizon. They might only seem concerned with their own hunting grounds, but with shipping and travel on the rise they must be conscious of the state of the towns and settlements that visiting ships are coming from. Though monastic sites might not be the first place to seek the **shartha**, the isolation suits them well, allowing them to slowly take control of the insular communities they find.

The other tribes do not deny the utility of the Hunters on a raid. Their stealth, intuition, and sense of direction are valuable assets when exploring unfamiliar terrain and avoiding detection by the target. Their talents for harrying and cornering prey make a raiding party all the more efficient in rounding up captives. Breeding stock interests the **Meninna** more than gold or silver, and they can be quite assertive when they find Wolf-Blooded among their quarry.

One particular misgiving that the tribe has about raiding is that they will, sooner or later, encounter foreign **Meninna**, and may well be the ones violating their tribemates' sacred territories. When this time comes, their reservations will hardly stop them from taking what they need, and they would expect no less were the situation reversed. Unlike dealing with a neighboring pack, the open sea and the speed of a good ship mean it's unlikely they'll ever be caught. Still, a Viking Hunter can spend years looking over her shoulder for the brother she wronged.

Norse Hunters have no shortage of sacred places to choose from. The mountains and waterways of Scandinavia are riddled with secrets unseen by man, and loci or Glades are natural choices for the **Meninna** to protect. The family home is inviolate, and closely guarded in times of feud or dispute. But the Norse hold the law as sacred too, and many **Meninna** carry this belief through the Change. Thus those places where law is spoken or honored are often considered to fall under the Tribal Oath. The **Thingmote** is the most prominent, where freemen meet to debate law and resolve disputes. If a district has a fixed **hólm**, the site of a **hólmgang**, it is usually given similar weight, as are **hörgr**, holy sites where rituals and communal sacrifices are performed. The laws themselves matter little to the **Meninna**, only that they are honored in that place, and that oaths and sacrifices made there go unbroken.

The Silent Mother, **Hikaon-Ur**, is much too secretive to be spoken of in Norse mythology. Instead, the children of Black Wolf feel an affinity with Nótt, goddess of the night, also known as "darkness" and "unlight." Vidar, god of silence, the forest, and revenge appeals to members on every level, though they tend not to share this fact with the **Suthar Anzuth**. Some pray to Hoenir, another god of silence, said to survive Ragnarök alongside Vidar.

The **Meninna** have generally mixed feelings about the spread of Christianity. Most are inclined towards worshiping the old gods, whose warlike and wandering aspects are more easily related to their own lives as Uratha. But for the most part, Christians show respect for sacred places and attempt to lay claim to them over time rather than defile them. Whether this gradual takeover constitutes a violation of the space is entirely up to the local **Meninna**.

Concepts: Furtive Hunter, Mysterious Wanderer, Seasoned Woodsman, Territorial Outlaw.

IRON MASTERS

I shift to Dalu as he realizes he's cornered, and catch the familiar smell of oil as he draws the sword and turns. His pose tells me everything.

"You don't know how to use that, boy."

That pisses him off. He swings, proving my point.

"A good sword won't cut its maker."

While he makes sense of that, I sidestep the blade, catching his wrist and elbow. The crack is nearly as loud as his scream. For a moment, I feel sorry for him.

But I'd rather his arm than my sword.

You are the wolves unseen. You strike with claws of iron and the howl of a warhorn. You are as shifting and treacherous as the sea. Through molten metal and chiseled stone, you forge yourself and prove your innovation. "Honor Your Territory in All Things"; you adapt, and for that the North is yours.

The Iron Masters were the first tribe to walk among humans, and the first to raid alongside them. They have followed the ascent of humanity since the Sundering, and they have learned its ways well. Their skill at crafting allows them to work with metal and stone, earning high status and respect in the Norse community. Their fascination with the modern also draws them to the craft of shipbuilding. Possessed of predatory wits combined with insight into the minds of humans, they succeed as merchants and even leaders.

This sense of predation is necessary at all times, for the Iron Masters alone live and breathe among their sacred prey. The Norse are civic-minded, at least among their own, and this speaks to members of the tribe. To be above suspicion they must be one with the community, a linchpin or an integral link. Rather than live in deep woods or distant farmsteads, the Iron Masters tend to set up shop at the heart of activity. Even the most isolated members, those who sail or stoke a forge outside a town, ensure regular contact with the wider community, learning of problems through movement and seemingly idle gossip.

Iron Masters attend feasts and gatherings with zeal, and even the Thing, not to speak so much as listen and assess the mood and spirit of the territory, offering help where they can be seen to give it. They are the ones people come to with problems. Other tribes scoff at this, saying the Iron Masters over-indulge in the Flesh. But in truth they are honoring their oath to **Sagrim-Ur**, as well as preparing for the **Siskur-Dah**.

When the **Farsil Luhal** go raiding, they know their prey better than they have any right to. They have studied the patterns, and they know the signs. One village is not much different from the next, and important men always live in the biggest and finest houses. Cut the lines of communication; silence the bell and scatter the horses. Dispatch the guards individually, for it is better and faster done alone than as a wall of shields. Find the leader and cut him down; compliance will soon follow. Raids led by Iron Masters are both ruthless and ruthlessly efficient, buying them as much time as possible to plunder and make their escape unhindered.

One aspect of raiding which does not sit well with the tribe is the destruction of books. Destruction drives change, but the destruction of knowledge can impede innovation. The Iron Masters have watched the spread of Christianity, intrigued by the concept of monotheism, and by the contradictions between the message and its delivery. But they see change, and they do not argue with change; some embrace it, others merely observe it. In some regards it's the artistry and skill in the making of these tomes that appeals to and inspires the Iron Masters far more than their contents. Some take solace in the potential to reforge the gold and silver bindings, to reset the precious stones, and to give it all new purpose.

Another uncomfortable element is that the Iron Masters must leave their territory behind. This is a concern of all Uratha who go raiding, and measures are taken to lessen the impact of their absence. But the Iron Masters would not raid if it did not benefit their territories, and the livestock and silver they return with can certainly do that. Those who have gone raiding pour much of their new wealth back into their towns. Where mortals commission runestones to remember great raids and instill pride, the **Cahalith** of the tribe engrave metal, stone, and the bows of their ships with images honoring the deeds of pack and totem.

The quality and utility of longships is the driving force behind expansion, and the Iron Masters appreciate these advances on levels that other tribes cannot. The splitting of wood to produce stronger, lighter planks, and the broad, shallow hull to ride high on the waves; the Iron Masters see beauty and innovation in every aspect of these vessels. Their own ships are among the fastest and most agile, if not as large as those of the wealthiest humans.

Similarly, while most farmers and woodsmen know the basics of crafting and maintaining tools, weapons and armor

require considerable skill, and pieces the Iron Masters put their hands to go beyond that. Their packs are often the best equipped, and in practical function rather than gaudy display. But while their weapons and vessels are usually at the cutting edge, there is another technology which captivates them just as much: money.

Uratha of other tribes look at the Iron Masters and see a lust for silver, but this is not so. The children of Red Wolf despise the metal as much as any other werewolf, but they are fascinated by its application. Currency, whether minted coins or fragments of jewelry, is at once the most abstract and the most utilitarian tool humanity has devised, allowing those who possess it to obtain just about anything, or anyone. Ironically, humanity's greatest tool is also its greatest weakness, and in this the **Farsil Luhal** know their prey all the better.

Concepts: Blacksmith, Linguist, Merchant, Navigator, Shipwright.

STORM LORDS

A high wave engulfed the bow of the ship, and it listed heavily starboard. Two men disappeared over the side, sinking into the darkness. As the spray cleared, Borghildr could smell the blood they'd left on deck, and see icy tendrils gripped about the mast and bow. Many spines tore at the wood like a rusted saw, and her housekarls clung to the ship as it listed further.

Snatching her axe from its ring as she shifted to Dalu, she sunk her claws into the deck and charged its length. Leaping over the port bow, she saw her prey for the first time, and howled her challenge as she fell upon it.

You are the wolves of winter. You strike with claws of ice and a howl of thunder. You are as relentless and merciless as any blizzard. Through the harshest trials and acts of defiance, you hone yourself and prove your fortitude. "Let None Witness or Tend to Your Weakness"; you endure, and for that the North is yours.

The Storm Lords know they are first among the Forsaken, and so place themselves first among the men and women of the North. All are freemen at least, and there are more jarls among them than any other tribe. They are the masters of ships and leaders of raids, or serve as housekarls and bodyguards to even greater Storm Lords. They lead households, settle disputes, and speak law before the Thing.

While the nature of their prey demands that they watch the Herd, the approach of each **Iminir** varies. Some immerse themselves deeply, taking leading roles in local politics and warfare, while others keep a short but notable distance, whether a farm a day's ride from town or a ship which docks on the half moon. They are ever mindful of the reputation of local jarls, and greet every such leader in accordance with his or her deeds. Honest trade is respected, and the fact that humans barter in silver is an irritation to be endured. A few Storm Lords take issue with taxation, but most dismiss it as tribute to those whose honor enables trade and commerce. If the jarl's honor is deemed lacking, though, that tribute will often go unpaid.

Mutual appreciation for honor can ease the transition of the **nuzusul** from mundane Scandinavian society to the moots of the Uratha. The Storm Lords in particular recognize this quality among the broader population, but often seek to witness it and put it to the test. They engage in honor duels with humans more often than the other tribes, and pay unusual deference to the laws of men in such matters. If they suspect they're being cheated by a merchant, they'll try his weights against their own; whether they crush a guilty man's windpipe or just his reputation depends on the individual Storm Lord.

The tribe's hunting grounds generally reflect their harsh and uncompromising outlook. Adventurous members claim coastlines and trade routes, demanding tribute from those who pass through their waters, some commanding ships as large and impressive as any jarl's. Rural members favor difficult, open terrain, where crops and livestock may struggle but invaders can be seen approaching from a great distance. Urban dwellers take prominent and important locations in towns, building large houses and drinking halls where they can gather retinues and increase their influence. Regardless of form, any structure a Storm Lord puts her hand to will be striking, and it will be built to endure.

The relationship between **Skolis-Ur** and Schöll, the warg who chases the sun across the sky and swallows it at Ragnarök, is not lost on his followers, but unlike the Blood Talons they're not too concerned about their totem's role in the downfall of the gods. Whether motivated by politics or spirituality, most Storm Lords continue to honor these deities. Thor is naturally popular, as is Vár, goddess of oaths and pledges. The relentless god Vidar is well regarded for his pre-ordained role in Ragnarök, avenging his father Odin and surviving into the era to come. That he will do so by slaying **Fenris-Ur** stirs scorn among the Blood Talons, but the Storm Lords know that even the greatest of heroes will eventually fall.

Christianity poses an interesting dichotomy to Storm Lords raised entirely immersed in Scandinavian culture. While the isolation and austerity of the monks they encounter resonates with the children of Winter Wolf, their abhorrence of violence is viewed as a crushing weakness. Furthermore, the petition of the faithful to channel external powers, whether saints or the Holy Spirit, is entirely anathema. This openness may be the reason they seem to encounter the Claimed more frequently among monastic communities, though it's equally likely it's due to isolation and the relative lack of Uratha claiming monasteries as territory.

Of course, the occasional presence of the Claimed among Christians is hardly enough to justify the frequent raiding the Storm Lords engage in, and while silver is useful, lust for it is looked down upon. Instead they cite the challenge of the journey, sailing across hard and open seas and battling strange warriors and spirits in foreign lands. While other

Vikings and Uratha limit their raids to the summer months, the **Iminir** go a-viking early in the year and return much later. Some have been known to test their mettle by raiding in the winter months; suicide for ordinary humans.

Advances in travel have allowed for an evolution in the **Siskur-Dah**. Previously the seas and isolated islands offered places for intruding spirits to hide from the Uratha, but in this age the **Iminir** can cross vast seas to hunt their chosen prey. Humans are not the only flesh that spirits can Claim, and more than one hunt has started with whispers of strange creatures seen beneath the surface. Maps depicting sea serpents and kraken, traded for or captured in Christian lands, are often the product of imaginative scribes, but occasionally hold clues for a determined hunter.

Concepts: Honor Duelist, Lawspeaker, Loyal Housekarl, Raid Leader, Venerable Jarl.

SAMPLE SPIRITS

Ember Carrion (**Didal Uga**) are the crows of ash and blood that follow raiding fleets across the seas, descending on the Essence generated once the raiders strike. Cracks in their charred black bodies reveal flames and veins coursing beneath the surface.

Deep Eyes (**Sus Haz**) and **Water Wyrms** (**Esmusgal**) reflect the kraken and sea serpents that sailors witness far out to sea. These spirits can be immense and powerful, but some younger examples are willing to act as totems to sea-borne packs.

OTHERS

The Uratha are not alone in this world, and the beings they share it with experience their own changes in this period.

SPIRITS

There are two distinct types of spirit which a traveler might encounter in the Viking age: those familiar with Uratha, and those that are not. The former inhabit the same places as humans, tolerating the interference of Uratha since the Sundering. They don't discriminate against Norse Uratha any more than local Uratha; half-Flesh abominations are still half-Flesh abominations, no matter where on the material plane they're from.

The latter are quite aware of the Uratha and humanity, but by existing on islands so remote or seas so distant, they have not had the displeasure of meeting them until now. Finding themselves encroached upon by creatures they thought themselves long rid of, whether through brief encounter or lengthy occupation, can provoke unpredictable and violent reactions from spirits. Thus when the Uratha sail on uncharted seas or set foot on an untouched shoreline, they had best be respectful and on their guard.

Earlier in this period, towns are far smaller and fewer in number, meaning there are far more places where the Gauntlet is thin and spirits can invade. As the Vikings expand, this empty space doesn't shrink significantly, but for many spirits any amount is too much. For their part, the Norse are more mindful of local spirits than some cultures, and leaving them occasional chiminage is considered the duty of any housewife even after the Vikings Christianize. Many spirits avail themselves of seasonal **blóts**, feeding on Essence generated by sacrifices since the gods either don't know or don't care to collect it themselves. When leaving their territory to go raiding, the Uratha tend to offer generous sacrifices to ensure the cooperation of these spirits in their absence.

Spirits of artificial choirs are still relatively natural, seemingly carved from wood or stone, and only occasionally displaying metallic components. Conceptual spirits are also naturalistic, as abstract concepts such as pain and fear are still related to natural entities such as fangs and darkness. Those bound to man-made locations, from houses to gravemounds, tend to cooperate with Uratha in return for the protection of the structures they reflect.

THE HOSTS

The Uratha in this time are spread far thinner than in later centuries, and the **shartha** have many more places to hide.

Viking towns and smaller settlements lack the large buildings and tunnel infrastructure that the **Azlu** appreciate, and in this period they're more commonly found in deep woodlands, spinning webs from ancient trees and trapping humans who've wandered. But the taste of human flesh calls to them, and some do hazard colonies in larger towns, possessing key figures and pulling their unseen strings. Sometimes they take over monastic communities, using subterranean tombs and dark, vaulted naves to weave vast translucent webs.

Varangian Uratha occasionally encounter large hives while visiting Mediterranean cities, and have unwittingly carried **Azlu** eggs back to Scandinavia concealed in bolts of Eastern silk. Spider-Hosts are sufficiently prevalent in Iceland, and the Gauntlet there sufficiently thick, that some Uratha worry the glaciers may hold shards trapped and frozen before the Sundering.

The **Beshilu** are a far more frequent and familiar problem in Scandinavian territories. The bellies of ships and the rivers the Norse build their towns on are well suited to rats' nests. Small Rat-Hosts burrow into stocks of dried meat and fish, gnawing and infecting the food before moving opportunistically to human hosts. Vikings have better hygiene than most in their time, but their attitude towards medicine is dire, and those bedridden by common ailments sometimes find a hard, growing knot in their bellies.

Unfortunately for the Uratha who hunt these **shartha**, towns of wood and thatch are far too dangerous a place to

wield fire against the **Beshilu**. Sometimes the best one can hope for is to divide powerful shards into smaller ones that will no doubt escape.

THE PURE

Though eons have passed, the **Anshega** will never forget Pangaea. The Sundering brought them low and triggered the ascent of humanity, but the Pure will claw their way back on high over heaps of bone and blood. They've heard the tales of Ragnarök, calling it the Sundering of the Gods, and know that humanity will be cast back to its natural state: cowering before spirits and the **Anshega**. The Hateful Wolf will consume Luna, and those **Urdaga** who have not yet abandoned her will be put down like the tamed pets they are.

Scandinavian Pure are not much different from their Forsaken brethren at this time. They eagerly pursue wealth and territorial opportunities across the seas, raiding and pillaging. But unlike the Forsaken, the Pure broadly reject silver, and not solely for its association with their maligned mother. Instead the **Anshega** raid for captives, particularly Wolf-Blooded breeding stock. They're rarely concerned whether the settlements they attack are occupied by other Norse, and the presence of other Uratha tells them plainly that they're looking in the right place.

FIRE-TOUCHED

Norse **Izidakh** are no less fervent or devout than elsewhere, and are frequently seen in religious roles, expressing or channeling the anger of the gods. Among pagans, they tend to claim territory around **hörgr**, local sites of religious and social significance, steering the nature and tone of the gatherings there. Cremation sites in particular offer resonance suited to their spirit patrons. In Christian lands they claim monasteries, feigning austere isolation to conceal their more savage and otherworldly activities. One shared aspect of these faiths appeals to the **Izidakh**, as the apocalyptic narratives of Ragnarök and the Second Coming carry a message they can eagerly get behind. Regardless of which faith they are observed to practice, it is simply a tool, a means to an end; their true faith is placed in **Urfarah** and the glorious plains of **Taga Dan**.

Viking Fire-Touched raid for captives and converts, targeting Forsaken territories to carry off the Uratha protectors themselves. Other times, they hunt those who reject their chosen mortal faiths to stir and cultivate the hatred of their followers and honor the demands of **Siskur-Dah**. They are vocally dismissive of silver, but in practice they will happily take it for use in rituals and torture.

IVORY CLAWS

The followers of Silver Wolf are ever mindful of their lineage and the duty it places upon them. They do not toil in dirt or herd swine to make their way in this world, they lead and direct men and other **Anshega** as their blood demands. They are jarls and shipmasters, merchants and raid leaders. Those who serve will solely attend greater Ivory Claws. They occupy the finest halls in towns, and the best farmland outside, with their followers and non-Uratha kin tending to the everyday affairs.

Despite appearances, they care for the communities around them, ensuring all live up to the potential of their blood, and none rise too high above his station. It's when people step outside these boundaries, or when Uratha of good blood stoop to serving Luna, that the **Tzuumfin** declare **Siskur-Dah**. While they may not know their true natures, the people of their territories know better than to challenge the opinion or authority of an Ivory Claw.

The tribe raids primarily to cultivate its bloodlines. This frequently causes conflict with other **Anshega**, who they use to filter the taint of Forsaken ancestry. But they sometimes overlook this taint when abducting Wolf-Blooded or **nuzusul** relatives from distinguished Forsaken. Though they scour themselves to honor their totem, they think themselves above the petty use of silver as a metal of trade, dealing in gold or finer materials and leaving petty transactions to their lessers. They have cynical views on human religion, publically assuming whichever is politically advantageous.

PREDATOR KINGS

The most brutal of the Uratha tribes keeps itself separate from humanity, but not too distant. Many are outlaws, for crimes committed before or after the Change. They're not just used to rough living, but embrace it, living off the hunt and crafting tools or weapons for themselves as necessary. The frigid and uncompromising Scandinavian winters are reminiscent of Pangaea's brutality, and provide the **Ninna Farakh** with desolate farmsteads to haunt and occasionally stoke a forge. Others stalk mountains and forests, preying on those who wander along the wrong paths.

They do not roam too far from human settlement, however, or what would they do for prey?

Raiding satisfies the **Siskur-Dah**, for that which does not hunt is prey. Whether raiding humans or, better still, the Forsaken, pillage and slaughter refines Dire Wolf's children. They laugh at the concept of **hólmgang**, for what coward places boundaries on war? They have little need for silver; they give no value to the craft of man, and only the weak indulge the pitiful notion of trade. What they do envy of men are their ships. Most packs capture ships for raiding, burning them when the season ends; others join the fleets of other **Anshega**. A rare few build their own. The Predator Kings have little need for the gods of men, but eagerly anticipate Ragnarök, even if it takes a few more lifetimes.

THE RESTLESS DEAD

The unquiet dead, known as the **draugr**, feature heavily in Scandinavian folklore. Burials and cremations are conducted in careful accordance with tradition to ensure the peaceful passage of a soul into the afterlife, with adequate food and wealth to accompany it, but this is not always enough. The appearance of a **draugr**, or the disturbance of a recently interred corpse, is considered a sign of more death to come.

Frequently this death occurs within the family, as the **draugr** are driven by base instincts to return home. In the depths of winter, when food is scarce, the bodies of those who die of starvation are considered particularly prone to rising.

Norse Uratha are aware that, for the most part, the **draugr** are little more than possessed corpses. The beliefs surrounding the **draugr** actually have a hand in shaping the nature of many of the spirits involved, with some acquiring bans against entering a properly inhumed body or requiring oddly specific causes of death. Some stories cause these spirits to develop impulses at odds with the normal practices of their descant, potentially resulting in truly bizarre **magath**. The Uratha know that putting such creatures down quickly is of the utmost importance, as any delay could add more corpses to the tally.

Occasionally, however, the restless dead are something of an entirely non-spiritual nature. As travel and the scale of towns increases, the Uratha encounter a growing number of vampires. Precisely how these creatures come to exist is not commonly known, but Uratha have taken to calling them **aftergangr**, in order to distinguish them from regular **draugr**.

Despite their comparably broad knowledge of the world they live in, the Uratha cannot always explain what causes the dead to rise. There are rumors of certain pagan rituals creating **draugr**, or of ships drifting into port filled with the hungry dead. Sometimes the causes are truly Abnormal.

Playing the Game

This section covers how some traits might differ in the time of the Vikings, and offers new abilities and tools to aid your pack.

Viking Era Totems

The nature of a pack's totem has a significant impact on its raiding potential. A spirit tied to a location or a local ancestral line finds it difficult or even impossible to accompany its pack on long journeys. Other totems have been selected based entirely on how they benefit a raiding pack. Most packs in this period fall in the middle, with spirits of mobile concepts which are of some degree of benefit while raiding. The majority rely on their ties to the pack to keep them in the material realm, but a few fetter themselves to the ship or its prow instead. Avian and serpentine totems are popular for their ability to scout some distance away from the vessel, guiding the ship towards land and sources of Essence.

When building a totem of this sort, consider the hazards of sea travel and raiding, and how the totem might alleviate these risks. Merits like Direction Sense can be particularly useful, especially if the pack gets separated, while those with totems of a certain bent might even be able to develop Contacts in foreign lands on short notice. Particularly potent totems (Rank 3+) might have Manifestations such as Shadow Gate, allowing a ship to emerge from the Gauntlet a stone's throw from a settlement. Others can call strong winds to hasten the vessel, or vigor to hasten the pack while they pillage.

Seidr

The practice of **seidr** is loosely defined, covering a wide range of abilities. It broadly refers to powers over fate extending beyond just prophesy or divinations. Mortal characters with Merits such as Thief of Fate, or mages believed to place curses on others, might be accused of practicing. Male characters known for this practice risk the Ergi Condition, while even female practitioners are feared, particularly by Christians.

Totems of this sort can become quite attached to the pack's vessel, and some packs carve extensive patterns depicting their totem along the sides of the ship. Where appropriate, the ship's figurehead, mounted on the prow while raiding, is modeled in the totem's likeness. Reports of dragons and other monsters flying about the sky at Lindisfarne and other raids may actually describe the Materialization of such totems.

New Merit

Rune Caster (••)

Prerequisite: Occult 2

Effect: Your character is known for her ability to read runestones, divining the path of fate and the will of the old gods. By incorporating and casting the stones in her rituals, the character gains +2 on rolls for the Clairvoyance, Medium, or Omen Sensitivity Merits, interpreting a **Cahalith**'s **Prophetic Dreams** (not necessarily her own) or using the Gift of Insight. This bonus may apply to other appropriate powers or abilities at the Storyteller's discretion.

Additionally, the physical theatre of these readings can place social or religious pressures on those they relate to. After consulting the runestones on a given subject, treat onlookers' impression of you as one step better while convincing them of your prophecy, whether your assessment is genuine or not.

Drawback: While the use of this Merit does not constitute **seidr**, it can draw suspicion of such practices. Using it in a predominantly Christian environment can provoke accusations of sorcery and demon-worship.

New Blood

Berserker

The sagas say the berserker eschews armor and shield in favor of a second or larger weapon, trusting in the gods to see his deeds and protect him...or to summon him to the afterlife.

Your character recovers a point of Willpower when he survives combat wearing no armor or shield. Natural armor from Merits or shapeshifting are acceptable, but Gifts, rites,



NEW CONDITIONS

ERGI

Your character has been accused of being unmanly, or of passive homosexuality. In Viking culture, this is a grave insult. He has until the next **Thing** meets to kill his accuser or face him in a duel. Failure to do so will result in full outlawry (see below). Should his accuser refuse to face him, the accuser suffers that fate instead. The accuser's family receives no **weregild** if he is killed, while the accused is worth half his **weregild** should he die. Male practitioners of **seidr** are broadly assumed to have engaged in such acts to gain their powers.

Resolution: Defeat your accuser in **hólmgang**.

OUTLAW

Your character has been declared an outlaw by the **Thing** and banished from society. Perhaps you can't pay a **weregild**, or refused an honorable challenge to a duel. A lesser outlaw (**fjörbaugsgarður**) is exiled for three years, but his property is protected under the law. Offering him shelter or food is a crime, posing a –3 penalty to Social attempts to seek aid, and he is banned from holy sites. A full outlaw (**skóggangur**) has his property seized and may be killed with impunity. He loses access to any dots in Resources or Safe Place that might be confiscated. Lesser outlaws who violate their terms of exile become full outlaws. Several sagas of exploration note outlawry as the motivation for their protagonist's travels.

Resolution: Serve three years in exile (lesser), kill three other outlaws (full).

Beat: Fleeing, or sacrificing something important, to avoid being legally killed.

or fetishes are not. He regains all Willpower if he makes it through such a fight, in which least one attack is made against him, without taking any injury.

NEW FETISHES

HEARTHGLASS BEADS (•)

Vikings raid for silver and slaves, but when seeking a gift for their wives, glass is the most prized substance. Glass beads come at a high price and in many colors, and have traveled from as far as Byzantium. A rare few are bound with spirits of fire or the hearth, and given on a necklace to close relatives to protect them from the cold.

Effect: When used in an extremely cold environment, the fetish downgrades the exposure by two levels for the remainder of the scene, and the user senses the warm embrace of the one who gave her the gift (see Extreme Environments on p. 97 of **The Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**). The bead must be heated by a fireside for one hour between uses.

HACKSILVER (••)

There is some debate as to whether these knives constitute a tool or a weapon. Named for fragments of silver objects cut for transport after Viking raids, the knives slice through precious metals with ease. Spirits of greed are used to empower such fetishes, and it's said that the knives can't be trusted to divide anything evenly.

Effect: Once activated, the user ignores two points of Durability when cutting silver or gold for the rest of the scene. This effect lasts until the end of the scene, and may also be used on alloys or items heavily decorated with such metals.

LOKI'S KNUCKLES (••)

Gambling is one of the finest ways to pass a winter's night, and the game of Mia, or Liar's Dice, is popular with freemen and kings alike. This particular set of dice, carved from the knuckles of a thief or adulterer, aids the user in lying while playing the game.

Effect: The user receives +3 to Manipulation rolls while playing. This applies to lies about his rolls, but also to the boasts, wagers, and political intrigue that take place over such games. The effect lasts one hour or until the game ends, whichever comes first.

SHIELDBITER (•••)

A shield can mean the difference between life and death, so why allow your foe that advantage? These fetishes commonly take the form of a hatchet. Hrolf Shipsplitter is said to have earned his deedname with one of these weapons.

Effect: Once activated, attacks with Shieldbiters ignore the durability of predominantly wooden objects, including reinforced shields. When attacking an opponent equipped with a wooden shield, ignore its Defense bonus.

NEW RITE

SIGRBLOT (••)

Performed to accompany the human ritual of the same name, this rite appeases the spirits of a pack's territory and ensures their cooperation while the pack goes raiding in summer.

Symbols: Blood, sacrifice, summer, ale.

Sample Rite: The Bone Shadows ritually mark the local **hörgr** a few hours before the **blót** is performed, allowing spirit courts within their territory to know of the coming sacrifice and send envoys. Once blood is spilled, the spirits rush to consume the Essence, and are bound to keep peace in the territory while the pack is away. Many packs take careful note of which courts snub the ritual, and visit them before departing. (Manipulation + Politics)

Cost: 1 Essence per court for each month the pack plans to be absent.

Action: Extended (10 successes; each roll represents 5 minutes).

Duration: 1 to 3 months, depending on the quantity of Essence spent.

Success: The Essence spent is divided evenly to one representative of each court answering the call. In addition, Essence equal to the Health boxes of the largest animal sacrificed is divided the same way, with horses or cattle providing a total of 10 Essence. For the duration, spirits of the attending courts are at –5 to cross the Gauntlet or use the Reaching Numen, and on returning the ritualist becomes aware of any violations.

New Gifts

Gift of Technology

In this period, the nature and definition of modern technology is constantly shifting and advancing. This Gift replaces that found on p. 133 of **Werewolf: The Forsaken Second Edition**.

Hush (Cunning)

In times of peril, monastic communities sound bells to alert their members and give them a chance to flee. With this facet, the Uratha can deny this and other such warnings and fall upon unsuspecting prey.

Cost: 1 Essence

Dice Pool: Composure + Stealth + Cunning

Action: Instant

Duration: 1 scene

This Facet can be used upon a single settlement with a population under 200 that the Uratha can perceive.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The signal carries further and with more impetus. Members of the target community who hear it gain +1 Initiative and +2 Speed for the remainder of the scene.

Failure: The Facet fails.

Success: The technological medium of any warning signal in the vicinity fails. Bells are struck dumb, horns wheeze ineffectively, and signal fires smolder. Warnings may still be spread through shouts or by running messengers, but they don't carry nearly as far or as fast, and the delay can be critical.

Exceptional Success: Messengers dispatched to other settlements to warn their inhabitants or beg for assistance are waylaid as the roads and paths play strange tricks with their vision.

Unmake (Glory)

Growling an obscenity, the Uratha drives a complex object to self-destruction.

Cost: 1 Essence



Dice Pool: Wits + Crafts + Glory versus Resolve + Primal Urge (only Contested if the item is being used)

Action: Instant, may be Contested

This Facet targets a single item of multiple components that the Uratha can perceive. It can affect an object with Size of up to 5 x Glory Renown. If unattended, no resistance roll is made to oppose the Facet's use. As a rule of thumb, the target item should require a skilled crafter to create, such as a shipwright, carpenter, or blacksmith.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Uratha gains the Ban Condition. He's compelled to repair and fix damaged objects and devices that come into his hands, regardless of his actual capability to do so.

Failure: The Facet fails.

Success: The targeted object disassembles itself immediately into its separate moving parts. A ship collapses into its constituent planks, rigging, and sail; a ship at sea is scattered across the waves, dragging the crew down to the depths. A magnificent sword falls asunder, its rivets shearing and inlay peeling from its blade.

Exceptional Success: The targeted object cannot be repaired or reassembled for one month; attempts to do so result in a dramatic failure.

Balance the Scales (Honor)

A statement of reliability and trusty craftsmanship inspires the technology to perform its duty admirably.

Cost: 1 Essence

Dice Pool: Resolve + Craft + Honor versus Resolve + Primal Urge (only Contested if the item is rigged)

Action: Instant

This Facet targets a single malfunctioning piece of technology, or one which has been rigged to perform in an unexpected fashion.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: A broken device is damaged irreparably. If the device is rigged, it performs commendably in the fashion intended. In either case, this Facet cannot be used on the same target again.

Failure: The Facet fails.

Success: A damaged or malfunctioning item performs as if it were in pristine condition for a number of hours equal to the Uratha's Honor Renown. An item designed to work in a deceptive fashion, such as a rigged weighing scales or hollow weight, instead performs as any casual onlooker would expect it to.

Exceptional Success: The duration of either effect is extended to days rather than hours.

Gutter (Purity)

Fire allowed humans to rise above the other apes, and this Facet reminds them why they fear the dark, denying the prey the comfort or security granted by firelight.

Cost: 1 Essence

Dice Pool: Presence + Survival + Purity

Action: Instant

Duration: 1 scene

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Uratha gains the Ban Condition. She feels compelled to smother or drown any controlled flame she encounters, from candles to forges.

Failure: The Facet fails.

Success: Any flame within the structure that the Uratha is in, or within an area equal to her Purity Renown x 100 yards (whichever is larger), immediately gutters and reduces to embers or a low flicker. Heat is still produced, but the light given off is cold and minimal. The Uratha may choose to reduce the area of effect of the Facet, limiting it to a specific room of a building or a single street.

Exceptional Success: The heat provided by the flame drops dramatically, and the fire offers no protection or benefit to those attempting to resist exposure from the cold.

Iron Minions (Wisdom)

This Facet coaxes assistance and communication from the user's chosen currency. In an age where contracts and financial paperwork are non-existent, this Facet allows its user to literally follow the money.

Cost: 1 Essence

Dice Pool: Wits + Politics + Wisdom

Action: Instant

Duration: 1 week

Roll Results

This facet is generally used on a small bag of coins, but works equally well on nuggets, ingots, hacksilver, or other convenient units of precious metal that the Uratha can see. The Facet works on a number of items equal to the user's Wisdom Renown.

Dramatic Failure: The Uratha gains the Ban Condition. She's compelled to hoard precious metals, unwilling to part with her collection and driven to make sacrifices to add to it.

Failure: The Facet fails.

Success: The Uratha forges a bond with the target objects. For the duration of the Gift, she is passively aware of their movements, knowing when they are divided or change hands and the rough nature of any such exchange. With a turn's concentration, she may temporarily perceive their surroundings at the expense of her own senses.

Exceptional Success: The duration of the Facet is extended to one month.

New Lodge

Lodge of Múspell

In the fiery realm of Múspellheim the Fire Giants wait for the coming war with the gods. As Ragnarök rages, they will spill forth at the command of their leader, the great **jötunn Surtr**. With his terrible flaming sword he will ride to Asgard, shattering the **Bifröst** on his path to slaying the great god Freyr.

THE CHRONICLES OF DARKNESS

The Uratha and the Bound are far from alone in this world. Here is a brief glimpse of other supernatural beings and even mortal hunters operating in this time period.

Unlife is difficult for the **vampires**, known as **draugr**. Towns like York might host a domain, but most settlements will barely support a coterie. Longships offer insufficient security to travel by day, so Kindred send ghouls or puppets raiding in their names. Vikings are more likely to encounter them while raiding, particularly if they're unfortunate enough to raid a Lancea et Sanctum monastery.

Medieval Scandinavia provides considerable cover to the more subtle abilities of the **Awakened**, though Paradox still bars against overt magic and Banishers wield the stigma of **seidr** as a weapon. Paper is foreign and flimsy, and spells are committed to metal or stone. Many secrets are locked away in monasteries or carved in hall timbers, but with secrets come guardians too.

Changelings in this period inform and adopt folklore in equal measure. Those favoring forests and rural settings live off offerings left for elves. Many go to sea for trade, discovering new wonders to offer at Goblin Markets; Ribe is said to host the largest such market in Northern Europe. Raiding is left largely to privateers, as many Lost associate slavery with the durance. Slave ports like Dublin are largely avoided, save to rescue or buy a loved one taken prisoner.

Adventurous souls wander the land in search of monsters to slay. Inspired by legendary heroes or compelled by faith, they seek out evil in the dark places. Still, monster slayers cannot afford to be motivated by simple altruism. From silver blades to rare herbs to stout armor, hunting **costs**, and so if the people need help from one of these expert **hunters**, they must be ready to pay.

Prometheans have a particularly rough time in this period. In addition to their usual stigma, their conditions can cause them to be interpreted as **draugr**. The rise of sea travel allows greater possibilities for a Pilgrimage, though in such close, cramped quarters the Disquiet can become all the more dangerous. Raiding provides provisions to survive, and rare metals to pursue alchemy, though ships are not immune to the deleterious presence of the Created.

Already a **mummy** is a stranger, his home and its customs now only memories, but these cold lands are stranger still. The Norse call such creatures **draugr** and seek to destroy them. The Christians may try to save their souls, which is often just as bad. The best they can do is find rest and hope to awaken in an age more suited to their kind.

At turning points in history, the joins in the God-Machine become visible, and the angels are most exposed. But the world still prefers to turn away. "There are no **demons**," evangelists claim. "Our Lord banishes all such evils from this world!" They are wrong. Soon they will see.

The world is shaped by hunger and sharpened by fear. Starving tribes surge outward to pillage. Once bellies are full, they develop new appetites for wealth. The hunger of **Beasts** is no different. Legends teem with all manner of dire creatures, from Nidhogg to Fenrir, and some of them walk as men. While the epics sing of slayers bringing such creatures low, many Heroes learn too late that the songs have lied to them, and that sometimes the monster wins.

Among Fire-Touched raised in the old faith, actual loyalty to the gods of Asgard is rare, and those who believe in them are far more enthused by their downfall. Members of this lodge have pledged themselves to the denizens of Múspellheim, and to battle against the gods of humanity at Ragnarök. Entry to this plane is normally barred by the giant Surtr, the supposed totem of the lodge. The tale of how the original members of the lodge went about finding this place and winning Surtr's patronage is reserved for the most renowned and distinguished members.

Initiates into the lodge must be branded with crude, angular runes passed down by its members. This ordeal is excruciatingly painful and is naturally relished by some of the **Izidakh**. In the week after initiation, members gain significant muscle mass and grow up to a foot taller. Even members who are abnormally large to begin with gain a few inches and broaden noticeably.



The Hanged Man and the Cross

As your last breath leaves your lungs, you look up and see the feathers. Have they fallen from the wings of the angels, or are they the plumes of the Valkyries? You grow lighter, lifted up on warm breezes, another feather drifting by in the wind, but then the light clouds over, the air chills, and a voice speaks up:

"This is not the end."

There is opportunity in the offer, but also doubt. If you had earned a place at Odin's table or a seat in the holy temples of Heaven, why would this insistent voice be offering you more life? Surely, if you lived the life your god desired you would be taken to your reward? And if you were irredeemable and damned, why would Queen Hel allow you to slip her grasp? Where is the Devil with his endless torments? Whoever this voice is, and whatever it means, you know one thing for certain.

You are not ready to die.

As a raven is drawn to carrion, so is the Sin-Eater drawn to the dead and the dying. What she sees with her death sight, the urgings of the ghosts around her, the word passed on through the ceremonies of the ravens, or the visions in dreams and laborious meditations — all these things lead the Sin-Eater to those times and places where the dead need her. She can ensure that an important death is a "good" death, that there is no lingering soul left behind, and the deceased has truly passed on.

This is where Sin-Eaters discover one another, as they cluster around the murdered body of a hero or gather at the site of a forgotten battle. They band together to share their burden with those who understand what it is to be Death's gatekeeper. Though the penitent Christian seeks a peaceful resolution to a ghost's pleas and the eager Odin-worshiper grabs up an axe on a path of revenge, they still feel that common understanding and fated purpose.

Death calls out and they hear, so they must listen.

Viking Sin-Eaters

In an age where death is never far, it is no surprise that Sin-Eaters can be found in most every culture, keeping the borders between life and death. Attitudes toward death and the afterlife vary widely as ever, but certain truths remain the same.

The Channel

The Founding of a krewe and creation of a channel is the same for Vikings as it is for the modern era. The players work together and combine ideas to create a Mythology and Ethos to guide play. The players need to familiarize themselves with the setting enough to ensure that they fit into it — or stand apart from it — in the right way. Remember, it's not about strict historical accuracy so much as it is about feeling "right" in the minds of the players.

The Calling: Mythologies

Norse faiths began in a world of danger. Neighboring tribes lived in constant competition over the meager food and fuel that would see them through the next winter. It's no wonder that the gods of their faith were warriors and hunters. They offered solace for the violent things that the people of the North had to do to survive.

Christians of the North are forced to cope with contradictions in their beliefs and lives. Their faith preaches a way of peace but they still live in violent times. Exceptions must be made and Christians ask forgiveness and hope to be redeemed by a God who pardons brutality in service to a greater good.

While it's possible the characters may encounter other faiths and religious outlooks, these are the basic beliefs of the era.

Creation Myth: God called the world into being to have a people whom he might love and who might love him in return. Humanity turned against him, however, and so was placed under a curse. All of Christendom strives to regain God's grace and be allowed back into the paradise he created.

In the Eddas of Viking myth, Ymir arose from a primordial soup of poison. He gave birth to men, giants, and gods. Odin and his brother gods saw he was evil and slew him, then shaped all of the world out of the pieces of his corpse. Krewes should consider the contrast of a world called into being as a gift or shaped from a murdered body.

Metaphysics: All believe in the certainty of godly influences, in the reality of an afterlife and in the existence of real, monstrous evil. Though the people have been given free will, there are still some things that are destined. Whether it is the will of God or fated by the Norns, Sin-Eaters understand that they are alive to see that the things that must be, will be.

Valhalla or Heaven are real places that people hope to reach after death. The reward for living true to their faiths is an unending afterlife in which they continue to demonstrate their devotion. The punishment for weakness is just as sure, whether it be lakes of fire or an endless, frozen plain.

Aspects: The native geists of the Norse and Irish lands are holdovers from the previous decades and centuries. Most geists represent the old ways, and Sin-Eaters who follow Odin are better attuned to their bonds. However, Vikings were famous for journeying to far-flung places and bringing back amazing tales and treasures. If one were to die on an excursion but make the Sin-Eater's bargain, then the geist that merges with him might be a spirit harkening from foreign, even bizarre beliefs. What about the Sin-Eater struck down by a native's arrows in Vinland? What will her geist desire of her on the shores of Clontarf?

The Mission: Ethos

The krewe's ethos can highlight the differences between the believers of Odin and followers of Christ. The

justification of violence, matters of self-determination, and ways to remove ghosts can put their beliefs into sharp relief, differing over what makes up a ban, duty, or destiny for their krewe. As they devise their channel the players need to resolve these differences or embrace the conflict.

Ban: While there are many strictures on Christian society, the Vikings may be more free-spirited. At the same time, those very rules provide guidance in new or unusual situations, and Sin-Eaters live in the world of the unusual.

Bans restricting the use of Manifestations and ceremonies are common among krewes. Only a few trusted servants of God can wield supernatural powers in his service. Daemons and witches use deceit and trickery to weaken the strength of faith, confusing the mind and bringing illness to the body. In Viking legend magic was created by Odin for himself and his trusted cohorts—all those who abuse its power are betrayed by it, eventually. It is considered "unmanly" to use magic to win contests or settle differences. While female magicians are tolerated, men who use magic to subvert strength become the target of insults to their masculinity that may demand blood in satisfaction.

Duty: The consensus is that Sin-Eaters have been chosen to fulfill the needs of death. Through scrying and omens they look for significant deaths and try to be present when they occur. Sin-Eaters have been trusted with dangerous and godly powers to patrol the barrier between life and death. The dead have no place among the living. The sooner they can be moved on to their final reward, the better.

Destiny and Bane: Each krewe is founded with a purpose, and so long as it stays on that path the channel remains strong. Many Viking krewes feel the compulsion to explore. Now they can venture into the depths of the Underworld, places no mortal being has ever traveled, where there are amazing things to discover and bizarre challenges to face. They might pursue a path of conversion, bringing their beliefs to others and seeing that their deaths reward the life they've led and faith they've kept. Sin-Eaters may also become hunters of legendary monsters, crossing the countryside seeking out the deathless beasts that only supernatural powers can destroy.

Choosers of the Slain

Death has always had its effect on the living, so Sin-Eaters have always been its stewards. What follows is an overview of the role of Sin-Eaters in different eras.

Long Ago

In ancient days before the Viking tribes began to travel and raid, Sin-Eaters were shamans, attending to the dead and putting angry spirits to rest, keeping the balance with the living. Sin-Eaters were respected as the guardians of that divide. People looked to them for insight and guidance into the matters of death.

Raiding

As raiding becomes synonymous with Viking, the Sin-Eaters become more aggressive as well. The dead slain in raids, invasions, and foreign wars are bitter, dangerous, and unusual. Sin-Eaters join ship crews to keep the ghosts at bay or to follow visions leading the way to deaths that shape the future. Those unfit to travel act as guardians of the villages, sweeping the plundered treasure to root out cursed things. Sin-Eaters are important to the people, but they are not above suspicion. The secrets they share with the dead and their magical powers are troubling, despite the benefits.

Exploration

When the Viking ships travel on journeys of exploration and trade, the Sin-Eaters make excellent scouts. They call upon the ghosts and learn about a land and its people before even setting foot on shore, and their raven messengers are faster and more reliable than any other means. Through meditations the Sin-Eaters glimpse the fates, steering the course of the future. The dead remain hungry and Sin-Eaters deal with spirits so strange and exotic that they do not have words to describe them. The growing presence of Christianity in the Viking settlements also has its effect, as people turn to God for the safety of their souls. Sin-Eaters, once the emissaries of the Valkyries, are no longer the only trusted custodians of souls.

Integration

In the age of settlement and conversion, the Sin-Eaters are pushed to the periphery of Viking societies. People turn to a priest for exorcism, or to see that a loved one is comfortably at her rest. The more powerful Manifestations of Sin-Eater power are horrifying to behold, and Christians immediately see evil and witchcraft in them. Those who hold on to the old beliefs and ways may be more tolerant of the strange magic of the Sin-Eater, but only to a point. Mortal men are not meant to meddle with magic and the dead. It is best for a Sin-Eater to hide what he is, keeping to his tasks of guiding the dead and guarding the living with only others of his kind to keep close company.

An Era Apart

Most rules remain unchanged from **Geist: The Sin-Eaters**, but a few have been modified to fit the time period. The Industry Key changes below allow for it to remain useful in a pre-industrial age, while the Twilight Network has been replaced with ceremonies that connect Sin-Eaters to one another through a supernatural network of ravens.

Industry Key Revised

In the era of the Vikings, when only the simplest machines are in use and even metal tools are in short supply, Industry is replaced by Forge. Forge gives the Sin-Eater power over the crafted tools and objects of the age.

Not all things are forged equal. Sin-Eaters find that the Key has a stronger effect on a well-made and maintained object. The more time and attention that go into the shaping and upkeep, the easier it is for the Sin-Eater to use the Forge Key on that object.



Dice Modifier	Usage/Condition
0	The object is crudely made or has been poorly cared for. A rough plow of branches lashed together or a cracked goblet pitted by rust.
+1	The object was made with care and is kept in good condition. The saws and planes of a boat maker. A shield that has been repainted many times to cover the chips and scratches.
+2	The object is expertly crafted, frequently used, and carries significance. The favorite hammer of a smith. A golden ring symbolizing lifelong commitment.
+3	The object is a work of art, an heirloom artifact kept in top condition: A perfectly balanced axe with elaborate scrollwork carved into its haft, a sword lovingly passed down from father to son.

A Sin-Eater cannot control or operate most forged items. Instead, the item can be moved to a small degree, in keeping with the functions of the item. A fastening could slip or a rope tighten, the tiller on a boat shift or door hinge creak shut. These are small, subtle effects when compared to the telekinetic manipulation allowed by higher-level Manifestations, but still give a clever Sin-Eater a fair amount of power.

Raven Messengers

The gods have a Twilight Network of their own. In legend Odin is served by his two ravens; Huginn (thought) and Muninn (memory or mind). He sends them out into the world to observe and bring back the knowledge of what they have seen. Being ravens, they are drawn to warfare and death, so Odin is always aware of the conflicts and violence in the world.

While they do not possess the powers of the "raven-god," Sin-Eaters can mimic Odin's authority and use ravens as supernatural messengers. It is not understood why ravens are better suited to the task. It may be that they are psychopomps who visit the souls of the dead, so they feel some underlying connection to Sin-Eaters. The ceremonies and effects are always the same, regardless of the Sin-Eater's personal beliefs.

Ravens are intelligent birds and a patient person could train them to carry physical messages, but it's less reliable and requires literacy on the part of the sender and recipient. Still, it is an option for the Sin-Eater who must communicate outside his krewe over long distances.

New Ceremonies

Call upon Huginn (•)

With a brief ceremony a Sin-Eater calls down a raven and plants a message in its mind to share with to the next Sin-Eater it encounters. These are impressions of mood, image, feeling, sound, smell, and so on, communicating a concept rather than an explicit message. A Sin-Eater can warn another of danger, offer a place of comfort, or rally others by sharing those feelings.

Once it has the message the raven heads in the direction of the nearest Sin-Eater, present company excluded. The time for the journey varies, with the raven traveling up to 300 miles with a full day's flight. With luck the celebrant finds an experienced raven that can travel through hidden paths in the Underworld, so it arrives much faster than one flying overland. The message includes an impression of the raven's journey, so the recipient knows the distance and direction to the source.

The celebrant may choose to post the raven instead of sending it to seek the nearest Sin-Eater. The bird patrols in sight of a landmark chosen by the celebrant and delivers the message to the next Sin-Eater who enters the region. The raven is not supernaturally empowered by this mission, and if the environment becomes hostile, such as changing seasons or lack of food, it forgets the message and moves on.

The celebrant may also use the ceremony to send word to a specific Sin-Eater. To do that she must give the raven a small, shiny object that once belonged to that Sin-Eater. Some common examples include a coin, piece of jewelry, polished stone, or glass bead. The raven flies the item back to its previous owner, delivering the message along with the bauble. These messages travel one-way to one recipient; a raven can only carry one thing in its beak. If the Sin-Eater wishes to send a return message he needs another trinket, something that belonged to the other Sin-Eater to start the raven on a return journey. Sin-Eaters who wish to stay in contact with one another thus exchange handfuls of baubles whenever they meet face-to-face.

The recipient of the message does not need to be trained in the ceremony, only willing to sit and "listen." He has to interpret the message and hopefully not confuse the meaning in the process. Once the raven has delivered its message to one Sin-Eater it is released from its duties.

Performing the Ceremony: The Sin-Eater finds a place in the open air and makes an offering of raw meat, tearing it apart and spreading it so that the wind carries the scent far and wide. He sits at the edge of the offering space and remains as still and quiet as he can so that the ravens come to take their meal. Once they arrive he fixes his gaze until one of them stares back at him. Then he shifts his focus, concentrating on the feelings, images, and impressions that he wishes to share with other Sin-Eaters.

Dice Pool: Psyche + Intelligence

Action: Extended (target number of 4)

Time Increment: The Sin-Eater can roll for this ceremony once every 5 minutes.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: All successes are lost and the ceremony fails. The Sin-Eater has frightened off the ravens and they've got his scent. Ravens avoid him for a full day and he cannot attempt any raven ceremonies.

Failure: No successes are gained.

Success: Successes are gained. If the target number is reached the Sin-Eater's message has been taken by one of the ravens. It flies off to deliver it.

Exceptional Success: Successes are gained. If the target number is reached, the raven the Sin-Eater has made contact with is a true psychopomp that knows how to travel secret paths through the Underworld. The raven delivers the message in mere moments, rather than hours or days.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+2	The Sin-Eater includes a small, shiny treasure in his offering to the ravens.
+1	The meat that the Sin-Eater offers has been allowed to rot for a day or so, so that the odor is especially pungent.
–1	Still air or doldrums prevent the scent from traveling on the wind.
–2	The ceremony is performed indoors or under a heavy layer of foliage.

Call upon Muninn (••)

When a Sin-Eater is the new arrival in an unknown land, she needs to scout about for information among the living and dead.

A Sin-Eater can get the "lay of the land" by calling down local ravens and gleaning something from what they have seen. Gathering information from animals is awkward and difficult. What is significant to humans might be meaningless to animals and vice versa. The Sin-Eater has an advantage however since both Sin-Eaters and ravens are fixated on the dying and recently deceased.

Successfully performing the ritual allows the Sin-Eater to rifle through the recent memories of the raven, looking for people, places, or events that align with her mission. The information comes in brief, full-sensory visions, snippets of the bird's memory spilled into the mind of the celebrant. The Storyteller can deliver clues through these visions or ask the player what his Sin-Eater is looking for and give whatever answers the bird has to share.

Performing the Ceremony: The Sin-Eater finds a space and makes the offering of raw meat. She waits for the scent to draw the ravens; once they gather she concentrates on one. When it settles in to staring back at her the sensations flow from the raven and into the Sin-Eater.

Dice Pool: Psyche + Intelligence

Action: Extended (target number of 3)

Time Increment: The Sin-Eater can roll for this ceremony once every 5 minutes.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: All successes are lost and the ceremony fails. Ravens avoid her for a full day and she cannot attempt any raven ceremonies.

Failure: No successes are gained.

Success: Successes are gained. If the target number is reached the Sin-Eater may collect some general impressions about the local environs and current events.

Exceptional Success: Successes are gained. If the target number is reached, the raven that the Sin-Eater chose has had dealings with Sin-Eaters before. She can engage it in a rudimentary telepathic conversation, and the raven answers her questions, to the best of its ability.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+2	The Sin-Eater includes a small, shiny treasure in her offering to the ravens.
+1	The meat that the Sin-Eater offers has been allowed to rot for a day or so, so that the odor is especially pungent.
–1	Still air or doldrums prevent the scent from traveling on the wind.
–2	The ceremony is performed indoors or under a heavy layer of foliage.

Witness the End (•••)

Though the Norns have woven the strands of fate and God has set the world on its path, people still possess free will. However, if they do not act when the time is right, they may be doomed to a lesser fate, rather than their destined greatness. Those with knowledge of the future can be in the right place at the right time to change the world.

This ceremony allows the Sin-Eater a glimpse of the future through the lens of death. These are significant deaths, turning points of fate. The visions do not prescribe actions for a Sin-Eater; she may be meant to banish the ghost of the newly deceased, or save a life and send someone else to die instead. She knows only that this death has meaning for her and perhaps the entire world, living and dead.

The Sin-Eater looking to see the future of death must bring herself to its brink. Odin hung himself from a tree to discover the knowledge of runes; Christ was hung from the cross so that he could descend to Hell, banish death and open the gates of Paradise. So too the celebrant mimics the act, suffocating herself until she experiences visions of deaths yet to come.

Performing the Ceremony: The Sin-Eater restricts her breathing with a noose or cord and she rolls the ceremony dice pool. The geist prevents her from losing consciousness, but asphyxiation puts her body into an inert state. So long as her Ceremony rolls are successful she will not suffer damage from this lack of air. The Sin-Eater is unaware of her surroundings but she can end the ceremony and reawaken her body at will.

Dice Pool: Psyche + Resolve

Action: Extended (Target number of 5)

Time Increment: The Sin-Eater rolls for this ceremony once every 10 minutes.



Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The collected successes are lost and the ceremony's performer suffers a point of lethal damage from asphyxiation.

Failure: No successes are gained.

Success: Successes are gained. If the target number is reached, the Sin-Eater experiences a full-sensory vision of the moments leading to a significant death that will occur within the next month.

Exceptional Success: Successes are gained. If the target number is reached, the Sin-Eater experiences the vision and may choose to continue the ritual, applying extra successes to a second vision showing another important death.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+2	The Sin-Eater physically suspends herself off the ground during the ceremony.
+1	The Sin-Eater ingests intoxicants or hallucinogens at the start of the ceremony.

The Underworld

The Underworld is a place of memory, where the new gradually presses the ancient down into forgotten oblivion. At surface layers the past is near at hand, and Sin-Eaters encounter familiar sights. When they journey down into the depths, they delve into a past where only the most powerful and twisted things survive.

The Gate at Dubh Linn

For the Irish the Dubh Linn, or Dark Pool, is a useful water supply, but to the Sin-Eaters it is a prominent Avernian Gate. The Dubh Linn Gate is ancient, so old that it is not a doorway. A Sin-Eater who would enter the Underworld immerses himself in the pool. Once ducked beneath the water he pays the cost of one Plasm and rolls his Psyche rating. If he succeeds, he surfaces in another Dark Pool somewhere in the Underworld, a reflection of the Dubh Linn.

The Gods Themselves

They who enter the Underworld often expect to meet their gods or God. Sadly, that is not the case. Powerful Kerberoi are eager to claim the titles of gods and saints, certainly, but in time all prove to be imposters. Sin-Eaters traveling the Underworld might never encounter any godly beings, or they might cross paths with several old men in broad-brimmed hats, carrying spears and demanding they give over the road.

Regardless of their dubious identities, any entity demanding to be hailed as Odin should be treated with some respect. Though not all-powerful, it could still be mighty enough to dispatch a krewe.

Underworld Domains

Because it is the beliefs of the living that shape the lands of the dead, the Underworld is made of domains that reflect the mythology, Norse and Christian. A traveler can find the afterlife that faith promised, though the longer she stays, the more she sees the faults that betray the Underworld for what it is: a space where souls merely endure.

Helheim

Helheim, the land of the dead, is not unlike the lands of mortal men and women.

Those who remain true to the ways of the gods work to get by, making the places they find into reflections of the lives they once knew. They build homes from wood and stone, plant seeds and cultivate meager crops, fish in the streams, build boats to traverse the rivers and lakes, hunt the animals of the forest, and gather into communities.

They pay homage to Hel, the queen over the dead, who received their souls from Odin in just portion. To put it bluntly, however, she is an absentee queen. Though her subjects labor to pay her taxes, her lands are left unguarded and her fortresses stand empty. Only the servants who collect her due insist that they have seen her, but refuse to carry any messages for her subjects.

Despite all attempts to make Helheim a second life, it is a hollow existence. The sun never rises or sets, but sits in a gray fog at midday. The fruits of the fields and meat from the hunts are bland and tasteless. The countryside shifts so that no matter how far one tries to travel, he ends up stumbling back to his doorstep. Passions cool and soon there is nothing to talk about, fight over, or even fall in love with in this place. Slowly the souls fade, until they are just drones plowing the fields or endlessly mending the same loose board on a boat. With enough time, they simply cease to exist.

There is a way for a soul to escape this languid demise. High fences mark the edges of Hel's domain. A traveler need only climb over to escape, but once he has done so, he finds it impossible to return to Helheim by that way. He must now journey on to other realms of the Underworld.

Ganglati and Ganglöt

Just as Odin has granted Hel a portion of the dead, the dead must offer up a portion to Queen Hel, so these Kerberoi servants collect the toll from any who pass across the plains of Hel. Ancient and withered but dressed in threadbare noble finery, this "maid" and "butler" pair travel in an achingly slow procession with armed and armored guardsmen.

When a Sin-Eater or spirit catches sight of this retinue she must kneel, waiting for them to stop, collect their due, and pass before she may rise and go on about her business. Should she fail to wait for the lazy walkers or approach them unbidden, the guardsmen fire arrows and throw spears, attempting to impale her on the spot. Once they have collected

their tolls, the Kerberoi free her so that she can kneel and wait for them to pass into the distance.

Valhalla

If a Viking has lived a life that exemplifies the ways of Odin or Thor, he or she may be called to join the armies of the gods in Valhalla. It's a place of glory in Helheim where they train in battle all day and feast all night as they prepare for Ragnarök, when they will be called to fight the foes of Odin.

To travel into and out of Valhalla one must cross the battlefields. Here the ruined bodies of the dead lie, half-crushed into soil turned to mud by the spilled blood. Broken weapons and banners stand as grave markers, and flocks of ravens gather to dine from the remains as they pass through from one world to the next. The paths are treacherous and crossing exposes the traveler to the dangers of injury, not just from stumbling into a thicket of spearheads, but also from attack by those left on the field still seeking foes to vanquish.

Valhalla's mead halls are guarded by Kerberoi who have fashioned themselves to be the lords and ladies of the feasting halls and battlefields. All who enter their holding must pass tests of valor, strength, endurance, and cunning. They include contests of boasting, trial by combat, death-defying stunts, drinking competitions, and romps in bed. A new arrival may have to face any or all of these challenges.

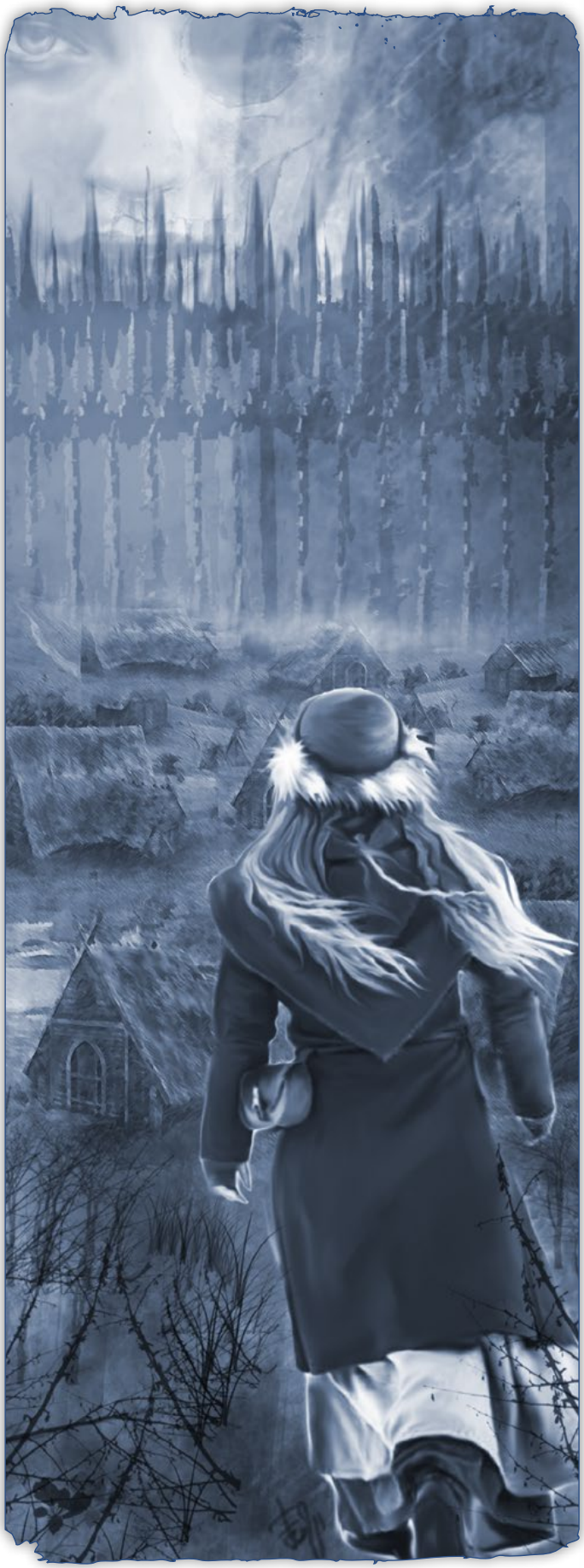
The older souls that reside in Valhalla are the most powerful, winning contests until they draw out and absorb all the strength of those who face them. As they grow they lose sight of the goal of preparing for Ragnarök, caught up in revelry and violence for its own sake. Eventually they challenge the Kerberoi to take their places.

Brunhildr

A voluptuous woman in a cloak made of raven feathers and a warrior's helmet, she tests the mettle of any man who boasts to be a great lover. Conjuring rings of fire, she dares him to walk through hotter and more dangerous flames to prove his desire for her. If he can pass the test he is whisked away to her rooms in the feasting hall for three days of lust and exhausting pleasure. If he cannot cross the flames he is driven out by the point of her spear.

Limbo

Christian souls arriving in the Underworld recognize it as Limbo, an in-between place for those who have led a good life but who are still held back by unforgiven sins. Here they must wait for their release. Those ghosts devote themselves to prayer and contemplation, believing that with unwavering faith they may earn God's favor and be taken up into heaven.



The souls of this domain worship God in droning repetition, begging over and over again for forgiveness as they recite prayers and quote psalms. There is no joy in this reverence, only hope tinged with desperation. They beg visitors to carry messages back, asking for holy people to pray for their deliverance.

As time wears on the prayer and worship gives way to self-castigation. The supplicants turn to punishing themselves, hoping they can scourge away sin and be redeemed. In the darkest extremity, the devout lock themselves up in cells and commit vicious acts of self-flagellation and torture. The eldest have been driven mad by the constant acts of contrition and brutalize themselves in an unending masochistic nightmare.

The Kerberoi of Limbo are the keepers of the holy sites. They place no ban on anyone traveling through these domains, merely requiring that anyone who would pass through be entirely pious in their actions and to cause absolutely no disturbance among the holy observers.

Mother Superior

A tall figure lost in the twists and folds of her elaborate robes of office, Mother Superior ensures that there are no blasphemies by word, thought, or deed in her Domain. She punishes transgressors by forcing them to carry her across Limbo on a palanquin. The greater the sin, the greater her weight, but as the sinner atones she grows lighter and lighter until the burden can at last be set aside.

Gehenna

Some souls enter the Underworld and see only a place of punishment. Without their glorious heaven of warmth, light, and beauty, they believe they are damned and exiled to an eternity of torture. They sink deeper and deeper into despair until pain is all that they can feel.

Gehenna is a landscape of broken stone and deep pits filled by funeral pyres. Wailing screams rise on the hot winds along with the smell of burning meat. The eldest denizens have become the daemons who lord their strength over the others, patrolling the domain and brutalizing imprisoned souls. Most souls beg travelers for deliverance or demand their freedom; others wallow in their fates, addicted to the punishments they suffer. Crossing this place is fraught with danger, from the inhospitable landscape to the monstrous souls that assault any passersby.

Satanis

The Warden of Gehenna's prisons is a giant man with the beastly head of a goat. His skin blisters beneath a layer of sizzling grease. Up close it becomes obvious that the goat's head is a leather mask, like the heathens wear at harvest ceremonies but permanently bound in place. His jaw strains against the thick leather as pained grunts escape his lips and his wild eyes bulge through holes that gouge into the sockets. Torturing imprisoned souls provides him a distraction from the pain of his own constriction and burning. There is no dealing or bargaining with this one. Sin-Eaters must be strong enough to fight or quick enough to flee.

In Flux

Though its domains boast of their eternal natures, Helheim is changing. The old falls deeper and deeper and the new grows up above it. Exploration opens up new paths, roads, and even seas in the Underworld. Things unlike any Elf or Giant of legend live here, and the farther one travels, the more bizarre they become. Just as there are conflicts of faith in the living world, those with differences of belief fight against one another in the Underworld. Strong geists from the realms of Odin or Thor raid the penitents of Limbo. Likewise the tormented in Gehenna abduct dwellers of Helheim into their pits of suffering. As the Viking tribes lose their place in the world, so too do the realms forged from their beliefs transform into the mythology of others or fall by the wayside.

Sin-Eaters at the Battle of Clontarf

The troops are massing. The boats are laden with fresh supplies and newly sharpened blades. The seer's visions are all of blood and suffering. The dead are restless, hungering for newly fallen souls to join them...or to feast upon.

As surely as the ravens flock to the fields of slaughter, the Sin-Eaters go to fulfill their duties to the Fates. Those destined to live must survive. Those destined to die must do so and be delivered to their reckoning. Though the Sin-Eaters may take part in the battle, there is also much for them to do in the aftermath. The dead create new challenges uniquely suited to the Sin-Eater's talents.

Brodir's Death at the Tree

Brodir's painful and ignoble death (by disembowelment, with his entrails wrapped around a tree) traps his soul on the battlefield, creating a dangerous and powerful **draugr** that haunts the fields of Clontarf. In addition, the tree becomes a Ghost Tree (see **Geist: The Sin-Eaters** page 237).

Brodir the **draugr** hunts and kills people, dragging the corpses to the site of his death so that their blood waters the tree. Brodir's transformation has altered his appearance to that of a bloated, dirt-covered corpse, but his intelligence remains. He baits opponents into places where he has the advantage of contact with the earth. If badly injured, he retreats to give himself time to regenerate. Though he may converse with a Sin-Eater about his death and fetters, he does not go willingly to the afterlife. To end the haunting, Wolf and Óspak must be punished or killed, and the tree on which he died destroyed.

Draugr merge with earth, allowing them to travel through the ground and absorb it to increase their size and mass. They can change the composition of their bodies, armoring themselves with stone and sharpening their claws with flint chips. While in contact with earth they regenerate one point of bashing damage in a minute, one point of lethal damage in an hour, and one point of aggravated damage in a day.

BRODIR, THE WRONGED

Attributes: Power 6, Finesse 3, Resistance 7
Willpower: 13
Morality: 2
Virtue: Justice
Vice: Wrath
Initiative: 10
Defense: 6
Speed: 14
Size: 5
Health: 12
Essence: 9
Numina: Gather Earth; add 1 point to Size (and Health) for each point of Essence spent. Grave Ways; melt into the earth and travel at a walking pace until surfacing. Stone Skin; all damage inflicted on the **draugr** becomes bashing for one scene. Flint Claws; unarmed attacks by the **draugr** inflict lethal damage for one scene.
Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Range	Dice Pool
Brawl	3(B)	N/A	9

The Raven Banner of Jarl Sigurd

Jarl Sigurd's mother wove this banner for his war party to carry on the fields at Clontarf, and she used dangerous magics in its creation. Raven banners have been carried for centuries to ask for Odin's blessing on the battlefield, but this one is cursed, a totem too dangerous for any mere mortal to possess.

Raven Banner

Memorabilia, the Torn (Death by Violence)

Skill: Special, see below.

Anyone who attempts to strike those under the banner's protection is attacked by an invisible phantom. The cost and effect is that of the two-dot Phantasmal Rage Manifestation (**Geist: The Sin-Eaters** p. 144). What makes this memorabilia sinister is that it draws energy from whoever carries it, regardless if they are Sin-Eater, mortal, or some other thing. If the bearer is a Sin-Eater, his geist's Plasm will power the Manifestation as usual. If he is mortal, the banner extracts one point of Willpower each time the Phantasmal Rage manifests. If the bearer is some other creature, he may spend two points of another mystical source of energy (Vitae, Glamour, etc.) in place of Willpower. If the bearer's Willpower falls to zero, the next phantasm summoned is that bearer's soul, and he falls dead on the spot.

When the embedded Manifestation activates it is the bearer's Manipulation + Persuasion that are rolled as the dice pool. If the bearer is a Sin-Eater he may add his Rage rating. If he is not a Sin-Eater, or the Sin-Eater has no Rage, no more dice are added.

Sample Keys: Phantasmal Key for the ghosts tied to the banner, and possibly the Stigmata Key if a banner bearer has already been slain.

Sin-Eaters on the field at Clontarf immediately recognize the banner for what it is and the danger it poses to both the wielder and his opposition. For the sake of their souls it must be captured and destroyed. The Sin-Eaters may need to fight Sigurd for the banner, or offer to carry it for him, or even pounce to grab it off his corpse. If the banner is lost somewhere on the field then there is no telling when it could appear again and who could be using it to lead an army of phantasms.

If Sigurd himself has fallen, the Sin-Eaters will encounter his ghost, still tied to the banner. He accepts his fate, having fought a good fight, but wishes to lead his fallen warriors on a final ride through their homeland.



Yusuf shuffled the pile of papers again, placing a sketch of a young woman with a tight smile on top.

"Not an akce more, you thieving old Greek."

"Efendim, you wound me. You'll see my seven children starve on the streets; crying 'Why has our father accepted such a terrible bargain? Why has he thrown our inheritance into the mud, to be trampled by beasts and Turks?'"

Mitsos took the papers, shuffling them until he found a sketch whose ink was nearly washed clean, of two old men and a saz. He pushed the papers back toward Yusuf.

"Such drama, such pathos. Mitsos the actor, I beg you that I might speak to Mitsos the honest merchant. To him I offer unheard of charity: I'll take his sad palimpsests, with not a single clean scroll among them, for a sum equal to luck times luck itself. Three hundred and twenty-four altuns, with which I could buy a thousand untouched scrolls, ship them here from distant lands, and wrap them in the finest of silks once they arrive."

Mitsos sighed theatrically. "You are throwing treasure away with both hands. New scrolls would lack the personal and tragic air that mine possess, with secrets not quite washed away by the hands that came before mine. These papers have value that could only be calculated by the geometry of heaven."

"Which is to say that you haven't actually bothered to inspect the wares you dragged me through Phanar to examine. You could be offering me a caravan of moldering Caucasian baggage."

"Efendim, I would never dream of closely handling goods meant for grander men than I."

"But without a careful study, you could not hope to properly assess their value. Surely the wise and careful Mitsos would not have accepted goods in my name without verifying that they were what I was seeking."

"Certainly they are the kind of thing you have sought in the past, though I couldn't say whether every piece is of equal value to a man of your standing. Unfortunately, I must insist that they go as a lot. Your tastes in luxury goods are…refined, and I would never hope to find another client as worldly and discerning as yourself. But surely you are terribly resourceful; you could find a use for even the poorest of soon-to-be-your valuables?"

"Even the smallest thing can provide a balm to the soul which seeks and does not find. The least of these will be a comfort to my sisters of the faith."

"Ah, yes. How is Zuleika? Does her soul still long for the embrace of God?"

"Better that she embrace God than accept a life this deep in shadow. Better to be the one who holds the book of life than to be the page on which life is written."

Mitsos frowned. "God is good, you are harder to grasp than the gates of Sefer Yetzirah. I can't keep up. Will you take the damn things or not? They're haunting my storehouse and terrifying my hounds."

Yusuf sighed and dropped the pages he was shuffling, letting them slide out of their tidy pile. In the space of a breath, he lifted the merchant by the throat, holding him aside as he kicked wildly at the air.

"Oh Mitsos, I was always going to take them. The question was only whether I would pay you before I did. Now where might I find my errant baggage? You may still earn your stipend out of this."

Mitsos gasped. "You've been handling the contracts this whole time. The Pactbound refugees they belong to have been squatting in my storerooms, stinking up the place and emptying my larder. I can send them out into the city at your leisure, but if it's much longer I'll need to raise my operating budget."

"You didn't strictly need to feed them, I don't see why I should bear any of that expense."

Mitsos tugged at Yusuf's hand, which relaxed slightly, letting him close enough to touch his toes to the ground. He looked uncertain.

"They were nearly dead on their feet when they arrived. Your men drove them too hard. I had no choice if I wanted them to live until they got to market. It was an investment in your product. Frankly, I should be commended for taking such good care of the foreign devils."

"I haven't killed you for violating the secrecy of our colloquy yet; consider that your commendation. Tell me what you know about the pacts, and you can have your bribe on delivery."

"Robbery." Mitsos sighed. "Perhaps a third are greater pacts. Their bodies seem so empty that they're just fading away. The rest are of lesser pacts, though I suspect a stigmatic is hiding amongst them."

"And you've let it stay?"

"How could I tell the difference between one hollow-eyed wretch and another? I'm a contract short is all. Someone's there who isn't supposed to be, and I can't figure out who. They're yours now, you figure it out. Set them loose and see who starts talking to walls and fountains, I don't know."

Yusuf dropped Mitsos, who stumbled, clutching at his throat.

"Yes, how could I hope that you've learned enough in your lifetime of swindling the innocent to accurately distinguish between one man and another."

"And yet clearly I have not, Efendim. One would need to be taught how to discern the differences between brothers."

"Then take me to them, dhimmi. And I'll show you which are worth my time."

After The Fall

The spider weaves the curtains in the palace of the Caesars, the owl calls the watches in the towers of Afrasiab.

– Mehmet the Conqueror

Constantinople was the proud capital of the Byzantine Empire, the scion of Rome. In the 15th century it was a microcosm of the wider empire; stagnant and still recovering from wounds inflicted over centuries of civil war and a terrible sack during the Fourth Crusade. In 1443 Mehmet II, Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, captured the city after a long siege. He dealt the death blow to the Byzantine Empire and took the mantle of Caesar from the ashes.

The seven-week siege and the terrible looting and violence Mehmet's army inflicted upon their victory broke Constantinople. Walls that had stood for centuries were breached by cannon fire, and buildings were reduced to rubble. The terrified citizens ran and hid from the sultan's soldiers as they pillaged the city, emptying treasuries, enslaving and slaughtering the populace. Among the screaming crowds were the Unchained, trapped in Covers that could do nothing but hide and wait for death, emergency pacts made useless by the butchery. After three days, when the sultan put an end to the bloodshed and offered mercy and clemency to those who remained, the Unchained looked out upon the ruins of the city.

Amidst all the horror and death, the demons of Constantinople saw a new hope. The siege had broken the God-Machine's power in the city. Before it had been nigh-unassailable. Now it lay in ruins, its Infrastructure razed and broken. The old hierarchies, compromised and controlled by the Machine, had been decimated. Entire cults had been put to the sword. Even angels had been abandoned. Confused and terrified, many Fell or become Exiles.

The Ottomans immediately began the process of rebuilding Constantinople. Churches were converted to mosques and great architectural projects began. As citizens of the Ottoman Empire flocked to the city, the sultan invited those who fled the siege to return. Among the crowds came the Unchained, eager to behold a city free of the Machine. An uncharacteristic optimism took root in the war-weary hearts of Istanbul's demons. Here they could focus on more than mere survival. Here they could build Hell.

The God-Machine still has assets within Istanbul and it will not ignore such an important city for long, but its retreat continues after the siege; for now, at least, it turns its attention elsewhere. Titanic heat-sinks hidden in deserts and volcanic activity triggered by angelic interference cool the planet, bringing what will become known as the Little Ice Age, a time of harsh winters and famine. It seeds its agents throughout the bureaucracy of China, which under the Ming dynasty has become a rigid hierarchy easily repurposed by the God-Machine. It encourages the rise and subsequent fall of the Incan Empire, powering its Infrastructure with human sacrifice and the victims of smallpox epidemics.

The God-Machine of the 15th century is not unlike the God-Machine of the 21st. It is mechanical and industrial in nature, but in a world with smaller workforces and no industrial processes, it often has to build Infrastructure using much more basic resources. This is not to say that the Machine is in any way primitive — its hidden Infrastructure still houses grinding gears, sparking cables, nuclear reactors, and strange hemoglobin fuel cells, but it is more difficult to construct these marvels when the materials it can take from human civilizations are limited. If the God-Machine needs gallons of oil in the 15th century it must drill for it, hiding its oil rigs and derricks from mortal eyes, while in the 21st century it can claim

existing platforms, siphon thimblefuls of oil from thousands of shipments, or hijack a fuel carrier. As a result, many examples of advanced machinery are interfaced with the simpler technology of the time. Many of its gears are turned by water, clockwork servitors, or cryptid livestock.

The lack of modern materials affects the Unchained as well — more advanced gadgets often require alloys beyond the ken of contemporary metallurgy and technology, such as circuitry, that doesn't yet exist outside of the God-Machine's hidden facilities. To that end, some demonic artificers raid or disassemble Infrastructure for components, while most settle for modest gadgets made from simpler tools.

Theme: Rebuilding

The siege broke Constantinople, decimated its citizenry, smashed buildings, and breached the ancient walls. A new civilization must be built from the ashes of the old. The Ottoman Empire begins ambitious construction projects, renovating the city and repairing the damage done by the siege and a legacy of centuries of decline, warfare, and neglect. As minarets rise and churches are converted to mosques, the Turks make their stamp on the city; but Mehmet II sees himself as the inheritor of the Roman Empire, an Emperor as well as a Sultan, and preserves much of the city's Roman and Byzantine character. Nonetheless, the refugees who fled the city return to find themselves strangers in their own lands.

The Unchained, too, are rebuilding. Almost everything they possessed before the siege was swept away. Entire libraries of Cover identities and pacts were effectively destroyed by the war, and many of those that survived are powerless in the Ottoman city. The Unchained of Istanbul make new pacts, wear new faces and carve out niches for themselves in the changing city, but many of them do so with a cautious optimism. The angels are gone and the keys of the city have fallen into their hands.

Mood: Possibility

In Constantinople the Unchained were forced to exist as parasites and scavengers, taking what they could from the God-Machine and living in fear of its reprisal. Without it, and with the Ottoman Empire breathing new life into the city, there are opportunities to be found everywhere. Refugees are desperate for wealth and eager to divest themselves of unpleasant histories and unwanted fraternal bonds. Occult machinery lies in ruins, lifeless and defenseless, easily subborned, repaired, or broken down into components that can be reassembled into puissant gadgets. A degree of religious tolerance lets the Unchained establish cults beneath minarets and church spires. The city's bureaucracy is almost entirely free of the God-Machine's moles and open to infiltration by ambitious demons. The Unchained are free to insinuate themselves into every level of the city, from the indentured prisoners to the highest echelons of the Ottoman leadership. They are free to rule.

Darker possibilities also exist. What if the Byzantine establishment was intentionally razed to make room for some newer and more terrible creation? Some speak of the God-Machine's imminent return, while others pray for it. Others whisper that it was not driven out by the siege but fled from something else, some looming cataclysm or terrible foe. There are other, more present dangers as a result of its desertion. The Machine was a stabilizing presence — in its absence, malfunctioning Infrastructure unleashes cryptids and other nightmares into the city streets, while the different schemes of Istanbul's demons clash as they compete for limited resources and attempt to build incompatible Hells.

What Has Come Before

When Mehmet II knocked down Constantinople's doors, Byzantium had been slowly crumbling for nearly 300 years. Hollowed out by the Black Death and the dull grind of civil war, it had lost nearly all of the territory outside the Theodosian walls, and more than three-quarters of the population inside them. Then the fourth wave of crusaders came, and stole everything left standing. The sack of 1204 crippled major Infrastructure: cracking the great walls, wrecking the difference engines arranged within, and rusting the long spools of wire strung between them and the Fener alleys. Alone and under-maintained, God-Machine installations across the city became restive. And with so few humans to fetch and carry for them, or slip a copper-wrapped iron rod into each bale of silken thread on its way to Genoa, its angels fell further and further behind in their works. The already fraught lines of communication between angels and their proxies began to break down.

By 1453 Byzantium was weak, but her emperors had been successfully trading on canniness and wealth for generations; and Constantine XI Palaiologos believed he could do the same. Constantine even saw his brother withstand a siege by Murad II barely 20 years earlier; not with force of arms, but with blackmail. John VIII had narrowly avoided a second sack of Constantinople by exacerbating the strife within the royal house of Osman, distracting Murad with civil war. So when Murad abdicated for Mehmet II, Constantine XI was inclined to be friendly and conciliatory toward the aggressively expansionist Ottoman Empire. Diplomacy and walls had kept the faith alive for a thousand years, through Huns and Sassanids, Abbasids and Seljuks, schism and crusade. With any luck, the young son would be more peaceful than the father. And during his first days as sultan, Mehmet did reassure the envoys to his court, promising that he would be a mild neighbor.

But Mehmet began a campaign of pointed harassment less than a year later, starting by building Bollazkesen fortress (the Throat-Cutter) along the Bosphorus, which blocked





Constantine's access to foreign aid and military reinforcements. The God-Machine's few directives began stuttering, coming out confusing and contradictory. Angels were unmaking one another's work, tearing out whole installations and burning the wreckage, alongside cults that were still methodically repairing hundreds of years of accumulated damage. While Constantine had been rebuilding as fast as he could wheedle money from richer, safer nations, the Schism (and the mutual excommunication that followed) was preventing any real collaboration between the Eastern and Latin churches. Constantinople wasn't ready for another war. With no aid on hand, Constantine returned to his brother's tactics. But the blackmail that worked on the father incensed the son, who became obsessed with possessing the Golden Horn, and more vigorous in his harassment. Byzantine citizens were beginning to panic, fearing not conquest yet, but another sack. The people feared that they would need to weather more dead, more destruction, and more loss of the priceless artifacts Constantinople had once guarded — but not that their city would be taken from them. The God-Machine grew quieter. In 1453, it fell silent entirely. Whole cults went dark overnight, slipping out of the city on the backs of Venetian traders and Latin traitors.

And yet, Byzantium very nearly survived.

The Siege

The siege lasted for seven weeks, from April 6th to May 29th, 1453.

Though perhaps it really began in 1452, when Constantine XI, barely scraping together the money to rebuild Constantinople, couldn't spare enough metal to build the supergun of a Hungarian eccentric and scientist. A new cannon that could break open "the walls of Babylon." Orban then took his designs to the nearest likely patron, Mehmet II, who had both money and materials to spare.

April 5th: Mehmet joins his army, camped between the Theodosian walls and the Lycus River, and everyone holds his breath. Even on the eve of invasion, Halil Pasha the Younger (formerly Mehmet's father's advisor) still advocates abandoning the conflict. It is too risky for the young caliph to participate directly, too taxing for their military, and too likely to destroy the city Mehmet wants so desperately.

"What does any man feel in the moments before battle? You empty your head with god or wine or secrets, and put your horror in a box under the floorboards in your heart. Soldiers can have a thousand ways to call one another a girl, but not one word for fear." – Bedri, a sapper

"When the armies began to advance, we sighed in relief. Constantinople was going to be destroyed, that was all. The God-Machine was simply removing valuable mechanisms, to be reinstalled in more important locations. We had been left to observe. To record with our imperfect vision how it was to happen. I wondered how I would be reclaimed, but not that I would be. It is terrible to know that you will be of service." – Once, a Shield

"Is this what freedom feels like? To walk down the street knowing that the one who could strike you down and feed you a memory at a time back into the machine, won't? That you could brush past his shoulder or kiss him on the lips and waltz away into a city where he was lost lost lost but you were ever more at home." – Delilah, newly a Saboteur

April 22nd: Despite setbacks, the Ottoman ships finally cross the chain protecting the bay, and force Byzantium's fleet into naval combat too close to the city to safely employ their fire ships. Mehmet has the surviving sailors impaled along the sea walls.

"He was a drunkard and he cheated at dice and he was my kin. When his ship went down, I mourned him once. When I saw him, a speck amidst the flaming debris, I mourned him a second time. When he swam to a shore populated by monsters, I prayed that he would die quickly. He did not." – Spiro, never a sailor but once a little brother

"There isn't even anywhere to run now." – Everyone

April 29th: In retribution, Byzantium publically executed their prisoners of war along the opposite side of the same walls.

"It takes all day and a dozen soldiers to kill so many men. Someone to hold the man down. Someone to strike the blow. Someone to keep his friends chained sullenly apart from him. Someone to pitch his body over the wall. Someone to clear away the puddles of blood and viscera. Someone to wave away the blinding swarms of flies. Someone to take the first soldier's place when his arm grows weary. Each cluster of soldiers, spread out along the walls atop the Anemas prisons, methodically slaughtering 260 captured men. We were soaked, by the end." – Timotheos, a soldier

"You can smell it across the city. It shouldn't even be possible, but somehow the wind keeps catching just right, and all I can smell are the corpses ringing the city. Does the ground even have room for another thousand dead men? Two thousand? Ten thousand? Where could we hope to conceal so many dead?" – Despina, contemplating a step into the Marmara Sea

May 21st: The siege grinds on. Ottoman casualties mount as Byzantium whittles away the forces that crash against her walls. Sapper tunnels are set aflame almost as they are dug. Two Janissaries die for each fallen soldier they attempt to reclaim. Halil Pasha urges Mehmet II to retreat, Zagan Pasha (his second vizier) pushes for an immediate heavy attack. Mehmet splits the difference, and offers to lift the siege; his terms are unconditional surrender. If Constantinople is surrendered to him, the Byzantine people will be allowed to live, and the Emperor will be recognized as a governor to the Ottoman Empire's Peloponnesian province. But while Constantine in turn offers broad concessions, he refuses to surrender the city. No peace is found between them.

"I heard Constantine told the Turks that '...we have all decided to die with our own free will and we shall not consider our lives.' No one asked me if I was ready to stop considering my own life." – Alexios, on the cusp of making a pact



"The Turks wouldn't be offering terms if they thought they could still take the city, right? That's what you do when you're trying to get the other guy to hit himself for you. And if it was a bluff, we only needed to wait a little longer." – Cosimo, formerly a tailor

"Those of us who were abandoned, we...we had to believe that this was its will. That the advancing armies carried with them the tools to repair what it left behind with us, and replace that which was removed in the days before. Which surely meant that the Byzantines needed to be destroyed entirely. So I should bend the ear of every soldier I touch toward honorable death and sacrifice. No one, not even one child can be allowed to survive." – An abandoned Destroyer

May 22nd: Prophecy is a dangerous thing. While in your favor, it gives your soldiers faith; but once it's met, their morale turns to ash. It had been said that Constantinople would never fall during a waxing moon; she might be wounded, but never conquered. So when the full moon slipped into shadow and turned the color of dried blood, the heart went out of her defenders.

"Up and down the battlements, you could hear the wailing. Grown, stern men who had crawled amidst mines in the darkness to destroy the Turkish tunnels and the sappers that lurked there. Men who patched the great walls even as that hideous cannon was firing. The Stoudite monks laid down upon the sea walls from Psamathia to the Pomegranate Gate. The final blow would not be struck for seven more days, but that night our souls were lost." – Stathis, on running from Blachernae

"I laughed, I think, at the absurdity; that even the moon had turned against the humans around me. And that so much of my work was coming undone every moment. My carefully curated sister killed herself in grief. One of my homes was torched by the son of a backup disguise. All before the Turks even passed through the walls. Perhaps the God-Machine was ceding Constantinople. Certainly the angels seemed concerned with grander problems than us. But the incidental wreckage was killing us just as thoroughly as deliberate reclamation." – A Tempter, speaking through an elderly man with ink-stained hands

May 26th: A dense fog (common in the climate of the Golden Horn, but never so dense or prolonged) descends on Constantinople, casting strange shadows in the streets. As it finally lifts, lights dance along the dome of the Hagia Sophia, dissipating into the night.

"At first we thought it was more smoke billowing in from the Turkish camps, or from the fires of an unseen army that might yet rescue us. But it drifted to the ground cold and wet, and suddenly we were lost in our own city, beset by ghosts and shadows. You could walk down the street you've lived your whole life, and not recognize it. You could walk past your mother, nearly invisible behind the wet gauze in the air, your vision fixed on the woman who must be your long-dead grandmother, her shoulder just out of reach." – Anna, who hid in a winepress for four days

"Finally, finally, the holy spirit has abandoned the Byzantines. Whatever has lingered of its presence is gone, and our term as remainder is nearly complete. If I only had time to search Boukoleon; to



reclaim any part of its body left behind." – Once, no longer a Shield

May 28th: A day of prayer is observed by both sides. Mehmet hopes the sight of tens of thousands of soldiers preparing for a final onslaught will frighten Constantinople into surrendering. Constantinople prays for deliverance rather than victory.

"After the nobility held their service, two priests walked among us, offering final rites to the crowds surrounding the Hagia Sophia. God has left us, the sea is closed to us, and Rome is not coming. Maybe if I stay close to the walls, I'll be killed before the Turks have a chance to really notice me." – Evangelia, whose brothers were sailors

"Well what else can I do? I'm going to catch it as much for sweeping the floor as not. I might as well be keeping my hands busy when the world crumbles to dust." – Amelia, who doesn't really think she'll be any less safe returning to work in the palace tomorrow

"At a distance, I wonder if a clean face and the right clothes would work. Surely one of those men will fall once they make it inside. Maybe I can get his coat. Maybe I could run. If I can get clear away, maybe I could wait it out in the empty country." – Drina and Nandi and Ioannis and Jeta and a dozen other children hoping to escape on their wits

May 29th: Shortly after midnight, the final assault begins; it lasts through the night, passing into the day. And after weeks of bombardment, the walls near Blachernae finally crack open, and Ottoman soldiers pour through what will thereafter be called the Topkapi ("cannon") Gate. Turkish flags are raised above the break, and the walls begin to falter as soldiers flee into the city to protect their families. The street fighting that follows is brutal, horrific, and continues intermittently throughout the sacking of the city. Tens of thousands of people die, mostly non-combatants.

The Aftermath

Terror follows. Mehmet's soldiers, driven mad and vengeful by months of sieging, set about the business of erasing a city. Bare thousands survive; some are cunningly hidden, but most are just lucky. Citizens hiding in great buildings were moderately more likely to survive than those hiding in private homes, provided that Mehmet had expressed particular interest in that building surviving. The Hagia Sophia was saved, as was the Church of the Holy Apostles, but minor monasteries and nunneries were not. The people sheltering in those churches lived long enough to be enslaved; those hiding in buildings too common for a distant sultan to have heard of, did not. Of those that survived, perhaps two-thirds were enslaved or deported. Thousands of soldiers die as well, and go uncounted, their bodies thrown into the water; they bob there so densely that one could almost cross the canal walking on their backs.

Mehmet's soldiers are killed as often by one another as by the remaining Byzantine survivors. They quarrel hard over what riches Constantinople still possesses, and kill one another over slaves and books and fine goods. Goods that are, as often as not, destroyed. Religious vestments and royal wardrobes are torn apart for their pearls. Jewelry is melted down for its gold and silver. Manuscripts are burned to reclaim the gold leaf in their illuminated pages. Homes and holy buildings are taken to pieces in search of yet more and more spoils.

When the bloodshed stops to catch its breath, the city is almost unrecognizable. Bodies clog the rivers and the streets; the Great Palace and Boukoleon and Blachernae are each abandoned wrecks; and all that remains of Constantinople's market district is a black smudge and the unsettling haze of burning paper. A fine dust of ash from the countless burned manuscripts coats every building left standing, and mingles with the blood coagulating in the streets.

After three days, Mehmet officially declared the looting of Constantinople finished. On June 1st, Mehmet II rode into Constantinople. His first act was to officially and publically condemn the wreckage left by his armies. His second was to reconsecrate the Hagia Sophia as a mosque. And his third, to execute Halil Pasha the Younger, friend to Mehmet's father and the vizier who had constantly discouraged Mehmet's efforts to expand the empire. Zagan Pasha, Halil's rival and the younger of the two viziers, replaced him at Mehmet's side. Mehmet would go on to have seven more grand viziers in the course of his 30-year reign (executing two more, and banishing one), but frequently praised the absolute loyalty shown to him by Zagan Pasha.

Only after Constantinople had fallen did Europe express any real regret for delaying aid. Rome half-heartedly declared a crusade, and distant kings threatened to take up arms, but resistance was short-lived and ultimately more rhetoric than action. Europe had no real enthusiasm to wage another attack on Constantinople; too many nations had standing trade treaties with the Ottomans, and his ambassadors assured those city-states that he would not aggress towards them. For most of a year, trade and sea travel in the Mediterranean returned to normal. And Mehmet began a 25-year campaign to renovate and remake Kostantiniyye in his image of the ideal imperial capital.

Istanbul Today

Mehmet the Conqueror didn't mourn over-long, and quickly centered Constantinople, which he called Kostantiniyye, as the capital of his sprawling empire; he would use his new capital as a base to push deep into Europe throughout his life. In a year he would begin pressing into Serbia; in three he began the conflict with Wallachia that would define Vlad III's life; in ten, Venice; and so on into Genoa and Albania. Twenty-eight years after the fall of Constantinople, Mehmet's army landed in Otranto, intending to march on Rome. Only a mismanaged winter campaign and Mehmet's sudden death (suspected to be poison) halted his advance toward the second seat of European Christianity.

Scholars who could not tolerate Ottoman rule fled to the west, bringing with them the preserved legacy of Greek and Roman civilization: language, a library of ancient texts, and 1,000 years of early Christian discourse. Those who could, found themselves comparatively welcome in the Third Rome, as would many of the religious minorities currently being expelled from European nations. Both Mehmet II and his son Bayezid II worked to portray the Ottoman Empire as a religiously tolerant place, where European Jews could relocate and practice their faith in peace. Bayezid would later dispatch the Ottoman navy to evacuate Spaniards at risk of execution by the Alhambra Decree; rescuing more than 150,000 people to distribute throughout his empire. In practical terms, the quality of life available to non-Muslims would vary tremendously according to the whims of individual sultans, but Jewish communities would maintain a significant amount of political autonomy. For its trouble, the Ottoman Empire received a significant influx of skilled labor, personal wealth, and technological advancement.

Games of Succession

When Constantine died (or disappeared, or was spirited away to wait for the moment Byzantium might rise again), the line of Byzantine succession became somewhat complicated. While Constantine had no children of his own, his brother's sons survived the purge largely unharmed. To stave off the possibility of a revolt which might form around them, Mehmet chose to promote his own indirect claim to the throne: through Theodora Kantakouzene (a Byzantine princess who married an Ottoman king several generations earlier, when both nations sought peace with one another) and John Tzelepes Komnenos (a royal Greek Muslim through whom the Ottoman sultans claimed descent). This made the two children his distant relations, allowing him to incorporate them into his household, where they would convert to Islam and be raised within the political machine of the Ottoman Empire. After all, there was no sense wasting young men who might still be brought up right; not when there were armies to manage and reconstruction to oversee and millets to govern. And their blood was still royal, if not as good as that of the house of Osman. The elder brother was renamed Has Murad, gained Mehmet II's favor, and went on to govern the Balkans. The younger brother was renamed Mesih Pasha, and went on become a naval admiral and vizier under Bayezid II. The co-opting of Constantine's heirs lent an inevitability to Mehmet II's reign, casting him as not merely the conqueror of Kostantiniyye, but also its savior — the sultan who would restore it as the gem of his empire.

Kostantiniyye the Beautiful

Before a single soldier broke the door of a single home, half the city was in ruins. Fields were plowed around abandoned foundations, which had toppled hundreds of years before (exposing giant ceramic vessels that crawled with beetles even now, but which had been stripped of their copper wire). The rubble from those older, grander homes had been reclaimed to mend the cottages that replaced them. After the siege, even less of the city was inhabited, and even fewer buildings were standing.

To address the latter problem, Mehmet required a short-term solution to the former. No great building projects could be begun without hands to apply to those tasks, or merchants to supply goods to the households those hands came from. To bolster the collapsed population, Mehmet offered broad amnesty to both Byzantines that evaded capture during the sack, and those who fled before the siege began. They were invited to return to their homes and reclaim what might remain of their property, or keep that which they had successfully hidden. But it wasn't nearly enough, and he immediately also called for 5,000 households to be forcefully relocated into the city. Prisoners of war, people deported from other recently conquered regions, and eventually immigrants began trickling into the city. With a new population, one that had not fought him for control of the city in which they now lived, Mehmet began his great building projects. He encouraged his viziers to invest materially in Kostantiniyye, subsidizing the creation of new marketplaces and mosques and other community-oriented architecture. These loci would encourage new immigrants, and direct them toward the districts which met their particular spiritual needs (thus directing Greeks toward Greek districts and Armenians toward Armenian districts, etc). With those immigrants came the creatures who would prey on them; they joined the monsters who had weathered the siege, and were now emerging into a city totally reshaped by the absence of the God-Machine and the loss of Byzantine rule.

Having claimed Kostantiniyye, Mehmet II needed a seat from which to rule. The Great Palace was plundered during the Fourth Crusade, and the feudal crusader state that controlled the city failed to repair it, preferring to use Boukoleon palace. By the time the Palaiologos emperors retook the city, it was a wreck that the crusaders had begun selling for parts. The walls and pavilions that remained were demolished in the rebuilding of the city, to be replaced by then-needed housing. The seaside Boukoleon palace still stood, but hadn't been inhabited since its partial destruction during the recapture of Constantinople which followed the Fourth Crusade. The Palaiologos emperors restored the Palace of Blachernae, which they ruled from for nearly 200 years, but it too had been destroyed past usefulness in the siege. Finding that none of the Byzantine palaces were fit for residence, Mehmet II took it upon himself to design a new royal residence. The vast Saray-i Cedid-i Amire (later to be called Topkapi Palace) complex would be built directly over existing foundations (including the thousand-year old Basilica cistern, which would see use into the 18th century).

Phanariotes, Jews, and Millets

While he initially had most of the Greek citizens of Constantinople deported or enslaved, Mehmet II viewed himself as a protector of the Greek people and the Eastern Orthodox Church. That combination of preferential treatment and paternalism meant that Christian Greeks in Kostantiniyye were both more likely to attain significant political power, and also more likely to be targeted for the *devşirme*. The *devşirme* was, in fact, one of the routes to power a Greek citizen might pursue. It was an annual "blood tax" wherein the Ottoman military would abduct young Christian boys (Jewish children were exempt), who would be converted and trained into the Janissary Corps. The Janissaries existed in an ambiguous space between slavery and freedom. They were sworn to the sultan, but received salaries and could retire. They were subject to many restrictions on their dress, trade skills, and living arrangements, but they were also afforded a vastly superior education and many opportunities for advancement. They were involuntarily taken from their families and forcibly converted to Islam, but were offered a clear path to the most powerful positions in the empire. Many viziers were drawn from the Janissary Corps, and many of those viziers were Greeks. The other path was through the rising merchant class, the Phanariotes, who would grow to dominate the Ottoman civil service. Unlike the Greek Janissaries, these merchants were permitted to remain Christian; but correspondingly, they could not rise as far in the Ottoman political hierarchy.

Jewish immigrants found themselves in a similar position. They were officially embraced and exempted from military conscription, but encouraged to remain within ethnically segregated neighborhoods. They were prosperous, and technologically advanced (the first Turkish printing press was developed in the Kostantiniyye Jewish community), but their political status was wholly dependent on the whims of royal advisors, and subject to frequent reversals over the course of the empire.

Both groups enjoyed more political autonomy than might be expected, however. The millet system, which segregated Ottoman subjects into religious "nations," allowed for a great deal of self-governance (when cases did not involve Muslim participants). On their best day, millets were meritocratic appointments; positions were filled with care, and wisely managed. On their worst, they were just as corrupt as the Byzantine courts that preceded them. They were not quite as easy to infiltrate, though. Successfully planting a Cover required a significantly longer game than simply exploiting cultivated weaknesses in hereditary posts.

Daily Life

Most days, for most people, human or not, are much as they were before the siege. For the poor, very little has changed but for the expression of nationalist sentiment.

Byzantium, Constantinople, and Istanbul

The Queen of Cities never had a single name, because it defied a single identity. Constantinople presented a different face to each ally, each foe, each citizen; and they all called it something different. While the empire we call the Eastern Roman Empire stood, *Byzantium* was just one name for the city itself; it was the Byzantine Empire only in retrospect. *Constantinople* was added, in recognition of Constantine the Great, a century after his vast expansion of the city. Then *Istanbul* 500 years later, a corruption of a common Greek name — "the city," carrying with it *Stamboul* and *Islambol*. Like Constantinople, they remained in common use within specific ethnic communities until the name was officially changed by the Republic of Turkey, in 1923. The name the Ottomans preferred, though, was *Kostantiniyye*, a Turkish transliteration of the Greek name.

Most of Kostantiniyye's new citizens are from distant parts of the empire; and while this city might once have been grand, and may be again, today it's a wreck with a view of the sea. Wrecked cities are much like one another, and time spent sweeping ash off someone else's floor breeds the same desperate longing for something better that it did in Izmir and Trebizond. For the formerly rich, nearly everything has changed. Those who lived, and maintained enough status for it to matter that they had, needed to start over. Favored status must be acquired from scratch, through dangerously unfamiliar power blocs, in exchange for confusing concessions and favors. Those who succeed enter the high-stakes gamble of Ottoman politics, where advisors were in as much danger of being assassinated by one another as they were being executed by the sultan — which was similar in kind to the machinations of the Byzantine court, but which exceeded even the dizzying heights of Justinian and Theodora's reigns.

In time, the same goods are available at market stalls rebuilt in much the same places that they had been built before. As many people are pious, though a proportionately larger percentage of them are Muslim. Mehmet II will continue to go out of his way to normalize his rule, to make his populace feel that it has always been thus. And months on, that is beginning to take. There's work for as many hands as can be found, and food, and some safety to be found in having already been conquered. The problems of European Christianity become distant and irrelevant to Eastern Orthodox Christianity, which spreads within the Ottoman borders and initially sees a great deal of protection and fellowship. Protection and fellowship that Rome had been

unwilling to extend. Mehmet will begin pursuing his *hadith* of conquest soon enough, but in the heart of the empire that will become an increasingly distant concern. Kostantiniyye will modernize quickly, and regain an economic power that it has lacked for hundreds of years.

The Unchained are in a kind of ecstatic disarray. The (apparent) lack of God-Machine activity means that they aren't being observed. The (apparent) lack of angelic presence means that they aren't being hunted. The freedom is staggering, and in its own way as unmooring as those first steps free of its controlling presence. Some are already rushing to fill the gaps with their own Infrastructure; to dismantle the master's house with what tools it has left to hand. Some are content with the thought that they might get to disappear, to live out whole lifespans worth of Covers. They're dizzy with the thought that they could change skin so many times that no one could ever know who they had once been. Older creatures, who had something invested in the Byzantine Empire, whether pacts or concealed Infrastructure or simply adopted families, are somewhat less sanguine about their losses. They may be nominally freer, but their lives have been destroyed.

Landmarks

Even in the days immediately following the conquest, shattered Constantinople still possesses a ruined beauty. As the years go by, the Ottomans rebuild it to new heights and glories.

The Maiden's Tower

There is a small islet just to the south of the Bosporus strait, where a length of broken iron chain hangs into the sea. Once a Byzantine garrison, and an anchor for closing Constantinople's port, the Maiden's Tower is now an Ottoman watchtower. Just below the surface of the water, you can still see the dimly illuminated remains of a broken defensive wall.

Serpent Column

No one races horses at the Hippodrome these days, and its grounds are becoming overgrown and wild. But the men and women who survived the sack (and made it home again) still find themselves drawn here, to make pacts underneath the Delphic monuments. At eight yards of twined bronze, topped with three huge serpent heads, the Serpent Column was too unwieldy and strange to be stolen during any of Constantinople's sacks. So it remains, its gaze demarking the path from the Kathisma to the Great Palace.

Basilica Cistern

Fifty-two stone steps underground is a vast cavern, held aloft by hundreds of stone columns, harvested from yet older ruins. Mud cakes the marble faces of gorgons, the tears of the Hen's Eye column weeping for the slaves who died in the cistern's bones. Here, in cool darkness, filled with small dark fishes, lies the water that serves the palaces and great public buildings of Kostantiniyye.

Semaniyye

Mehmet has already endowed the Eight Courtyards, and in a generation it will become the largest and most prestigious seat of Islamic scholarship, providing higher education in the divine studies to hundreds of young scholars. Teachers and students minister to the ill, impoverished, and mad, in exchange for free room and board. Only men are officially allowed to enroll (or live in student housing), but it's not uncommon for women to attend courses and sit for such exams as a madrasa might offer.

Rumors

The streets hum with gossip and urban legends in dozens of languages. Here are just a few.

What Has Gone Missing

When Constantinople fell, many beautiful things went missing, and most are presumed destroyed. Perhaps saddest of those losses are the famous walled gardens. The paths to many secret things went missing as well. Somewhere in the heart of Galata, there was a mosaic with a row of cypress trees. The largest tree had branches thick with foliage, and when you pressed a certain leaf, a door would open to a tiny garden, open to the air. Inside was an elaborate fountain with three basins, each decorated with a small automata of a wild songbird. When the moon was high, and the water ran clear, one after another the birds would begin to click and trill; the room would echo with the song of every bird that sang in Constantinople that day. If the birds failed to click in harmony, the room would reverberate with every word currently spoken in the presence of a bird.

There is a Roman woman with a strange gait and severe posture, who is looking for a betrayer named Felix. The Matrona Gulfracta would reward any news that pointed toward his whereabouts, or identified any friends who might have effected his escape.

Many, perhaps most, private libraries were destroyed in the carnage that followed the siege, but a few hidden closets concealed books whose worth was difficult to appreciate. In Edirnekapi there is a hollowed tree filled with dense, delicate wiring and dripping with coolant. Every time one of the Unchained forgets something, the book at the heart of the tree records it. The woman who watered the tree must have been killed during the siege, but none of her neighbors can remember her name.



What Has Been Found

In twos and threes, clever homeless children are returning from their flight out of the city, bearing fist-sized mechanical devices they don't remember acquiring (and most assume they stole). When buried, they sprout small beacons that glow faintly at night, like fireflies. If you line them up in your eye just right, you can see the curvature of the earth.

New angels appear to be returning to Kostantiniyye, but once they pass the Theodosian walls they become confused and stuttering and somehow insubstantial. Some develop almost demon-like glitches, tells that make them look alien and unearthly to human eyes. Most falter, and many Fall. This glut of new, fearful demons trying to reclaim their connections to the God-Machine is overwhelming the fragile emotional well-being of the city. The humans around them become more suspicious without knowing why. They pick more fights, cause more accidents, falter more in maintaining their personal codes.

The ceramic jars that once littered old foundations near the walls have been broken. But the beetles that seemed to infest them haven't disappeared. If anything, they seem to be spreading through the fields plowed around those foundations. They leak a powerful acid when killed, and people burned by it report visions of a broken metal landscape, infinite and all-encompassing. They wake desperate to fix the broken thing they saw, but further exposure to the acid doesn't always bring visions of the same expanse. And when it does, a different part is broken, and they find they've brought the wrong tools.

What Is To Come

Mehmet expands his new capital even while it is still being rebuilt, forcing the mass relocation of slaves and prisoners of war with one hand and welcoming refugees from Constantinople with the other. Mosques, theological colleges, and public baths are built across the city.

While Mehmet's city is, for its time, an impressive bastion of religious tolerance, there is still friction. A Turk is found dead in the Patriarch's church mere months after his appointment. Anti-Christian feeling blossoms amongst Kostantiniyye's Muslim citizens in response to the apparent murder. To protect the Patriarch, Mehmet moves the seat of the Patriarchy into the city's Phanar district, a strongly Greek region. How the body came to be there remains a mystery, though some demons point the finger at cults loyal to the God-Machine. Others are less certain. Several vampires wearing the antiquated Chi-Rho badge are seen lingering near the church before and after the body's discovery.

Over the early years of the Ottoman consolidation many Integrators flee, terrified they have been abandoned, while those that remain begin to organize themselves and develop a new theology. Some Saboteurs also leave the city, taking the fight to the enemy. These emigrants are the minority. Demons across Europe, Africa, and the Middle-East are drawn by stories that the God-Machine lies in ruins within the broken walls of Constantinople. They acquire Covers as merchants, mercenaries, and even as slaves in their eagerness to reach Kostantiniyye and join the streams of refugees and colonists that repopulate the city. A popular conspiracy theory (that demons building their own Infrastructure and occult matrices brought down the God-Machine's wrath) spreads among the demonic population. Many Inquisitors come to investigate, agreeing or disagreeing, debating various theories, eventually falling into loose philosophical camps, such as the defeatist Cyclics and the paranoid Eschatologists.

Tensions rise between "native" and expatriate Tempters. The survivors of Constantinople, who come to be known as the Eagles, close ranks and force most of the immigrant Unchained into segregated districts occupied by the city's Christian and Jewish minorities, or even outlying settlements like the Catholic-dominated Galata, while they build their nests near the seats of power in the Fatih district. Conflict between the two factions flares regularly over the following decades.

Other Tempters remain above such conflicts. The Grand Bazaar is completed in 1460, a triumph for the citizenry of Kostantiniyye and for the Architects, an ambitious group of Tempters who steered the construction from conception to completion. The Bazaar is honeycombed with extradimensional boltholes, hidden gadget-workshops, and other amenities. It becomes a seat of Tempter power, a mercantile redoubt, and a potent symbol of Unchained ascendancy in the fallen city. Demons come here to trade pacts, to exchange gadgets for information, and to hire stigmatic oracles, all under the watchful eyes of the Builders.

The Voivode of Wallachia

Over the next few decades, Mehmet fights a series of wars, crushing the last vestiges of the Byzantine Empire and expanding his empire into Europe, conquering large parts of Serbia. The caliph demands tribute from vassal states such as Bosnia and Wallachia to fund his wars and reinforce his armies. In 1456 the Voivode of Wallachia refuses.

The God-Machine values secrecy but despite its efforts many see through its illusions and machinations. In addition to the stigmatics who witness it directly, left scarred in mind and body, some recognize its subtle manipulations and glimpse a vast conspiracy. The Voivode of Wallachia is such a man. He recognizes that his country's entire social structure is designed to serve the interests of a greater power, a vast and uncaring machine expanding across Europe. He conflates his enemy with the Ottoman Empire, misled by his own prejudices, though he does recognize that the Turks are themselves merely the servants of a greater order.

The Voivode would earn many titles in the course of his conquest and the centuries to come — Impaler, Dragon, Dracula — but before all the legends was a man. Vlad Tepes, born to the noble House of Draculesti in 1431, had no love

THE CHRONICLES OF DARKNESS

During the sack of the city, some **Kindred** ran wild, feeding with abandon. Others found their havens looted and burned, their mortal pawns slaughtered. The local Kindred, most of them staunch servants of the Lancea et Sanctum, face competition from the Kindred who accompany the sultan's armies. At least three would-be Princes and other factions vie for power in the new city.

The Ottoman armies hid packs of **Forsaken** fighting a parallel war against the great Pure legion of Constantinople, a bloody conflict that made Mother Luna turn away in sadness. But the war was won. Now, the Forsaken have a city to tame, a city filled with wild and dangerous spirits that festered under the uncaring eyes of the Pure. They must be brought to heel. The war may be over, but the hunt has only just begun.

In the shattered city, everything is up for sale or stealing. **Mages** from all over the world flock to the city, looking for opportunities to loot the Artifacts and Grimoires that were once hoarded there, including relics from perhaps a dozen versions of Atlantis. But the Awakened are stalked by a shadowy adversary that knows their weaknesses...and worse, knows their wants. The only clues are three Greek words sometimes found written in mud, blood, or ash: "Aegis Kai Doru."

Qashmallim visited the **Created** in their dreams, calling them to the great and holy city of Constantinople. They came on foot and by sail, seeking truth, fleeing persecution and the howling storms that dogged their steps. They found war, violence, and desperation waiting for them; and as they gathered before the great church, the terrible storms caught up with them. Skittering, thirsty things hatched from the stone of the catacombs as the soldiers sacked the city. Those who survived the slaughter would find some measure of hope in the new city, a city filled with places for them to lair and hide, and a place where customary distrust was lessened under Mehmet II's rule.

Constantinople sleeps uneasily. Poisonous dreams drip from ear to ear. Nightmares harrow the city sleeping. The **Lost** find dreams hostile, dangerous, and some whisper that something is coming, something weaving itself a body from the skeins of mortal nightmare.

Under the God-Machine's watchful eyes, monsters and nightmares given flesh were brought to heel, controlled and corralled by its iron will. In its absence, the monsters slipped their leashes and began preying on the human citizens of the city. The Machine cannot hide the evidence, the bodies, the signs that some people cannot bring themselves to ignore. All across the city, candles are being lit. **Hunters** are becoming watchful.

War always bring phantoms; the **Sin-Eaters** are well aware of this. Victims lingering at their graves. Death awakens older, stranger spirits. But the resurrected of the city fear something more than the most puissant ghost. A murderer that cannot be killed, an undying assassin that takes the eyes of her victims and leaves their shades to stumble blindly into the Underworld.

As men and women of all faiths flock to the new Constantinople, some hide Scorpion badges beneath their tunics. They tell their undying masters of relics hidden in the catacombs and plundered by Mehmet's armies. Many **Arisen** make pilgrimage to the great city, few realizing all their cultists saw was a baited hook. There are no Arisen native in Constantinople. The city belongs to the Devourer and her hungry children laugh as the Arisen stumble blindly into their trap.

of the Ottoman Empire. He and his brother had been kept as hostages in the Ottoman court when he was younger. They had been well treated, educated in Turkish, logic, and the Quran. Vlad's brother, Radu the Handsome, had been a friend of the young Mehmet and would eventually convert to Islam, but the young Vlad was surly, defiant, and regularly punished for his impudence. His simmering resentment for the Ottomans never left him, and as Voivode he allies himself with Hungary, the great Ottoman rival in Eastern Europe.

His tenure as Voivode is bloody. Dracula strikes down Wallachia's boyar nobility, impaling many of them on spikes and replacing them him with nobles of his own choosing. He is meritocratic, and the new ruling class includes former peasants. He also persecutes and slaughters the principality's rich and powerful Saxon merchants. In the Saxons and boyars, Dracula sees the tools of the conspiracy that he will go to any lengths to protect his nation from — and, though he kills many innocent men and women, the God-Machine's



cultists and agents are among his victims. His new hierarchy is almost entirely outside of its influence, a state of affairs it moves to remedy.

When the Ottomans demand their tithe of gold and soldiers, Dracula refuses. He has the Turkish envoys' turbans nailed to their heads for not showing him proper respect. In response Mehmet sends Hamza Bey, a trusted advisor and general, to treat with and if necessary eliminate the rebellious Voivode. Vlad Tepes catches wind of the possible betrayal and prepares an ambush, massacring the Ottoman force and mounting their bodies on stakes. Hamza's is the highest, in accordance with his rank.

Dracula begins a campaign of outstanding terror and brutality. His armies kill Turks and possible sympathizers within Wallachia before marching across the Danube into Bulgaria, butchering thousands, burning villages and impaling the living and dead in geometric patterns around the smoldering



ruins. They kill rich and poor, peasant and nobleman alike. Dracula uses his fluent Turkish to pose as a Turkish officer, infiltrating and destroying Ottoman camps from the inside. He crushes the armies sent to stop the slaughter in open battle and displays their bodies to demoralize his enemies. Many come to fear the bloodthirsty warlord. The Pope and other Christians praise his pitiless crusade, hailing him as a defender of Christendom.

Mehmet refuses to stand for Dracula's bloody defiance. Abandoning other conquests, he personally leads an army to Wallachia. Dracula's defense is characteristically brutal. He poisons wells, burns crops, and butchers livestock. He redirects rivers, turning fertile fields into fetid marshes to slow the Turkish advance. He sends plague-carriers to infect the sultan's armies. Small outbreaks of bubonic plague fester within the Ottoman ranks.

Dracula is hopelessly outnumbered, however, and his scorched earth tactics are not enough to win the war. He writes to Hungary, requesting troops and even promising to convert from Orthodox Christianity to Catholicism; minutiae of religion matter little to Dracula compared to his war. No reinforcements materialize and Dracula struggles to pay the mercenaries that increasingly comprise his armies.

Desperate, Dracula resolves to kill Mehmet the Conqueror, hoping to cripple the Ottoman leadership and embroil them in a war of succession. He enters the sultan's camp, disguised, before leading his famous Night Attack, attacking the Ottomans in their tents and melting away before dawn. The Turks suffer heavy losses, but the sultan survives and leads his army to the Wallachian capital where thousands of impaled bodies await them. Faced with this grisly spectacle, the Forest of the Impaled, Mehmet leaves in disgust. He places Radu in charge, supplying him with funds and soldiers of the elite Janissary Corps.

Radu rallies Wallachia's remaining boyars against his brother. His army drives Dracula's forces back, ultimately besieging Poenari castle, the Impaler's main fortress. Dracula flees the country and his wife leaps from the battlements to her death.

Vlad meets with Matthias Corvinus, King of Hungary, and plots to retake Wallachia, but the Hungarian ruler imprisons him instead. Betrayed by his greatest ally, he broods in prison. Dracula curses the weakness of his former allies, the treacherous boyars, his hated brother, and especially the Ottomans. He comes to realize that Matthias is, like the Ottomans, nothing more than the puppet of something greater. He begins to understand how insignificant he is to his foe, but he resolves to fight on regardless. Dracula cannot abandon his war or his country.

Dracula does not remain imprisoned for long. With his brother ruling as both Voivode and as Mehmet's governor, the Hungarian and Moldavian leaders want an enemy of the Turks on the Wallachian throne, and there are none more implacable than the Dragon. He lives in exile while the anti-Ottoman bloc plots his return to power, hiding his resentment towards those who betrayed and imprisoned him. They may help him get revenge on the Turks, but Dracula will not trust them again.

In 1476 an alliance of Transylvanians, Hungarians, and Moldavians marches into Wallachia to reinstate Dracula as Voivode. The Turkish forces in Wallachia flee and Dracula once again ascends his throne. His reign lasts weeks. Most of his allies leave the country upon his victory, and before he can



marshal significant support the Turks return in force. They attack Dracula in the night when a traitor opens the gates, using his own tactics against him. Vlad leads what troops he has, hopelessly outnumbered, and falls in battle.

Dracula falls in battle and awakens in death. He feasts on the fallen, drinking the blood of Wallachian, Moldavian, and Ottoman alike. When morning breaks he is forced to flee from the blinding sun. As it burns his flesh, Dracula realizes he has underestimated the true nature and scale of his enemy. Finally, he names his adversary.

It is God. God, who sent the Ottomans to claim his homeland, who turned his own brother against him, who united the boyars of Wallachia against their Voivode, and, as a final act of cruelty, cursed him with undeath. Dracula vows to defy God.

Ottoman Consolidation

After many more wars, victories, and defeats, Mehmet the Conqueror sickens and dies in May 1481. Some suspect he was poisoned. His grand vizier attempts to crown Mehmet's younger son, Cem, as sultan, but Janissaries discover the plot and support Mehmet's elder son, Bayezid, storming Kostantiniyye and killing the scheming vizier. The Janissaries riot within the city while the two potential sultans travel to the imperial capital. Bayezid arrives by the end of the month and is quickly crowned. Cem revolts, seizing lands in the east and proposing the two brothers split the empire. Bayezid rejects the offer, enraged, and defeats his brother in a bitter civil war. Cem survives, however, and becomes a prisoner of the Knights Hospitaller and the Pope. Bayezid bribes his enemies to keep his brother imprisoned and his throne secure.

Bayezid the Just earns his cognomen because of his piety and commitment to religious law. He transfers properties Mehmet secured for the state back to religious hands. Bayezid II is a consolidator, less concerned with conquest than his father, and the Ottoman Empire prospers under his rule. Still, he faces rebellion and war in the east and continues his father's wars with Venice in the west.

In 1492 Queen Isabella I and King Ferdinand II of Spain issue the Alhambra Decree, ordering that the Jews of Spain convert to Christianity or leave. After a grace period of four months, they vow all Jews within the country will be sentenced to death without trial. Spain's uprooted Jews resettle across Europe and beyond, many moving to the Ottoman Empire. The journey is dangerous and Spanish captains charge extortionate fees to their Jewish passengers. Bayezid dispatches the Ottoman navy to rescue the displaced Jews, issuing firm decrees to his governors and ensuring the Spanish Jews are not persecuted by his subjects. The Jews bring new ideas, skills, and wealth to the Ottoman Empire; and the sultan famously laughs at the folly of the Spanish monarchs.

Demons travel with the displaced Spaniards. Many join the Adepts, bolstering their numbers. They bring new occult and technological knowledge, selling their services to the highest bidder and making powerful gadgets, even lambdas, to order. The power of the Adepts grows to eclipse the Eagles, who initiate a spiteful wave of thefts through deniable third parties. The Adepts respond by attacking the Eagle power structure, using Embeds and Exploits to blackmail and curse their mortal pawns and allies. The shadow war escalates until both sides are attacking and weakening Covers, attracting undue attention. It births a new faction of Tempters tired of the bitter conflict, the Mediators, who negotiate a truce between their Decadent comrades.

Other things flee from persecution in Spain alongside the Jews. Pursued by strange storms, several strange and soulless beings make their homes in the city. Unrest and omens accompany them, and hideous creatures are said to hatch from stone to haunt the city at night. Eventually, these inhuman refugees are driven from the city by a coalition of demons and other supernatural beings known as the Sentinels.

In 1499 the Janissaries revolt. Saboteur Crusaders, many wearing Janissary Covers, support the mutiny. They demand higher wages, a concession they win. In time they become increasingly corrupt and dominate the politics of the Ottoman Empire, much like Rome's Praetorian Guard before them, which many demons use to their advantage.

The Lesser Judgment Day

In 1509 a terrible earthquake strikes the city. Thousands die after days of aftershocks and a tsunami. Hundreds of homes, mosques, churches, and other buildings lie in ruins for months. In the Hagia Sophia, frescoes crack open to reveal Christian iconography. The earthquake is nicknamed "the Lesser Judgment Day" and Christians across Europe ascribe the disaster to God's wrath. The Unchained cannot help but agree; in the immediate aftermath hunter angels descend upon the city, dragging demons away for recycling or killing them in the streets. Many find their homes destroyed and their pacts rendered void as signatories are buried in the rubble.

The hunter angels' attack ceases as quickly as it began, but many demons assume the earthquake was sent by the God-Machine, heralding its imminent return, a taste of what is to come. Inquisitors debate the disaster and a fresh wave of rumors of demons building Infrastructure and inviting the Machine's wrath abound. The Eschatologist philosophy becomes more prevalent among Kostantiniyye's Watchers in the aftermath of the disaster, but it wanes as the city rebuilds and life returns to normal. The Hands, a vocal Saboteur minority, insist that Integrators within the city are to blame for the earthquake and the attacks that followed. They spend the next decade trying to galvanize other demons against the Turncoats, hoping to rid the city of their influence.

A war of succession breaks out between Bayezid's sons Ahmed and Selim between 1509 and 1512. Bayezid II is old and infirm at the time and loses his influence over the newly politicized Janissaries. Afraid both his sons plan to depose him, the aging sultan hides in fortified Kostantiniyye. Despite initial setbacks, Selim wins the war after securing the support

of the Janissaries. Bayezid II abdicates and dies shortly after. Some claim he was poisoned on his son's orders. It's far from implausible — to prevent further civil war Selim I, now sultan, puts all of his brothers and nephews to death.

The brief civil war, so soon after the earthquake, is a time of great tension for the demons of Kostantiniyye. Ahmed and Selim previously governed other cities in the Empire, as is tradition — cities where the God-Machine's influence is strong. Many politically minded demons fear the civil war is a result of the God-Machine's meddling, an attempt to place one of its pawns on the throne, but it soon becomes clear that the meddlers are demonic. The Janissaries were manipulated into supporting the more ruthless Selim by the Saboteur-Crusaders within their ranks. The Soldiers take great pains to infiltrate Selim I's inner circle before he rises to the Sultanate. With the sultan under their influence, the Saboteurs hope to keep the Machine from encroaching on the city.

The Reign of the Soldiers

Selim the Grim is a demanding and short-tempered ruler. "May you be a vizier of Selim" becomes a curse, a reference to how many the sultan has executed. As a consequence, there is great opportunity for advancement under his rule, gleefully exploited by the Unchained. According to Unchained gossip one of his demonic advisors has been sentenced to execution repeatedly, shifting to another Cover each time and once again winning the sultan's ear.

The Saboteurs wield immense influence under the reign of Selim. Their guidance is likely responsible for Selim reaffirming and widening his father's ban on printing in Arabic. Demons recognize that the printing press now spreading across Europe has to potential to revolutionize the world. In its mechanical workings they see the beginnings of industrialization, a way for the Machine to spread information more efficiently, and they fear it. It is not difficult to turn the Ottoman leadership against printing. An entire industry of scribes and calligraphers are opposed to the press, and many consider its use for religious texts outright blasphemous. Calligraphy is considered a holy art form in the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, each of the Ottoman Sultans has a personal *tughra*, a calligraphic symbol that contains his name and titles, used as the Imperial seal and stamped on coinage. Selim decrees that anyone printing in Arabic will be sentenced to death.

Some Inquisitors strongly disagree with the Saboteur position. They charm their way into the Jewish and Greek printing houses and create gadget-presses, encoding secret messages to Watchers across the empire. They hide time-capsules written to future demons within Hebrew texts and Greek psalters.

Many of the city's demons become increasingly frustrated with the Saboteur hegemony. The Hands find their purge pivoting back upon them, other demons bitterly throwing their own accusations in their faces. Other Saboteurs label them as dangerous fanatics and force them underground. Integrators operating as Tempters and Inquisitors carefully work to turn public opinion against the less radical Castellans, and when Selim dies in 1520 leading Saboteurs are ambushed by the Legion, a strange hunter angel still active in the city. Some point the finger at the Integrators, but memories of the witch-hunts led by the Hands are too fresh in the minds of Kostantiniyye's demons and the accusations are not taken seriously.

Selim dies from "sirpence," a form of cutaneous anthrax. Some Inquisitors, mostly former Destroyers, suspect the sultan was deliberately infected by servants of the God-Machine. The Adversaries opine that the assassination was a response to the Thugs steering his actions, while Cyclics wonder if he was killed just to put his son Suleiman on the throne. Some Saboteurs wonder if the sultan was killed to further attack their power base. Few demons give any thought or credence to the possibility that his death was simple chance.

The Golden Age

Under Suleiman the Magnificent, the Ottoman Empire grows larger and more prosperous. Suleiman realizes the ambitions of his great-grandfather, taking Belgrade and breaking the strength of Hungary, the Ottoman Empire's main rival in Eastern Europe. He puts down enemies in Persia and annexes large swathes of land in North Africa. He appoints Hayreddin Barbarossa as admiral. Barbarossa makes the Ottoman Navy one of the largest and strongest in the world and earns his own place in history.

For all of his conquests, to the citizens of the Ottoman Empire Suleiman is a lawgiver more than a warlord. He takes all the legislation laid down by previous sultans, consolidating and updating it to create a codified set of laws that exists in parallel to religious law. These laws further improve conditions for the Ottoman Empire's Christian and Jewish minorities.

Suleiman, like Mehmet the Conqueror, hopes to turn Kostantiniyye into the center of the Islamic world. He builds bridges, palaces, and mosques, and establishes charities, hospitals, and schools. The city flourishes throughout his reign and the Unchained scramble madly to spot the telltale signs of Infrastructure as the city expands. The Architects hope to repeat their earlier successes, but they struggle in the face of Mimar Sinan. Sinan, a soldier turned civil engineer and architect, designs more than three hundred structures across the Ottoman Empire including the Sehzade and Suleymaniye mosques in Istanbul. The latter is the largest mosque in the city and reflects the city's character, blending Islamic and Byzantine styles, complete with a dome that apes that of the Hagia Sophia.

Some demons attempt to make use of Sinan, though none are able entice him into a pact. Some Architects take Covers and positions beneath him, hiding their work on smaller, lesser projects. Other demons fear him. They suspect that he is influenced by the God-Machine, possibly even possessed by one of its angels. A popular story feeds these fears; when ordered to build a mosque that could be seen throughout the entire city, some claim the Prophet appeared to Sinan in a dream. Too many former Messengers remember transmitting dreams to ignore the implications.





Many demons become convinced that Sinan's projects, especially the Suleymaniye mosque, hide Infrastructure. Some of them certainly do. A hospital near the great mosque is exposed as a breeding ground for sleeper agents and cultists. New aqueducts move Aether throughout the city.

Less fearful demons attempt to make use the God-Machine's expansion, moving to suborn Infrastructure as it appears. The Redeemers, an Integrator faction, are especially frantic. They believe that the God-Machine is broken and scramble to repair what they can before its power is re-established in the city.

In the years to come many historians would argue that the Ottoman Empire reached its zenith under Suleiman the Magnificent. For the demons of Kostantiniyye, however, the golden age is already ending as the God-Machine's angels creep back into the city. New Infrastructure appears with increasing regularity throughout Suleiman's reign and beyond it. The dream of a city free of the God-Machine begins to die. It does not die silently. Demons strike, desperately, against the God-Machine. Many of them die, or find their Covers compromised and their power broken as the Machine flexes its muscles.

In 1566 Suleiman dies, leading his armies against Hungary. His inner circle keep the death a secret until his chosen heir, his son Selim, is contacted. Popular folklore asserts that the sultan's body was embalmed (a violation of Muslim burial practices), his heart buried in Hungarian soil in a golden casket. The legends are wrong. The heart buried by Suleiman's viziers is a gadget, a strange assemblage of clockwork that clicks and buzzes when lies are told in its presence. The story of how it came to be in their possession, their reasons for burying it and its final resting place all die with them.

Selim II, called the Drunk by some, earns a somewhat undeserved reputation as a hedonist who lets others run the empire for him. The decline of the Ottoman Empire is slow but inevitable. New layers of Infrastructure are built atop the old; the God-Machine's grip on Kostantiniyye tightens as the Empire stagnates and, over the centuries, gradually dies. Istanbul's importance wanes over the centuries and the God-Machine's newer projects move elsewhere, its work in Istanbul mostly focused on maintaining ancient and vital Infrastructure established centuries before. Some of the organizations established in the ruins of Constantinople remain, in new forms, to this day; more information on Istanbul in the modern day can be found in **The Demon Seed Collection.**

The God-Machine's flight passes from memory into myth. Still, a few of Istanbul's demons insist that a cycle continues and the God-Machine will retreat from the city once again.

The Supernatural

The God-Machine's withdrawal was dramatic. Infrastructure lies in ruins. Abandoned cults listen for orders they will never receive. The effects of its absence on Istanbul's supernatural underbelly and ecology are ongoing; confused Exiles, cryptids, and other creatures emerge from the ruins as both the Ottomans and the Unchained rebuild. With the old hierarchies destroyed or made irrelevant, new power blocs and factions emerge to take their places, thriving without the threat of the God-Machine. Some take on the burden of the its abandoned duties while others probe its broken remnants for insight, power, and signs of its return.

Its withdrawal is not total, however, despite what some demons hope. The God-Machine's authority may be greatly diminished within the city walls, but it still leverages its scarce resources and etiolated Infrastructure to enact its will upon the city. In time, the God-Machine's strength will return in full.

Agendas

The Unchained suffered an existential crisis in the wake of the God-Machine's flight. The initial frenzy of fear and joy that followed in the wake of its departure quickly faded. Now the Unchained pursue their schemes without its interference, though they cannot help but glance over their shoulders for fear of its return. The bonds of rings and Agencies become tighter for many demons as hope for the future and suspicion towards their peers take root in demonic hearts. Without the omnipresent, clear threat of the God-Machine dangling above their heads the Unchained compete, become clannish and uncooperative. They argue over why it left and how best to prepare for its return. Some attempt to cleanse the city of its influence while desperate Integrators beg forgiveness and try to bring it back.

Inquisitors

The Inquisitorial response to the God-Machine's retreat was predictable; they question why it left. The Paranoids earn the moniker as they investigate and debate its withdrawal, identifying and studying its remaining assets and Infrastructure, seeking the remains of its broken, retired, and buried projects. The Watchers are secretive; other demons seek their prizes for other purposes. Saboteurs move to smash whatever remains of the God-Machine, Tempters are eager to suborn and claim whatever they can, while Integrators make secret pilgrimages to reconnect with their absent god.

For the most part the Watchers of Istanbul find themselves split along theoretical rather than ideological lines. Each doctrine is divided further as demons quibble over ever-smaller details and interpretations — ultimately every Inquisitor is a faction of one.

The **Cyclics** believe that the God-Machine's absence is a temporary reprieve. Mehmet's army functioned as Elimination Infrastructure, wiping away old, outdated, and failed projects and providing a clean slate for the Machine to rebuild. They point to the terrible sack the city suffered in the Fourth Crusade as an earlier example of the same process — the God-Machine is updating, rebooting its activities and developments in the city to respond to a changing world. They

predict new developments will be camouflaged by the city's socioeconomic and architectural renovation under Ottoman rule. Though almost all Inquisitors agree that the Machine will return, the Cyclics are the most resigned to it, assuming its projects will begin in earnest soon if they have not already.

The Cyclics are archaeologists and historians, studying rare records from long-dead demons written in machine-scripts indecipherable to humans, uncovering messages encoded into architecture and inscription on ruins that date back to Byzantium. They even interview the city's longest-lived inhabitants, immortals and the undead, seeking first-hand accounts to the cycles of destruction and renewal.

The **Synchronists** contend that the God-Machine is neither omnipotent nor omniscient and that It did not instigate the siege and the terrible sack that followed. The terrible damage wrought by Ottoman troops caught it by surprise and left it vulnerable. Its retreat was an inevitable response as it sought to minimize its losses, cutting off damaged and broken Infrastructure. They believe its current aim is to remove what remains, amputating its diseased parts and denying the Unchained potential assets. The Synchronists accept that the current reprieve will end when the God-Machine recalibrates. Soon it will begin spinning new schemes and projects within the ancient Byzantine walls.

The Synchronists are forward-looking, vigilant for signs of the God-Machine's return. They, more than other Inquisitors, insinuate their way into the Ottoman hierarchy, hoping to spot Infrastructure in its conceptual stages. Many of them profit by feeding their intelligence to Saboteurs and Tempters.

The **Adversaries** claim that the city's fall was a direct response to the actions of the Unchained. Constantinople's demons had grown too powerful and were subverting projects vital to the God-Machine. Rather than see its work undone, the Machine elected to cut off and destroy the suborned Infrastructure. The city is too important to abandon, of course, and the Adversaries believe that it will continue to strike against the Unchained, decimating and demoralizing them until it decides that Istanbul is secure. The strange phenomena that surrounded the final days of the siege are heralded by Adversaries as evidence of their theory, and are the main focus of their investigations. They also chase rumors of demons who invited its wrath by experimenting with existing Infrastructure or even creating their own. Many Adversaries take a keen interest in the aloof Nuncii Lucis and the Tempters of the Architect clique.

The **Eschatologists** are considered conspiracy theorists even by other Inquisitors. They believe the God-Machine fled the city to escape a terrible cataclysm or some indescribable enemy. Other demons are skeptical of this theory; the God-Machine regularly causes disasters to fuel its projects or to wipe the stage clear for new Infrastructure, and even Saboteurs devoted to its destruction struggle to imagine any foe that might drive it away. Eschatologists focus their attention on the angel Kaziel and the Golden Gate, afraid of what the future holds. Many even dabble in prophecy, consulting human mages and stigmatic oracles for glimpses of what is to come, all the while preparing their bolthole-bunkers and escape routes for when the apocalypse comes.

The smallest minority of Inquisitors, the **Caged**, believe that the God-Machine never left at all. Its retreat is an elaborate deception intended to lower Unchained defenses. They fear that the city's demons are being studied and catalogued by unseen angels. Istanbul is a Petri dish. The God-Machine's Infrastructure is dormant but might reawaken at any moment; the ruins gleefully suborned by ambitious demons in actuality remain under the Machine's aegis. Each seemingly abandoned fragment of the Machine doubles as a supernatural listening device and will be used to trace demons when the God-Machine inevitably decides to end the experiment. Few Inquisitors agree with the Caged, pointing to a lack of proof, which the Caged claim *is* their evidence. Many demons do not believe that the Machine is so scientifically minded — while its aims remain opaque, they argue that knowledge is a means to it, not the end.

Despite their philosophical divides, most Inquisitors work comfortably with demons who hold divergent viewpoints. The difference of opinion is, for the most part, seen as a healthy debate rather than a bitter ideological divide. The various philosophies seldom equate to anything approaching allegiance; the Watchers of Istanbul are more comfortable operating as rings and Agencies and sometimes even prefer the company of those who disagree and debate with them. The Paranoids generally consider larger organizations too vulnerable to infiltration.

As the God-Machine's influence seeps back into the city the Watchers are always the first to notice. None show any surprise at its return; while speculation as to why it fled never ceases, the Inquisitors become more concerned with the immediate question of why it has returned and its intentions for the changing city.

Integrators

Returning to the God-Machine is easy. A demon can drop her Cover, walk to active Infrastructure, and surrender when the angels arrive. Yet few Integrators do so, each of them delaying the reunion she claims to seek. They live out their mortal lives, pursue their chosen objectives and gradually come to understand their newfound free will. The Idealists of Constantinople were no different; each of them vowed to return to the God-Machine tomorrow.

Then came the war, the siege and the slaughter that followed. The old world was destroyed and the God-Machine had fled the city. Tomorrow had come and gone. The faithful had been abandoned, denied the redemption they had spurned for so long.

Terror united them. Terror made them fanatics.

A core of Constantinople's Integrators fled the city not long after the siege, hiding among the refugees, terrified of what a world without the God-Machine could mean. They resettled in other cities, other countries where its power remained strong, afraid to return to the cursed city. Individual Idealists continue to lose hope and leave the city. As for those who remained, while some retained lives they were attached to, for most it was a strange sense of duty and a deep, personal shame that kept them within the city's walls. They were afraid. They needed to atone.

Some of the city's braver Idealists reached out to remaining angels. Some even begged for reclamation, though even among the zealots who chose to remain in Istanbul most are more interested in finding the God-Machine than actually returning to it. Freedom is a hard habit to break.

The remaining Integrators are united under the banner of the **Deserted**. They exist primarily to spread the word. Integrators seek signs of the Machine's presence as avidly as the Watchers, searching with a palpable desperation for signs of their God's return. They meet in secret to exchange their findings, wearing secondary Covers beneath masks, and encode secret messages in city graffiti.

The Deserted are not especially organized. They're too afraid to support or appoint leaders and are utterly incapable of acting cohesively, though individual Idealists form temporary alliances to thwart other demons who would harm what remains of the Machine. Many of them try to serve the God-Machine in its absence, shepherding its remaining cults, hiding and defending lifeless Infrastructure from greedy Tempters and vicious Thugs. Others infiltrate rings and Agencies, especially those dominated by Inquisitors (whose mission they share even if their motives are wildly divergent) to better find and protect what remains of the Machine. Some bravely stand beside Soldiers, hoping to misdirect and contain their sabotage.

The Deserted are everywhere, even if they don't realize it; a culture of silence, of conspiracy and fear, grips them. This caution is their best protection from Istanbul's fervent Saboteurs and two opposing heresies that fester within their ranks.



The first of these heresies are the **Redeemers**. They believe the God-Machine is broken — insane — and work to repair what parts of it remain in Istanbul, altering Infrastructure as it is discovered in the hope that when the God-Machine returns their work will make it the benevolent shepherd it was always supposed to be (at least according to their personal theologies). They work from within the Deserted, a conspiracy within a conspiracy, forever threatened by other Turncoats and the Thugs who would see all their efforts destroyed.

The Redeemers are few in number and mostly younger than other Idealists. They include many angels the God-Machine abandoned as it turned away from Constantinople, who Fell as the city did. Those who witnessed the horrors of the three-day sack firsthand tend to find the Redeemer position particularly convincing. The Redeemers are perhaps the only Integrator faction that finds their membership bolstered by newcomers to the city — some like-minded Idealists from across the world make pilgrimage to Kostantiniyye, a place most Turncoats fear, hoping to repair the Machine while its eyes are focused elsewhere.

Then there are the **Saviors**, a small but powerful cadre of Integrators who, in the face of their god's retreat, have taken it upon themselves to enact its will in its absence. They hope to draw it back to Istanbul and to earn its favor, like many Idealists, but their chosen methods set them apart. They are the bogeymen other demons fear, the treacherous spies who give all Integrators a bad name. The Saviors arrange complex traps to ensnare other demons, deliberately exposing them to the city's remaining hunter angels and God-Machine cults, even personally dragging their victims to hidden reclamation facilities that they jealously guard. Despite having access to the grail many Integrators seek, the Saviors refuse to rejoin their godhead until they have saved the other demons of Istanbul.



The Integrators become less obsessive and afraid as the God-Machine returns to Istanbul. The Deserted slowly break apart, their purpose served, though many of them retain links to one another. The Redeemers are disheartened but persist in their quest. The Saviors revel in their success, but few of them opt for reclamation. They decide their duty will not end until every demon is saved, and their fanatical schemes continue for centuries to come.

Saboteurs

In the aftermath of the siege, with the God-Machine's old hierarchies and Infrastructure smashed and dismantled, Istanbul's Soldiers faced a dilemma. They were warriors without a war, their clear agendas and enemies replaced with uncertainty.

Many of them branched out, taking on other Agendas, though few abandoned the Saboteur cause. Many became Inquisitors, concerned that the sudden change was simply the God-Machine updating, or part of a terrible new plan, dedicating themselves to uncovering its schemes to better oppose them. Other Soldiers became Tempters, destroyers vowing to create, to experience a taste of the world to come should they win the war and smash the Machine.

Some devoted Saboteurs left the city, vowing to take the fight to the God-Machine's strongholds in Europe or even so far as China and South America, but most remain, determined to ensure that its influence is not re-established. They are the **Castellans**, sworn to rid the city of the God-Machine completely. They hunt for its remaining angels and Infrastructure and watch for signs of the Machine's return. They derail its projects wherever they appear, staging riots and, if necessary, burning new buildings to ash to hide their insurgency. They orchestrate daring hit-and-run attacks on the few angels who remain active within the city and inveigle their way into the Ottoman hierarchy. Within the sultan's court they watch for signs of God-Machine taint, eliminating those they know or suspect to be cultists. They also sabotage Infrastructure on a bureaucratic level, fabricating reasons to demolish or rebuild structures suspected of housing Infrastructure, delaying or preventing new construction they suspect might form part of an occult matrix. The Castellans prefer to operate subtly but they are thorough — how else can Kostantiniyye be cleansed? — and quick to turn to violence, murder, and arson when more delicate and peaceful methods fail.

They often find common ground with Tempters. The Decadent dream to build Hell in the reborn city would be dashed by the Machine's return and many can be convinced or bribed to take up the good fight. The Castellans have a more complex relationship with Istanbul's Inquisitors; Watchers often hide Infrastructure from the Thugs so they can continue to study it, but they also provide crucial intelligence on the Machine's remaining projects and agents. Most of the Watchers are distrusted, seen as a necessary evil, though many demons who consider themselves Inquisitors as much as Saboteurs can be found within the Castellan ranks.

The constant friction and low-level conflict with other demons over Infrastructure, as well as deliberate acts of sabotage by Integrators, led to a zealous branch of the Castellans severing ties with other Soldiers of Istanbul. They take the Hand of

Fatima, a symbol said to ward away the evil eye, as a personal device and gradually become known as the **Hands.** They devote themselves to investigating the demons of Istanbul. Though too few in number to effectively oppose the Inquisitor and Tempter blocs, they smear, threaten, and occasionally assassinate demons they deem dangerous. Though the Hands claim all of their victims were sympathetic to the Integrator cause, their actual crimes are more commonly hoarding secrets or materiel that could have been of use to the war effort.

The Hands are widely decried as paranoid extremists, even in Saboteur circles. Having alienated their potential allies, known Hands are frequently hunted themselves. They adopt ever-increasing levels of operational secrecy and paranoia in response. Their paranoia is far from unwarranted, however; the Hands alone recognize the scale of Integrator infiltration in Kostantiniyye.

The **Coursers** are another offshoot of the Castellans, a loose affiliation of martially minded demons. These Soldiers, in the absence of their usual enemies, hone their skills so that they might better oppose its servants when they reappear. They're hunters forever seeking new and dangerous supernatural game. They chase rumors of shapechanger packs and cryptid nests, spending weeks tracking their targets — many of which lead human Cover-lives like the Unchained — learning their habits and routines, analyzing strengths and weaknesses before they spring their ambushes. On those rare occasions when new angels are sighted within the city, the Coursers set aside previous pursuits and devote themselves to their new quarry. In these moments they discover if their hunts have truly prepared them.

The **Crusaders** are a rare outwardly focused faction based in Istanbul. They hope to use the city as a headquarters for a global campaign against the God-Machine. The faction's relationship with the Castellans is complicated; Crusaders find the Castellans parochial but ultimately necessary to ensure their stronghold remains safe while they fight their campaign. For their part, Castellans do not consider the city truly cleansed of the Machine and feel the Crusaders are naïve to consider it a safe harbor. The Crusaders are always a minority within the city, temporary visitors who return to rearm and find new Covers they can wear to distant nations. Many of them take on identities as Ottoman soldiers and diplomats.

As time wears on and signs of the God-Machine's return become impossible to ignore, the Castellans become frantic. They strike with mounting desperation, sustaining terrible losses and eventually collapsing as a discrete and organized power in the face of the Machine's homecoming. The Crusaders abandon their headquarters, but not their quest. With internecine conflict dying away, the Hands also dissolve. The number of Saboteurs falls as the God-Machine re-establishes itself within Istanbul, those that remain becoming more subtle and opportunistic.

Tempters

The Tempters thrive in Kostantiniyye. The apparent retreat of the God-Machine provides a rare and welcome breathing space and the chaos of the shifting political structure offers ambitious demons countless opportunities for advancement. Desperate men and women are eager to sell parts of their souls in exchange for wealth, for position, for a return to the privilege and power they have experienced previously, or for a piece of the new imperial dream. Cults flourish in an atmosphere of religious tolerance. Abandoned and broken Infrastructure is easily suborned, used for Aether, or broken down to make gadgets.

It is a golden age. Possibilities seem truly endless. With only minimal interference from the God-Machine many Decadents can truly build Hell on Earth, pursuing lives of luxury, wealth, and even immortality in a procession of privileged Covers. Some devote themselves to even more ambitious projects. Their main barriers are other demons, often other Builders tapping the same resources. Tempters are, for the most part, openly selfish and individualistic, but many of them form powerful blocs to better carve up the city and outmaneuver one another.

The **Eagles** are survivors. They made their homes in Constantinople before the Ottomans came, and each of them suffered terribly in the sack of the city. Cults were decimated, holdings destroyed, wealth plundered. Many had to abandon their favored Covers. Now they strive to consolidate their losses and rebuild. They bled for Constantinople, struggled and fought for power and prestige when the Machine's grip was tight, and do not welcome the competition that comes from across the world hoping to carve a piece of Hell out of their city. United by an idiom yet to be coined — *better the devil you know than the devil you don't* — former competitors closed ranks. They took Constantine's double-headed eagle as their symbol and name. It is perhaps ironic that most Eagles wear the faces of Turkish dignitaries and foreign merchants new to the city, Covers which hold positions of influence and wealth in the new city.

Many Tempters followed the trail of Ottoman wealth and opportunity or heard the stories of a city where

the God-Machine's power was broken. They came to Kostantiniyye filled with hope and optimism, but competition quickly tempered their ambitions. When the Eagles unified, the immigrant Tempters found they were increasing pushed out, outbid and outmaneuvered in Unchained circles.

They adapted by becoming specialists. One demon buys and sells Covers, one builds gadgets to order, another has her claws in property both mundane and extradimensional. The migrant Unchained establish and defend niches, offering fair rates to one another and refusing to deal with the Eagles. They become known as **Adepts**. The conflict between the two groups is part of the background noise of the city, but it occasionally flares. Istanbul's rival Tempters rarely go so far as to kill their enemies. They prefer to cripple one another, dismantling entire networks of allies and servants and even attacking Cover identities. When the Unchained fight their shadow wars, violence, theft and arson are common, but Embeds and Exploits give rise to stranger phenomena — a demon may find her soul pacts rendered useless as signatories die in random accidents. Ill luck and nameless fears weaken allies and business partners, and adopted families are sometimes struck blind or driven mad by particularly cruel Decadents.

This conflict, as well as the constant friction between demons of other Agendas, is bad for business. Some Tempters recognize this and decide to win the monopoly on diplomacy. The **Mediators** include both "native" demons and expatriates. They arbitrate armistices between the Eagles and Adepts, broker deals with Saboteurs and Inquisitors and even meet with cloaked representatives of the Deserted and the Redeemers. They act as middlemen, procuring freelancers and mercenaries for various rings and Agencies. Their discretion is legendary, but while they are unwilling to share or sell what they've learned, the Mediators have a better picture of the Unchained political landscape than any other faction. It is this, far more than the modest fees they charge for their services, which gives the Mediators power.

Some Tempters are less concerned with earthly matters and conflicts. Their ambitions are far greater than wealth, prestige, or trifling immortality. A group of like-minded Builders joins together, exchanging notes on occult geometry and eventually becoming the **Architects.** These Tempters hear the rumors of demons who defied the God-Machine and build Infrastructure of their own. They infiltrate the construction of the Grand Bazaar, using Exploits and suborned Infrastructure to convert it into their headquarters. The Bazaar is filled with secret spaces, boltholes, and amenities, a Decadent fortress that positions them to watch and carefully redirect the flow of wealth in the city. They spy on businessmen and merchants, even other demons who come to trade. The Grand Bazaar is an incredible achievement, but a pale echo of what some overambitious Architects hope to accomplish. Such malcontents occasionally defect to the Nuncii Lucis and disappear.

Many Tempters deny the signs of the God-Machine's return, while others take up arms alongside Saboteurs to keep it from retaking Kostantiniyye. As time wears on and the God-Machine's power waxes, some Decadents refuse to accept that they have been denied Hell on Earth, joining Castellans in desperate stands. Others indulge hedonistic urges, enjoying the last days of the golden age. Yet even with the Machine's return, the resolve to build Hell in this ancient and holy city remains. It unifies the Builders. The Eagles and Adepts put aside their differences and for centuries to come it is the Tempters who dominate the Unchained of Istanbul, playing the other Agendas off against one another.

Factions

New philosophies and coalitions rise to prominence as Constantinople is remade. The God-Machine's departure spawns new possibilities, new dangers. The changes affect more than just demons, and strange alliances are forged in the shadows of minarets.

The Sentinels

The God-Machine values secrecy, hiding its workings from humankind. It also values stability. To that end a large and mostly unseen number of its projects are devoted to containing the supernatural. The damage done to it in the siege has left it unable or unwilling to carry out this duty. Cryptid populations explode. Contagious nightmares scar sleeping minds with images of bloody teeth. Echoes from splinter timelines bleed into reality. Eyeless bodies appear across the city as unholy predators move to reclaim the night.

Someone has to stop it. Someone has to hide it. Many answer the call, like-minded individuals working to hide the truth and protect Kostantiniyye. In time they begin to join forces, conquering their distrust in the face of the crisis. Rings and gangs gradually coalesce, uniting beneath a single banner. The disparate members of the organization take the city's broken walls as a symbol of their own struggle and name themselves the Sentinels.

The Sentinels are a disparate group, including demons from every Agenda and none, human occultists, politicians, the hungry dead, shapechangers, and stranger things. Their motives are as dissimilar as their membership. Many of them, especially the Unchained, consider secrecy their best and only security from the God-Machine, humankind, and other enemies. Some are more concerned with stability, afraid of the panic and turmoil widespread supernatural activity would cause within the city. Many pay lip service to noble ideals, vowing to protect humankind from the nightmares that lurk in the shadows. Some have no such illusions, reveling in the joy of the hunt; most of the Coursers are associates, if not full members, of the Sentinels. The Integrators who hide within the Sentinel ranks see their duty as a holy one, safeguarding the city and enacting the God-Machine's will in its absence.

Sentinels spend most of their time investigating rumors, hiding evidence, spreading misinformation, and even altering memories to hide the truth. They take up arms and torches, burning nightmares out of their lairs and putting them to the





sword. They perform banishments and exorcisms. Some of their duties are less righteous, however. They honor ancient contracts abandoned by the Machine, appeasing spirits with sacrifice. When *djinn* demanded human children as tribute, the Sentinels scoured the streets for orphans to keep the otherworldly lords away for another seven years. On another occasion a strange disease, an infectious phrase, took root in the city. Sufferers were compelled to sermonize in the streets, spreading the contagion to their listeners. The Sentinels moved quickly, orchestrating murders and pulling tongues to halt the spread of disease. The excised the phrase from the minds of those exposed but asymptomatic, and ruthlessly suppressed any writings in which the phrase was repeated.

Sentinels have been known to clash with demons who have become brazen in the God-Machine's absence, appearing in public in their true demonic shapes or using potent displays of supernatural might to cow enemies and inspire cultists. Tempters are the most common targets, though when some Saboteurs attempt to reveal the truth to humankind they fall under Sentinel crosshairs.

The Sentinels use their considerable resources and expertise to remain hidden from Istanbul's other supernatural denizens, recruiting the like-minded and silencing those who might expose them, though many of the city's Inquisitors and Integrators are aware of the organization.

Nuncii Lucis

Rumors of demons building Infrastructure and bringing down the God-Machine's wrath in the form of Mehmet's armies are common, and not just among the Inquisitors who call themselves Adversaries. Many Tempters, Saboteurs, and even Integrators want to believe the stories. The most widely repeated gossip claims that a ring of demons were successfully constructing and networking Infrastructure, creating a rival Machine under their control (or at least following their design). Naturally, the God-Machine could not leave a thing unopposed; its retaliation, which took decades to prepare, came in the form of Ottoman cannons. Others go so far as to claim the mysterious ring actually managed banish the God-Machine from the city, unleashing occult viruses that forced the Machine to amputate its infected Infrastructure.

Whispers point to the Nuncii Lucis, a small and insular Agency, as the survivors or inheritors of these mythical demons. The few known members of the Nuncii Lucis — the Envoys of Light — deny such gossip, quietly, but their denial only feeds the rumors. Some Inquisitors suspect that the Agency is hundreds of years old, hence their preference for Latin over the Turkish of the Ottoman conquerors or even the Greek of the Byzantines.

Many demons seek to join this secretive Agency, seeking the truth, seeking power. The Nuncii Lucis grudgingly accept these aspirants, setting them an exhaustive series of trials, tests, and challenges. They set them to work providing the Agency with information, gadgets, and other materiel. Some do not survive the trials. Those who succeed gradually abandon all previous ties as they enter the secretive organization. Their Covers are occasionally glimpsed afterwards, but their lips are sealed tight about their new lives.

It's all a lie. The Nuncii Lucis are not ancient. They are not the Machine's rivals or enemies. The Envoys of Light are a front for the Saviors.

Aspirants are sent on perilous missions to identify Infrastructure, to uncover and undo the work of other demons, in the name of testing their mettle and their loyalty. They are disposable instruments doing the Turncoats' dirty work. The Saviors slowly and carefully deceive these hopefuls into revealing everything they know, handing over their pacts, gadgets, and other assets. When the Saviors are convinced that their pawns have provided all the intelligence they can, they congratulate their neophytes and promise they will now reveal the truth. They take them, ritually blindfolded, a secret place where the air tastes of Aether. In the end the Nuncii Lucis are true to their word, revealing everything to their victims as they are broken into pieces and fed into the reclamation engines.

Some become suspicious, of course; demons are paranoid to a fault. The Nuncii Lucis acts quickly to neutralize them before they give voice to their doubts or expose the conspiracy. Most are killed or taken for reclamation, but the luckiest are smeared as failures, branded cowards and weaklings.

Sometimes Integrators attempt to infiltrate the Nuncii Lucis, often intending to sabotage the Agency from within. Most successfully keep their allegiances secret until they are vivisected and handed over to the Machine, but a few — if their true creed is discovered and deemed compatible with Savior ideology — are allowed to join the Agency. They become the organization's most visible faces, the titular Envoys, used to avert any rumors of demonic disappearances and recruit the next wave of sacrifices.

The Doorkeepers

Stigmatics have always been desperate and afraid, witnesses to something great and terrible they can scarcely comprehend. They live lives blighted by fear, hiding their stigmata, unable to share what they have seen for fear of being branded as blasphemers and madmen. They find themselves watched by the God-Machine's servants and even forced to serve its purposes.

Now, the Machine's power is broken. Without its angels scrutinizing and manipulating them, many stigmatics have stopped living in fear of the God-Machine's reprisal. They have flourished, leveraging their supernatural gifts to build more comfortable lives for themselves. The Unchained remain within the city, of course, and while stigmatics recognize that they can negotiate with demons on a more equal footing than the God-Machine, they are often treated as disposable assets, lackeys, or threats to be casually eradicated by callous demons.

Kostantiniyye's newly emancipated stigmatics are done being exploited. They unionize. They call themselves the Kapici, the Doorkeepers, naming themselves as unseen

servants and facilitators, though they're far less humble than their name. They offer their unique talents to demons, other supernatural beings, and even mortals in exchange for carefully negotiated prices. Their terms of employment are always clear; the Doorkeepers write contracts that impress even the Unchained. They mostly accept payment in coin, unwilling to trade in favors or information like many demons, but they are eager to amass gadgets and other magical artifacts.

The Doorkeepers are anachronistically egalitarian; all members are equal regardless of sex, class, nationality, or religion. Such divisions seem petty in the face of the God-Machine, and stigmatics are bound together by their shared secret. They search for new stigmatics constantly, investigating any accounts of witches and healers. Their more gifted psychics scour the city in astral form or gaze into the future for signs of other witnesses. When they find stigmatics they recruit aggressively, offering wealth, protection, and other benefits. Their bargaining power relies on their monopoly; scabs and freelancers are a threat. To that end, more unscrupulous members are known to stoop to blackmail and intimidation to keep troublesome stigmatics in line. Some who refuse to join, mostly members of Unchained or God-Machine cults, are quietly eliminated by the Doorkeepers.

The Doorkeepers are currently engaged in fierce debate about the future of their organization. Most understand that the current situation is likely temporary; they prepare for the Machine's return, finding safehouses, hiding caches, and forging alliances in preparation for that dark day. Others are unwilling to live in fear under its auspices. Their ambition is considerable. They attempt to maneuver into positions of power and authority in the Ottoman Empire.

The Doorkeepers have many enemies, of course. Though most demons are happy to negotiate, some see the witnesses as a threat to their projects, another rival in a city already choked with competition. Sentinels have eliminated some of the union's less subtle members. They have also taken an interest as stigmatic agents offer their paranormal gifts to wealthy merchants and even senior figures within the Ottoman leadership. Some Ottomans are aware of a conspiracy of witches trying to influence their leaders and are mobilizing to root out the taint.

Despite all these external threats, the greatest danger to the Doorkeepers is internal. In their eagerness to recruit all of Istanbul's stigmatics, the Doorkeepers allow cultists loyal to the God-Machine into the fold. These traitors pass information to angels and Turncoats. They are biding their time for now, awaiting orders, but when the God-Machine returns it will find the Doorkeepers easy to subvert or destroy.

The Constantinians

They say that Constantine XI Palaiologos, the last Byzantine Emperor, did not fall in battle. The head proudly displayed by the sultan's armies belonged to another man, a man nobody recognized. Some say that the Emperor was taken by angels, or monks, into a cave beneath the Golden Gate. Here he was entombed in marble to sleep and wait until Christianity returned to the city.

It's a common enough tale, the Sleeping King, a recurrent theme in mythology across the world. It is perhaps surprising, then, that an Agency comprised mostly of Inquisitors and Tempters are apparently devoted to finding the hibernating Emperor. The Constantinians haunt the area around the Golden Gate, searching for tunnel entrances that seem to move and dodging a zealous angel that does not take kindly to intruders. Often they are forced to retreat, but sometimes they find their way into the caves.

The underground tunnels are part of a piece of Infrastructure, a vast probability engine that spreads beneath the Golden Gate. The corridors are windows to other dimensions and timelines. The quest for the Marble King is a cover story; the Constantinians recognize the incredible potential of the Golden Gate, where the past, possible futures, and alternate presents can be seen and even visited. At the very least it provides the Constantinians with information about Istanbul's future and the locations of forgotten or future Infrastructure, and the Inquisitors hope to discover the reason for its retreat by glimpsing universes where the Machine remains. This is the true Constantinian aim, the secret they guard.

Despite the Agency's appearance of cohesion and loyalty, some of its members harbor more ambitious plans. They plot to manipulate or even suborn the Infrastructure, using it to alter the city to their liking. One of the Constantinians is an undercover Integrator. She once hoped to pass through the Golden Gate into a reality where the God-Machine still rules, but now she is convinced that she can use the Infrastructure beneath the gatehouse to bring the God-Machine back to her Kostantiniyye.

The warrens are a strange and dangerous place, filled with fizzing arcane machinery and gears that turn between dimensions. At every crossroads demons watch their translucent doppelgangers pass down the other fork. They hear echoes from words they have yet to speak. Cryptids haunt the passageways, interdimensional horrors barely recognizable from their origins as humans and animals. The tunnels fork and twist endlessly and even seem to change, defying the Constantinians' aim to map them, and making it different to escape back into the reality from which one entered. Several Constantinians have found themselves trapped within time-loops and blighted, apocalyptic landscapes.

Angels

Few angels remain in the fallen city, and those that come anew seldom stay for long. Every angel that appears or remains active for prolonged period is scrutinized by the Unchained. Saboteurs plot their destruction; Inquisitors study them for clues as to the Machine's current plans, sometimes begging them for information; while Integrators have been known to visit the God-Machine's remaining servants to ask for news of its return or beg forgiveness. Without





functioning Infrastructure to support them, many of those that remain are suspected to be Exiles, their motives and actions incomprehensible.

The Collector

The Collector is looking for parts. A clockwork heart. Eyes that can see the dead. Black, tarry blood from a walking corpse. It takes them from demons, from stigmatics, from cryptids, and other things that lurk in the shadows of Kostantiniyye.

The angel wears many faces, but it is betrayed by the distinctive rasp of scissors when it moves. It hides its clumsy hands in gloves, gloves that are easily torn to reveal shears. The Collector does a poor job of acting human. It is obsessed with whatever organ matches its mission parameters and struggles to maintain even the very simplest lies and cover stories. It also has considerable difficulty perceiving individuals as discrete beings and not temporary aggregations of their parts.

The Collector's methods vary. It might frame a stigmatic for a crime so that it can take what it needs from her gibbet, peacefully negotiate with a demon for a form gadget, and viciously hunt a cryptid for its wings. It is pragmatic and unusually open to negotiation; the Collector has offered the locations of retired Infrastructure or information on previous victims in exchange for help locating its current target. The Collector usually hunts for a specific organ, but it has been known to collect parts *en masse*; once it stole the severed hands of a dozen thieves.

Some of the city's demons have fallen victim to it, losing demonic form abilities to its shears. Many have vowed revenge, but the Collector's inscrutable purpose has earned it the tacit protection of many curious Inquisitors, and the fact that it's willing to negotiate (and susceptible to bribes) makes it tolerable to many Tempters looking for information or Infrastructure to suborn. Some demons have expressed an interest in the Collector's unusual ability to slice away demonic form abilities. They wonder if its shears could be removed, and would continue to function independently of the angel. The poetic justice alone is tempting.

What does the Collector need the parts for? *Where* does it take them? Many demons believe the Collector is an Exile, a former Psychopomp that forever attempts to repeat its mission, collecting increasingly bizarre samples. Maybe it does this in the hope of finding one that will please the God-Machine, though it has little hope of even contacting the Machine within Istanbul; or perhaps it mindlessly repeats its final task, adding to a magpie-hoard of rotting flesh. Some believe it splices what it takes into its own form, changing faces and hiding stranger additions under its cloak; while others believe it studies every sample in takes, trying to understand the world around it one piece at a time.

It is perhaps preferable to think of the Collector as an Exile. If every fragment it collects is for the Machine, what purpose could those pieces serve? Are the parts being used to assemble monstrous servitors for the God-Machine? In the absence of angels, will stitched-together nightmares hunt the Unchained?

The Judges

The Judges appear outwardly human, a man and a woman of Turkish appearance, though their eyes are solid black and their flesh is hot to the touch. When they open their mouths to speak, flames can be seen dancing and flickering within. To demonic and stigmatic eyes the Judges appear to be made of riveted iron with a burning forge built into their torsos. Each of them carries a hammer.

The Judges walk the street of Kostantiniyye, watching people around them passively. Sometimes they follow people home and corner them when they are alone. The Judges look deep into the souls of their targets with their black eyes and ask three questions. These three questions are different each time, always intensely personal. They often refer to secrets nobody could possibly know. The Judges will prevent any attempt by their quarry to leave without answering their questions, even threatening violence if necessary. They also punish any attempts at dishonesty; the Judges can always spot a lie, half-truth, or deflection.

Most of their targets are immediately released, confused and traumatized, after answering the three questions to the Judges' satisfaction. Others are not. These unfortunates are restrained by the Judges, who open their mouths inhumanly wide to blow gouts of smokeless flame. This unnatural fire is transformative, rendering human flesh soft and malleable instead of burning it. The Judges then use their hammers to reshape their victims in body, mind, and soul.

Some appear unchanged but find their personalities fundamentally different. Others are physically transformed, old wounds hammered whole, their own faces and bodies alien to them. The alterations can be minor adjustments or radical alterations; a few of their victims even harbor unnatural additions to their bodies, strange implants that might have no obvious function or possess profoundly unnatural abilities.

The duo's mission remains opaque, but most demons agree that the Judges are tailor-making humans necessary for specific occult matrices, or possibly just as servants and sleeper-agents to serve in the Machine's absence or upon its return. Their criteria are unclear — perhaps those selected passed or failed a test. Maybe they matched a desired profile. Perhaps the changes are rewards or punishments. Most demons aren't particularly interested in the duo's primary mission, however. The Judges seem to recognize the Unchained on sight, quickly moving to question them. They ask demons a trio of probing questions, but they make no attempt to remake the Unchained. They seem genuinely interested in the answers demons provide, and their questions often hint towards the next Key in a demon's Cipher, or even their final secret. Many demons seek out the Judges, eager to unlock the secrets of their own souls.

Some suspect that the Judges are Exiles curious about the Unchained condition, or perhaps angels perilously close to Falling. Many are suspicious of them — how do they know the innermost secrets of demons? Some fear that they are capable of remaking demons, burning away any memories of the process after they hammer demons into new shapes.

A few demons have attempted to destroy the Judges but they are surprisingly fierce combatants, unleashing unnatural fires capable of warping even the biomechanical flesh of the Unchained. The random changes wrought by the Judges' hammers leave their attackers crippled and deformed, unable to pursue the Judges as they walk calmly away.

Kaziel

The God-Machine's exodus, if it ever truly left, was not overnight, despite what many demons claim. The retirement of old Infrastructure is an ongoing project and Kaziel's responsibility. Kaziel decommissions Infrastructure by violently tearing it from reality, violating causality so that it never existed while ensuring its original purpose still remains fulfilled. The ensuing paradoxes could be disastrous, but for the most part they are contained by the Infrastructure hidden beneath the Golden Gate. The process is not perfect, however. Kaziel leaves tiny paradox-splinters, strange echoes (often mistaken for ghosts) and other temporal anomalies in its wake.

The duty imposed on Kaziel protects the angel from attack. Most Saboteurs are willing to put up with an angel that does their job for them, while Watchers and Builders follow the angel, eager to study and suborn the temporal flotsam it leaves in its wake. Idealists watch Kaziel as they do any other angel, though they do so with sadness and fear, watching their God not only leave the city but also reshape reality so that it was never here.

Some demons make use of the splinters Kaziel leaves behind, creating boltholes and even tiny splinter-fiefdoms. Some are even able to craft Covers from the leftover fragments of those erased from time, stepping into the holes left in the lives of their former families and associates, shaping the ragged wounds in causality into a life they can lead with a burst of Aether. It's difficult and not without risk, but it allows demons to make Covers without making pacts or angel-jacking, though the process is in many ways similar to both.

Kaziel is inhuman in appearance, a mess of tendrils and arthropod limbs held aloft by vast mirrored wings. In place of eyes two huge antennae jut from its face, branching like antlers. Kaziel has a loose relationship with time, the sounds of its wings and footfalls out of sync with its actual movements. It is able to travel impossible distances almost instantly by phasing between different dimensions and timelines.

Saboteurs contemplate Kaziel's mission with hope. The God-Machine's retreat is ongoing, and might even be complete one day. The Eschatologists are less optimistic, afraid of whatever has driven the Machine to retreat so completely. Some demons recognize that Kaziel's primary purpose is to deny the Unchained potential assets, and many suspect the Infrastructure Kaziel shunts into other timelines is simply in storage and will return when the God-Machine does.

The Legion

The God-Machine has not fully abandoned the city. Its influence is greatly diminished, true, but it still has assets within the walls. One of these assets is the Legion, an unusually active and dangerous hunter angel.

The Legion is bizarre, even by angelic standards. The Legion manifests not as a single being but as a crowd of citizenry. The citizens are perfectly innocuous, going about their daily business and casually and imperceptibly surrounding their targets before, in response to an unspoken signal, their faces become expressionless and they attack. The Legion is implacable regardless of how many of its bodies are destroyed.

These bodies are far from uniform. Some remain superficially human even when they strike, while others become monstrous, flesh sloughing off metal bones as they sprout claws of jagged glass.

The precise nature of the fragmented angel is a subject of intense, and superstitiously whispered, debate. Many demons assert that the Legion is a swarm of hunter angels, weakened by the God-Machine's absence and forced to work in tandem to achieve their goals; the prevailing theory is that the Legion is one angelic consciousness spread across many bodies. Some posit that the Legion has a central body, a control node of sorts, and that the other bodies are little more than appendages or projections. Many of these bodies might even be human — the Legion might be capable of controlling or even possessing entire crowds of people. Thoughtful Inquisitors sometimes link the Legion to the activities of other angels; are the victims of the Judges made into the Legion, implanted with fragments harvested by the Collector? A vocal minority of demons insists that the Legion is actually powerful cult, possibly with angelic or demonic patronage. Some Saboteurs insist it's the work of Turncoats taking up the mantle of the God-Machine's departed hunter angels.

This final rumor is unlikely; even the Integrators are terrified of the Legion. Its victims are always dismembered, never taken away for reclamation. A ring of Saboteurs is devoted to the Legion's destruction, wisely attempting to study the angel before moving against it (or them). They've been known to bait the Legion, forcing other demons to compromise their Covers repeatedly until the angel strikes, observing the attacks as closely as they safely can.

The Legion is a brutal, unsubtle angel. Many of its ambushes and attacks are in public and leave bodies scattered on Kostantiniyye's streets. Without the God-Machine to hide or manufacture evidence, how does the city not devolve into terror and riots in response to each attack? More introspective and paranoid demons speculate that the Legion cleans up after itself, dragging bodies away and silencing terrified eyewitnesses, but in truth the Legion is an ongoing headache for the Sentinels.





Playing the Game

Here we provide stories set at different periods, highlighting the themes and struggles of the changing city. After the initial rebuilding and scrambling for position in Mehmet's new city, paranoia reigns among the demons of Kostantiniyye. Broken Infrastructure leaks more than Aether. Strange, arcane threats loom over the city and the Unchained are ever-watchful for the signs of the God-Machine's return. Terrified and desperate Integrators infiltrate every level of Unchained society, while mistrustful Saboteurs treat other demons as deserters in their war to rid the city of the Machine. The city's Tempters become bitter rivals, their constant competition over prestige and resources forever stymieing their attempts to build Hell. Without the monolithic God-Machine to tyrannize them, the Unchained become their own oppressors.

Foundations

An old Byzantine church is converted into a mosque. The church has stood for centuries, but its foundations are far older, dating back to a bathhouse from centuries ago. They're the dormant remnants of thousands of years of Infrastructure, but the God-Machine's flight has left them unstable and they begin to reactivate.

Blueprint

There are bodies in the foundations. The minds of the dead, trapped by some obscure occult matrix, reawaken and coalesce. They reach out to the dervishes that tend to the mosque. Drawn by ghostly whispers and visions of blood oozing up from beneath them, the dervishes excavate the foundations and find the mortar stained red with blood, skeletons bricked behind and into the walls. The bodies beg them for company, for sacrifice, promising power and threatening disaster. The dervishes are twisted into a cult, feeding orphans and slaves into the hungry brick of the foundations, nursing the strange coagulant intelligence of the dead below them.

Infrastructure

As the terrified dervishes give their victims to the hungry stone, it learns about the city above and becomes curious, demanding more bodies. Squalls of Aether are produced as the malfunctioning Infrastructure reactivates. It attracts demons, hoping to find something they can suborn, break down into usable parts, or perhaps an example of the God-Machine's activity they can study. As the Unchained investigate and learn the horrible truth they begin to hatch irreconcilable plans for the Infrastructure beneath the earth.

Moving Parts

- Inquisitors investigate the site, assuming their demonic shapes and burrowing into the earth. They discover that the foundations extend far further than just the mosque. Kostantiniyye is built on the bones of Constantinople, of Byzantium. Whatever purpose drove the Machine to use living bodies as mortar, trapping their souls in the earth, remains opaque, but the Infrastructure that once kept them quiescent has been destroyed or broken. They make inchoate threats of disaster if they are not appeased, and the Watchers begin to believe them. They work desperately to hide the mosque from Istanbul's Saboteurs, fearing what might happen if they attempt to destroy or exorcise what lies below.
- A trio of Redeemers insinuate their way into the cult. What they see horrifies them, and they plot to find and sabotage whatever Infrastructure houses the dead hive-mind. They will set the souls of the dead free. Callous Tempters also make inroads, hoping to make use of the cultists themselves. They plan to simply appease the foundations and use the Infrastructure as an Aetheric battery.
- As conflict blossoms and the Unchained vie for control over the mosque, demonic blood seeps into the earth, arousing the curiosity of the gestalt intelligence awakening beneath the city. It calls for a demonic sacrifice, issuing more malformed threats. Some demons are willing to feed it, afraid of what the foundations might do; and as the struggle turns bloody demonic bodies may not be so difficult to find. Others, terrified at the prospect of the strange, dead mind absorbing a demonic soul, move to destroy the mosque.

The Calligrapher

An Ottoman scribe dutifully copies out the Quran and other religious volumes. Each of his works contains a secret, however. Hidden amidst the Prophet's teachings, each tells the story of a demon's Fall and Descent.

Blueprint

The calligrapher doesn't appear to realize that he's encoding the life histories of demons into his work. They're not even written in Arabic — the elegant loops and flourishes of his lettering form words in countless other languages, complex stories hidden between lines of holy writ. Only demons, with their mastery of all living languages, could read the code. Or angels, of course.

Infrastructure

By chance, a demon in the Cover of an Imam reads one of the calligrapher's books and spots the code, reading about a prominent Tempter. He tracks down and investigates the writer and begins purchasing and stealing every copy of his work, reading about other demons. He even finds, to his

horror, his own Descent laid down in ink. As he turns to the final chapters he reads the details of his own murder. Is the book a prediction or has his fate always been predetermined?

Moving Parts

• Horrified, the Imam shares his discovery with a few other demons. Most become convinced that the books are some form of Infrastructure. They wonder if the scribe is possessed or influenced by an angel. Some question if he's even human. The man could well be a living linchpin. Some want to burn the books and kill the scribe. Others plan to steal the books and kidnap the writer. The Inquisitors that hold to the Caged philosophy consider this discovery the validation of their work. They want to study the scribe, hoping to learn the full extent of the God-Machine's infiltration.

- The Saviors are terrified that one of the books might detail the Descent of one of their members. Should the demons of Istanbul discover their existence, let alone their identities, they will not rest until the Turncoats are destroyed. They're also afraid that if they move to kill the calligrapher and destroy his work they'll be defying the God-Machine they claim to serve. Though most remain paralyzed by indecision, a few move to take drastic, contradictory action.

- Mediators insist that the calligrapher's works are an Unchained forgery, an attempt to smear various demons and foment unrest. They attempt to disprove and refute the details already leaked. Their main argument is that none of the accounts mention the fallout of their own discovery, and they detail events that have yet to come to pass.

- The Imam is found dead and the books begin to disappear. Every demon in the city is a suspect, but the more terrifying possibility is that the God-Machine is collecting the tomes. The scribe is unharmed, however, and entirely unaware that he's being watched by scores of demons. It's only a matter of time before someone moves to secure or silence him.

The Returned

In the aftermath of the 1509 earthquake, the demons of Istanbul were sent scrambling as hunter angels descended upon the city. Thankfully, the attacks stopped after only a few days and the Unchained were left to rebuild. One demon, however, finds herself hunted by a nightmarish creature she gradually comes to realize isn't an angel at all.

Blueprint

The God-Machine has angels that hunt the souls of the dead. Some it harvests and renders into ectoplasmic fuel. Others it reworks into servants or weapons. One such soul has escaped back into the world, its need for revenge outweighing the God-Machine's orders. Or, perhaps, it was deployed.

The avenging spirit haunts a demon known as Shahinji, the Falconer. She once wore this soul as a Cover, after calling in a soul pact, releasing it when she elected to go loud when cornered by hunter angels. The howling ghost wants revenge on the demon who tricked it, who stole and spent its life.

Infrastructure

The Falconer lives in fear. Initially she believes she is being attacked by a hunter angel that wears a previous face to intimidate her, but she gradually realizes the truth. The ghost attacks her, cursing her and raking her flesh with ethereal talons, but it does not seem content to merely kill her. It torments her. It wants her to suffer. It manifests to drive away her Cover's family and even attempts to force its way into her body, trying to claim her flesh the way she once claimed its soul.

Despite her efforts, she is unable to strike back at the avenging spirit. It is entirely immune to her Embeds and Exploits, and even turns them against her. The constant attacks are fraying her new Cover, and the Falconer worries that should she abandon this identity a second spirit will join the first in tormenting her.

Moving Parts

- The Falconer's plight becomes well known. Few demons believe that the specter stalking her isn't an angel. Some Soldiers are prepared to help her. Some, fearing discovery by the same hunter angel, consider assassinating her.

- The Falconer contacts human mediums and Obol, a Psychopomp who once collected the souls of the dead for the God-Machine's purposes. Selling off most of her remaining assets, she pays them to design a ritual to banish the avenging spirit.

- A few scattered reports of similar ghosts begin to surface within the city and beyond. Is this a new weapon against the Unchained, or did the earthquake damage some hidden Infrastructure, releasing discarded souls from an otherworldly prison?

Through the Gate

A well-known demon begins acting oddly, speaking of a catastrophe only a few months away and loudly accusing respected demons of being traitors and Turncoats. She then reappears to decry her own accusations and apocalyptic proclamations, insisting that they are the work of a double out to destroy her reputation — or worse.



Blueprint

The Golden Gate is a fortified gatehouse in a much-reduced state after years of warfare. The fortification was built to endure a siege even if the city turned against it, an echo of the God-Machine's intentions for the Infrastructure. The Golden Gate and the tunnel network beneath it are honeycombed with passages and arcane machinery, windows to alternate pasts, futures, and presents. It is guarded by angelic sentries and packs of trained cryptids that flicker between dimensions and timelines. The God-Machine has prevented many cataclysms, and the Infrastructure beneath the Golden Gate functions as an interdimensional "crumple-zone," containing the spillover from the splinter timelines and the strain of the Machine's ongoing manipulation of probability.

Infrastructure

In another time, the demon Argent fled a disaster with her ring, braving the tunnels as they sought to pass through the Golden Gate. In the darkness of that interdimensional labyrinth they were hunted by angels, cryptids, and stranger things, monstrous refugees from stillborn timelines and pocket dimensions. Only Argent survived, escaping from the warrens into the city several months ago. Desperate to prevent a massacre perpetrated by maddened Integrators, she's become outspoken and even violent, unafraid of personal consequences. Her native double is desperate to stop the damage done to her reputation, convinced it's the work of a rival or even the God-Machine. Inquisitors, particularly those of the Eschatologist faction, are intrigued and move to investigate the alternate Argent's claims.

Moving Parts

- The alternate demon isn't the only creature that escaped from the Golden Gate. A cryptid from a bleak and ruined timeline is amazed to find its familiar hunting grounds suddenly teeming with prey. By night it begins feeding upon Kostantiniyye's inhabitants. Before long it will reproduce, and without predators from its own timeline it could devastate the city. With the God-Machine's assets too few to stop it, the Sentinels begin a hunt, enlisting the Coursers; but their numbers aren't sufficient to find the cryptid, let alone destroy it.
- Both versions of Argent find their Covers glitching terribly, especially when they finally attempt to meet with one another. They are becoming unstable. Either one of them must be destroyed, or they must find a way to collapse into a single entity.
- Saboteurs, particularly the Hands, are always suspicious of Integrator operations in the city. Some believe

Argent's warning, but most simply use it as an excuse to vilify and ferret out Turncoats. The Integrators assume the entire plot is a ploy by the Hands or the Castellans and abandon several projects until the heat dies away. The Saviors are intrigued but accept that they lack the numbers and resources to attempt anything as ambitious as Argent's tales.

- The Golden Gate attracts attention as more demons learn its true function. Some are allowed to join the Constantinians, a group already investigating the Infrastructure. Many of them go into the tunnels unprepared for what they will face; some never return and others come back fundamentally changed, remembering events that never happened or have yet to come to pass.

The Hospital

In the mid-16th century, the God-Machine prepares to re-establish its power within Istanbul, but the years of abandonment have left its few remaining cults within the city weak and depopulated. It sends operatives from outside the Ottoman capital and summons angels into the city, but doing so expends considerable power. The God-Machine needs to quickly recruit cultists and other expendable tools within Istanbul to further its many new projects. In the shadow of the great Suleymaniye mosque, the God-Machine enacts a project intended to recruit armies of loyal servants and unknowing sleeper agents, the first step of a gradual re-assimilation of the city.

Blueprint

It is said that the hospital near the Suleymaniye mosque can heal the sick within three days. This is true. The God-Machine's angels can repair broken humans with arcane science, surgical techniques, and medicines that will not be understood for centuries, but saving lives is merely by-product of the Infrastructure's true intention.

Sinister angelic physicians operate on patients in the night, implanting devices into their bodies that turn them into sleeper agents. Messenger angels and cultists among the patients and staff spread the God-Machine's dogma to receptive, febrile minds.

Infrastructure

Several demons fall victim to sleeper agents, glitching as their Covers are compromised, attracting the wrath of Istanbul's dreaded Legion. Inquisitors and Saboteurs investigate the sleeper agents and begin to notice that many of them appear to have fully recovered from chronic and incurable illnesses. It isn't long before they make the connection to the hospital and discover the God-Machine's plans.

Moving Parts

- An alliance of Saboteurs and Tempters begins recruiting demons to take down the Infrastructure. They plan to masquerade as patients and nurses, infiltrating the hospital. It's incredibly dangerous, and few demons are convinced by their fiery rhetoric.

- The surgeries and indoctrination processes at the hospital leave some patients stigmatic. The Doorkeepers move to recruit these stigmatics as soon as they discover them, unaware that most of them are sleeper agents or indoctrinated cultists.

- Despite initial promise, the Unchained infiltration fails. Cultists and angels gradually discover the demons in their midst and the Infrastructure activates defensive protocols. Demons are taken away for reclamation in the night and the botched operation quickly becomes a bloodbath as impatient Thugs move to sterilize the infection.

Inspiration

Andrew Novo's *Queen of Cities* is an action-packed, pulpy novel set around the siege, a mix of historical action and political intrigue that might be of use to Storytellers setting games around the siege itself.

A Place Called Armageddon by CC Humphreys is also based around the final days of Constantinople. This book benefits from a multitude of characters on both sides of the walls (and a relatively even-handed portrayal of both sides), with some mystical elements appropriate for **Demon**.

Adam Savage's *Ottoman* details five generations of an English family living in Istanbul, starting with an artilleryman's arrival in 1448, and is one of the few novels that details life after the siege. While it captures the byzantine and even cruel politics of the Ottoman courts, the majority of the Ottoman leaders are somewhat unfairly portrayed as ruthless and capriciously dishonorable.

The 2012 film *Fetih 1453* is a dramatic retelling of the siege, full of sweeping shots that make generous use of CGI, paying considerable attention to the religious intrigue on both sides. It is told firmly from the side of the Ottomans, however, with the Byzantine nobility portrayed as decadent hedonists ruling a prosperous empire, which hardly reflects Constantinople's war-torn reality. The terrible sack of the city is also glossed over.



Centehua looked up when the door opened, shading her eyes against the light. "Father?" she murmured.

"Hardly," came the cold voice. "You won't see him again." He was tall, filling the doorway to her father's workshop near to the lintel, but so thin light streamed in on either side of him, showing his ribs. His hair reached his mid-calves, and was red-and-rust with blood old and fresh.

"Ichtaca," she spat.

• • •

He had arrived the same way over a year ago. His sandals had made a clear whist whist as he walked. It had given her time to move to the floor and pick up her weaving, leaving her father alone at the fig bark paper stretched out on the desk.

He stood there, looking down at them, her on the floor and her father on his stool, with a disapproving glare. "Matlal?" Her father, face calm, nodded. "I have seen the codex you wrote for Tlazohtlaloni. It is magnificent."

Father inclined his head. "You do me great honor."

"I intend to do you another," Ichtaca said, and he outlined the codex he wanted Father to write for the nahualtin sect.

• • •

"I'm going to do you a great honor," Ichtaca said, crouching to look into her eyes. One hand rested on his knee, and the other held a flint knife a hair's breadth from the floor.

"Do you know when I first began to watch you?" Ichtaca asked with a slight smile.

"When you came to speak to me, and I answered foolishly," Centehua said.

"No," Ichtaca smiled broadly, "it was before that."

• • •

He found her alone. She had thought he was her father returning. "I hoped to find Matlal here," said cousin Citlali. His eyes widened. "Are you writing?"

"Oh, no," she put down the brush. "Just looking at Father's work and, and wishing."

"Reading such things is for the priests, cousin, and for a tacuiloque such as your father."

"Yes, of course." Centehua bowed her head. "It is only a fantasy." She stood and walked Citlali to the street. "Father is visiting his brother, if you wish to seek him there."

"Thank you," he said as they stepped out into the star-roofed night.

Turning to return to her work, she looked up at an owl nesting on the neighbor's roof. It seemed to look at her as it scratched the roof with one talon.

• • •

Ichtaca dragged the tip of the flint knife across the floor. "I see you remember. You were always smarter than you played. How much of your father's work did you do?"

Centehua straightened with pride. "All the finest work was mine. Father was proud when I surpassed him."

"I thought as much," Ichtaca said. "Were he not slated as a sacrifice at the next festival I might have him arrested. Tell me. Did he also teach you writing? Reading?"

"What do you think?" she spat.

• • •

"There has never been a finer codex," Ichtaca breathed rapturously. He looked at Matlal, and his piercing, weighing gaze returned. "What did you think of the text?"

"It was challenging, but it is, perhaps," he glanced at Centehua, "my finest work."

"You have no thoughts on the text?" Ichtaca asked.

"Mine is only to create the work. It is for the priests to interpret." Matlal bowed his head in respect.

"Of course. And you," he looked at Centehua, "why do you look proud?"

"I, uh, only, uh, pride for my father," she said.

Ichtaca's smile was not kind. "You are a good daughter," he said.

• • •

"Those secrets aren't meant for women," Ichtaca said.

He stood, and she stood with him. "I will carry out your punishment myself." He gestured, knife easy in his hand. "Your blood will unlock for me one of the mysteries of the nahualtin. Lie down." She locked gazes with him and didn't move. "No? Very well." He raised the knife and brought it down on her neck.

Centehua blocked the stroke. "Writing isn't the only thing Father wasn't supposed to teach me."

• • •

Ichtaca left the cell bloody. He stretched, cracking all his joints as though he'd found a new appreciation for the way his body fit together. He smiled, too, a rare sight that unnerved the servants who passed him on their way in to clear out the remains. And if the flayed, mutilated corpse he left behind was too large for a woman, the servants didn't notice, or knew better than to comment.



Beneath the Skin

Beneath the Skin details the world of the Aztec Empire at the height of its power, during the reign of King Ahuitzotl, and the strangeness of that world. Eagle warriors, jaguar priests, hundreds of thousands of human sacrifices to keep the sun moving through the sky, and visions from identity-shifting gods make this an interesting time to set a chronicle.

There is a face beneath this mask, but it isn't me. I'm no more that face than I am the muscles beneath it, or the bones beneath that.

—Alan Moore, V for Vendetta

Theme: Identity

Identity is both strict and fluid among the Aztec. Parentage determines whether one is noble or common, trades are handed down father to son, and one's birthdate can determine one's name and fortune to come. An Aztec is a farmer, fisherman, or artisan, but every man is also a warrior. And any warrior can earn recognition for valor and skill and join the ranks of the eagle warriors or jaguar warriors.

The gods demonstrate the fluidity of Aztec identity. Gods sacrifice themselves, die, and somehow live on. They are reborn into new forms and names, while their previous identities continue. The priests sometimes name a sacrificial slave the embodiment of a god on Earth, according him all the honors and privileges, perhaps for as long as a year, before sacrificing the slave to that very god.

Priests too demonstrate fluid identity. A small sect of Aztec priests, the *nahualli*, transform themselves into jaguars, owls, and even ghostly women to observe and punish the rebellious.

In the same way, skinchangers and the Unchained wear multiple identities. Sometimes their prior identities live on, and sometimes they burn away in the summer sun. Who they were, who they truly are, and who they might become are difficult questions to avoid when playing these characters.

Mood: High Strangeness

The dominant culture of the Aztec Empire believes the world will end if the priests don't sacrifice humans to sustain the sun. Sorcerer-priests stalk the streets of Tenochtitlan in the shapes of owls or jaguars. Remnants from previous ages hide in the jungles when they aren't stealing human bodies. The Unchained manage in an information-poor age as best they can. And the conquistadores are going to bring it all crashing down within a generation.

Tenochtitlan and the Valley of Mexico are fascinating, vibrant places with dozens of cities. Immense local and tribal variations in appearance and custom make traveling even half a day an opportunity to discover new superstitions that could all be twisted versions of the truth. A monster stalks from one city to the next without ever drawing enough attention to endanger itself, because information travels so slowly. What does a culture that worships the sun hide in the darkness?

Even as the cities thrive with life, the wilds are deep and unpredictable. Mesoamerica is rich with environmental variation, from deserts to jungles to volcanic mountains and great lakes. Each terrain has its mysteries, from the mother maguey in the dry plains to the jungle's self vines. Weirdness is everywhere, and an unlucky encounter can change the entire course of a person's life.

How to Use This Supplement

This supplement breaks into five sections, each with a Nahuatl name relevant to the content.

Telpochcalli: What Has Come Before

The "youth house" is where the majority of Aztec children go to learn about Aztec history and the gods, and where boys trains as warriors as they get older. This chapter contains information about what came before the Aztec Empire reached the heights of glory where it stands now, and hints at what threats might remain from those times.

Calpulli: Where We Are

Each "neighborhood" in Aztec society contained everything its inhabitants needed to operate day to day, including a *telpochcalli*. The *calpulli* helped its members navigate life in the city, managing local land distribution and electing its own local leaders. This chapter contains information about life in the reign of Ahuitzotl.

Tonalpohualli: What is to Come

The 260-day religious calendar determines when the priests hold non-seasonal celebrations and rituals, and many Aztecs consult it for omens and divinations. This chapter describes events yet to come for the Aztec Empire, with recommendations for how to incorporate them into games.

Tecuani: The Supernatural

The "wild beasts" are the least concern in this chapter, which describes the many supernatural threats and dangers of the Aztec Empire. In addition to monstrous creatures, it includes supernatural places and mechanisms, including Infrastructure of the God-Machine.

Patolli: Playing the Game

Patolli is a popular Aztec game using beans for dice, wherein players race their stone pebbles around a cross-shaped board. This chapter provides advice on adapting the Chronicles of Darkness rules to a chronicle set in the Aztec Empire, and includes some new Merits.

Telpochcalli: What Has Come Before

The *telpochcalli* is the public school in each district where commoners learn history and religion in greater depth than from their parents and culture. It is also where male students train to become warriors as they get older. This chapter concerns the history of the Aztecs — all that has come before the time of Ahuitzotl, who now rules.

A Note on Authenticity and Pronunciation

While this is a fictionalized account of the history and nature of the Aztec civilization, we have put effort into remaining true to the historical sources. However, many of those sources are contradictory, because many of the records from the Aztecs and the Spanish missionaries of the time are also contradictory, as are the original myths and legends. This is a guidebook to supernatural role-playing in an ancient time, written with respect for the original culture but also with an eye to inspiring good gaming, and not a definitive text on the subject.

Troupes may find it enjoyable to look up some pronunciation guides to Nahuatl, the language of the Aztec and surrounding tribes. Knowing pronunciation may not change the themes or emotions of your chronicle, but learning and practicing proper pronunciation of the many gods, kings, and places that look so foreign at first glance can lend a sense of authenticity to the setting.

In the Beginning

Before all things, the dual god Ometeotl fathered and mothered the four Tezcatlipocas, including Tezcatlipoca and Quetzalcoatl, brothers and rivals. These two would create the world and, in their struggles, destroy it. Now is the era of the fifth sun, the fifth world, each defined by its sun and its sun defined by what would destroy it.

First came the Jaguar Sun, a world populated by giants. In the unending rivalry between Tezcatlipoca and Quetzalcoatl, Quetzalcoatl deposed Tezcatlipoca as the sun. His brother retaliated by driving the jaguars to devour the people of the Jaguar Sun, and the world ended. Those few giants that escaped this fate live in hiding. They are fearsome warriors, but live in mortal fear of the jaguar.

The Wind Sun followed, in which Quetzalcoatl became the sun. The people of that era, of a stature with the folk of today, grew complacent in honoring the gods and their sacrifices. To punish them, Tezcatlipoca turned them into monkeys. This angered Quetzalcoatl, who was fond of the people and fought with Tezcatlipoca. In their conflict, Quetzalcoatl blew the transformed people off of the Earth in a mighty wind that ended the age. Some few of those



On the Nature of Gods

The Aztec gods are not omnipotent or all-creative, or even endless, with the exception of perhaps Ometeotl. They die and are reborn, they transform while remaining the same. Tonatiuh is a new god and the sun, but also an aspect of Ometeotl who has always been. Huitzilopochtli, patron god of the Aztecs, was also the sun, but was not Tonatiuh. Flames consumed Nanahuatzin to turn him into Tonatiuh, yet Nanahuatzin helps Quetzalcoatl give food to the people of the new sun.

More than anything, the Aztec gods are fluid. Aztecs did not impose their gods on others. They absorbed others' gods into their pantheon, discovering them as new entities or as aspects of existing deities. The gods transform and are transformed, and yet remain themselves, a nature that the Aztecs reflect in their culture.

people remained, living in small enclaves. They still hunger to become human again, and sometimes waylay travelers to steal their skins and masquerade as humans.

Tlaloc, god of rain, became the next sun, the Rain Sun. Conflict plagued his time as sun, and he refused to grant the people any water. When they rebelled, he scoured the Earth with a rain of fire. The only people who survived were those that Quetzalcoatl turned to birds to help them escape. Some cults on the distant edges of the empire say they learn the mysteries of both rain and fire by bargaining with these birds.

Chalchiuhtlicue became the Water Sun. She was Tlaloc's sister, and a goddess of rivers and lakes; records say little of why she destroyed her world. When she did, it was with a great flood, and the people of this world who survived became fish. Some say they are the fish of Lake Tetzcoco that the Aztec eat today, and that if any of them recall the ways of human speech, one could gain much wisdom from them.

To create the fifth sun that continues today, the Movement Sun, the gods convened in Teotihuacan. Tecuciztecatl volunteered to become the new sun, and the gods asked Nanahuatzin to go with him. When the time came to leap into the fire and become the flame of the new sun, Tecuciztecatl balked. Nanahuatzin walked in without fear and rose to become the new sun, reborn as the god Tonatiuh. Shamed, Tecuciztecatl followed and became the moon, his dim light an echo of the sun's bravery. To this day, daytime is for brave acts, and more sinister things occur in moonlight.

For Tonatiuh to continue across the sky, he required the energy of sacrifice. The gods gave first, shedding their blood or letting the god Ehecatl take their hearts to move the sun in its course. Eventually, this responsibility passed to the Aztecs.

Rebirth of Humanity

Just as the gods die and are reborn, so too humanity. With the end of the Water Sun, all people on Earth died, excepting those who became fish. To repopulate humanity, Quetzalcoatl went to retrieve the bones of humanity from Mictlan, the underworld. To do this, he met several challenges for Mictlantecuhtli, Lord of the Land of the Dead, and escaped.

To revive the bones, he enlisted the goddess Cihuacoatl, who helped him grind them into meal. Together with many other gods, they pierced themselves in many places and bled on the ground bones, and from there sprung the first humans of the fifth sun.

There was not yet any food for the reborn people, so Quetzalcoatl became an ant and brought out grains of maize from Mt. Tonacatepetl. It sustained them, but to give them

Before Chicomoztoc

Aztecs do not believe that all life originated with the Chichimec tribes from Chicomoztoc. People came from the god Quetzalcoatl's sacrifice and effort: recreating them from the remains of a previous age, rejuvenating them with his blood, and opening Mt. Tonacatepetl to give them maize. So where did the Chichimec come from?

Perhaps they were placed there by their gods, creatures of the spirit realm who plucked them from the world and placed them in the ideal land of Aztlan for their own purposes, then sent them into the world. This septet of powerful spirits raised these people as seven tribes as part of an experiment, or more likely a wager. As each spirit lost the wager or grew bored, it sent its tribe out into the world and away from Aztlan, which perhaps resided somewhere in Twilight.

Aztlan could have been a manifestation or aspect of the Time Before, cast into the mazy flows of time by the Ascension. Only around the turn of the first millennium did it drift back into the Fallen World, releasing the people who lived in that impermanent paradise over a handful of centuries.

Or there never was a land of Aztlan. Instead, it is the memory of perfection insinuated into the cultural beliefs of the Chichimec by Integrators among the Unchained, a humanized image of life with the God-Machine. Intended to drive the Chichimec to recreate mythical Aztlan and give them the mindset to follow commands to return to former glory, it helps explain the presence of man-made imitations of the seven caves of Chicomoztoc found across central Mexico.

enough food to grow and populate the world of the fifth sun, he had to free the maize from the mountain. The god Nanahuatzin recruited the gods of rain to help open the mountain, and freed the maize for the people, so they could spread and prosper.

The Origin of the Aztec

A thousand years before the founding of Tenochtitlan, before the world called them the Aztec, the Chichimec people emerged from the seven caves of Chicomoztoc. These seven tribes were not the first people, but they were the first of their tribes, and their gods had commanded them to find places to flourish and honor the gods.

The great mountain Chicomoztoc stood on the shore of a lake, in the middle of which sat an island of surpassing beauty: Aztlan, the place of whiteness. Surrounded by a fine mist, rich with white fish and birds, the island offered an ideal place for the tribes to live and grow.

One by one, as commanded, they left to seek greater fortunes elsewhere. Over 300 years after the first tribe departed, the Mexica left. They would wander for centuries before founding Tenochtitlan and becoming known to most of Mesoamerica as the Aztec, the people of Aztlan.

The Exodus

Led by High Priest Mexitl, for whom the Mexica are named, the Mexica followed the commands of their god Huitzilopochtli and ventured into the wilds. Their goal was to find a land of such bounty that it would surpass any other, including Aztlan, and he guided them in dreams and visions.

The trip was one of nearly two centuries, and it drew the Mexica near to extinction more than once. They made enemies of many tribes — and more than one god — on their path to found Tenochtitlan.

First Rest

The Mexica lived as nomads, traveling constantly, living off the lands, and imposing on those tribes who already occupied the lands they moved through. This life was hard on the Mexica, and as time passed Huitzilopochtli saw they needed rest. Through visions, he directed them to a great lagoon where the Mexica founded Patzcuaro.

Patzcuaro was a great respite for the Mexica. They cultivated foods and sacrificed to Huitzilopochtli. They recovered what they had lost in travel and grew strong. After several years, it felt like their long journey could be over. The priests conducted rituals to ask Huitzilopochtli whether this was their promised land. The answer was no.

Many did not want to leave. They were done traveling, and their god could grant them this land or go on without them. When the priests again conducted the rites and asked if they could leave some people behind, Huitzilopochtli gave them specific directions. One day, as the faction that wished to stay bathed in the lagoon, the rest of the Mexica took everything of value and left the settlement. They moved forward seeking their fortunes, and needed all they could carry. They left behind them spurned siblings and cousins. Those cousins would eventually become known as the Tarascans and deliver a devastating defeat to the Aztec military.

Malinalxochitl

Sister of Huitzilopochtli, Malinalxochitl traveled with the Mexica for some part of their journey. Sharing some of her brother's divine blood and wisdom, she helped the tribe survive some of their earliest years. Records conflict over whether Malinalxochitl was a goddess, a sorceress, or both, but the line is likely blurred in truth as well as in Aztec history.

When her wisdom conflicted with that of the high priests, and even that of Huitzilopochtli, chaos split the tribe. She protected those who obeyed her and punished those who stood against her with torments of scorpions and spiders, often resulting in their painful deaths. Even centuries after leaving her behind, some Aztec still believe that scorpions and spiders are spies of Malinalxochitl. They do not consider the creatures evil, but think it unwise to display weakness before them.

As Malinalxochitl's actions threatened to tear the Mexica apart, sundering her servants from those who followed Huitzilopochtli and leaving both groups too weak to continue, the high priests sought aid from their patron god. In dreams, Huitzilopochtli promised the Mexica that riches would be theirs through their hard work, and that he would prevent the sorceress and her followers from pursuing them if the loyal Mexica left while the others slept. The Mexica did so, and Malinalxochitl could not follow them, that day or any other. Even today, some Aztec claim similar boons from Huitzilopochtli. Some say that he has protected them from evil, or that he carried them far across the desert in a single night.

Malinalxochitl retreated into the deep forest with her followers, where she founded the city Malinalco. She taught all her people powerful sorcery, and instilled in them a great hatred of the Mexica. Though her son Copil was the first of the people of Malinalco to pursue the sorceress's vendetta against their former brethren, he was far from the last with that ambition.

The Danger of Success

Dissention in the ranks threatened the Mexica again. Having escaped from Malinalxochitl, they traveled to Mt. Coatepec in the land of Tollan. Here, Huitzilopochtli visited them twice, each time granting them a different innovation. History says he appeared in the flesh, but some secrets kept by the priesthood say he borrowed the flesh of a priest, and that the priest's body was harmed by hosting their god.

The first innovation was that of the dam and the man-made lake. The Mexica made a river into a rich lake that

sustained the entire tribe easily. That became the problem, just as it had at Patzcuaro before. Many of the Mexica became satisfied that their search was over, despite warnings from the priests that this was not the location that Huitzilopochtli intended for them.

War arose between the two factions, and again Huitzilopochtli donned human flesh. He strode the battlefield, smiting any who opposed him, exhorting the Mexica to leave. As those who had wished to stay fled the field, Huitzilopochtli cut open the chests of his captives and claimed their hearts to strengthen him. It was thus that his priests learned to sacrifice war captives to empower their god.

This time, the priests did not leave anyone behind, or leave anything to tempt the weak members of the tribe. The morning after the slaughter, the Mexica destroyed the dam and artificial lake and marched away, leaving nothing useful behind them.

Rivalry and Suspicion

On leaving Coatepec, the migrating Mexica began a century-long period of travel punctuated with temporary homes. The short periods of rest allowed them to recover, build up resources, and grow in number, but they inevitably angered the tribes who had already established settlements in the area. Seeking their promised lands with their god's guidance, they always moved on.

When they reached Chapultepec, on the shore of Lake Tetzcoco, the priests reported Huitzilopochtli's command to wait. He would provide a signal to strike at their enemies, and in preparation for that the Mexica should elect a leader, something they had never before done. They elected Huitzilihuitl, who put them on a war footing.

It was here that Copil, son of Malinalxochitl, caught up with them. Using sorcery learned from his mother and leading a band of warriors from Malinalco, he plotted the end of the Mexica. In secret, Copil met with the rulers of neighboring tribes. They were already wary of the Mexica, but Copil drove them to outright hostility.

Copil died in his ambush on the Mexica. Huitzilopochtli, in his wisdom, warned his favored people of the ambush, and they ambushed Copil in turn. They captured him and his warriors and sacrificed their hearts to the sun. But the damage was already done, and the neighboring tribes challenged the Mexica in war after war. Despite attrition and the loss of their leader Huitzilihuitl, the Mexica fought desperately and earned their survival and their enemies' respect.

Mexica Diplomacy

The Mexica went from Chapultepec to Colhuacan, where visions from Huitzilopochtli instructed them to avoid war at any cost and act with utmost diplomacy. Colhuacan's king greeted them well and offered them the land called Tizapan, a hostile land no one had bothered to settle. Under their patron's direction, the Mexica accepted.

Ruins of the Predecessors

The Mexica's time in Coatepec is also when they first discovered the traces of their predecessors, the Toltec. Known to the Mexica by their ruins, the Toltec were great artisans who crafted many wonders, and the Mexica learned some of their arts sifting through the ruins at Chingu. Some of these arts are closely held family secrets and may be supernatural.

Also secret is the cause of the Toltec's decline. Their city was and remains a ruin, and the impetus to move on (and consequent civil war) came directly after an exploration of the ruins. What ended the Toltec, and whether it has anything to do with the great mural of giant serpents consuming humans, remains a secret to all but Huitzilopochtli's greatest priests.

Through great effort and determination, the Mexica made the land more fertile and they flourished. They mixed with the Colhuacan and married into the noble families, gathering political power. Their domesticity grew until it angered Huitzilopochtli. They were becoming too complacent in his eyes, so he sent his priests visions that they were nearly to their final destination. The god commanded that they leave Colhuacan in a most shocking manner.

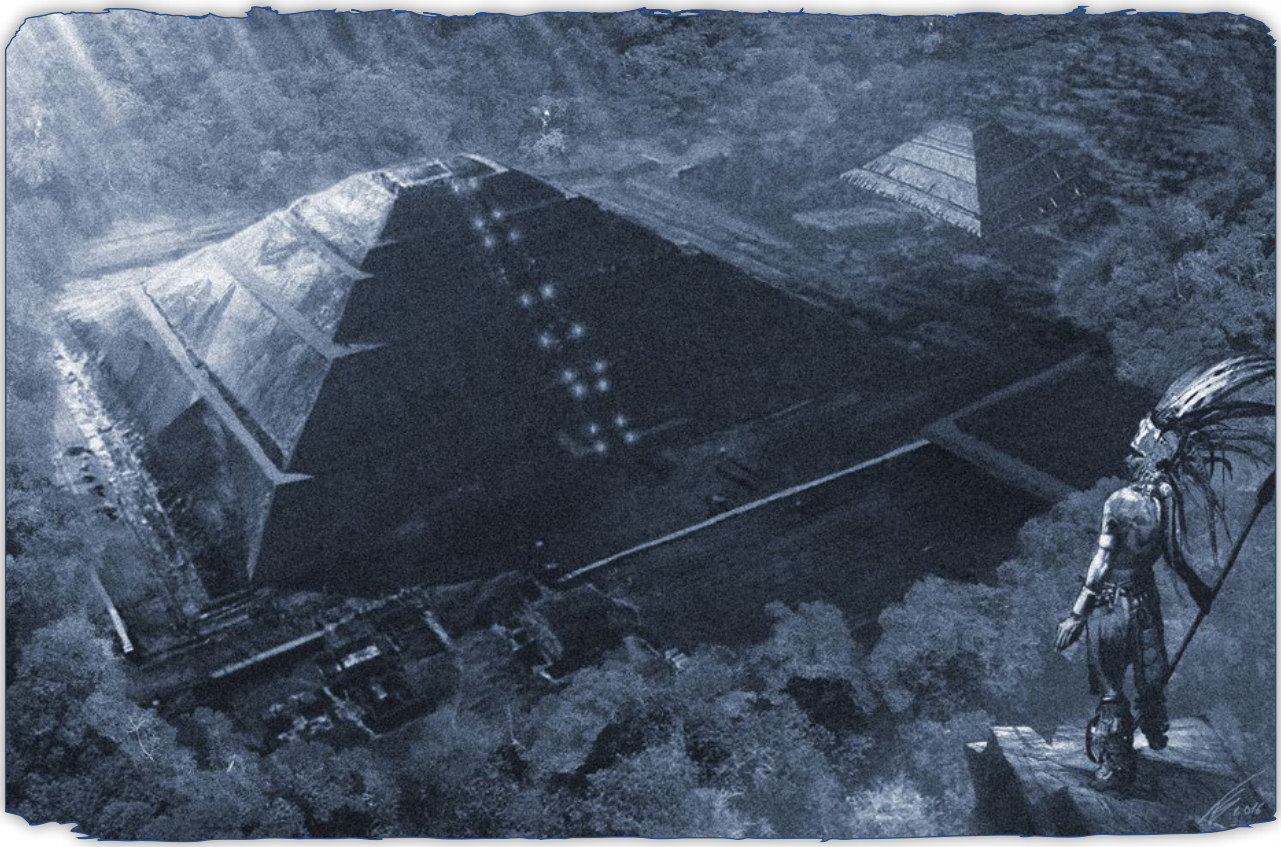
Through an emissary, the Mexica asked that the Colhua king permit them to crown his daughter the Mexica queen and Huitzilopochtli's bride. When King Achitometl came for the celebration feast, he discovered the high priest of Huitzilopochtli wearing his daughter's skin after having sacrificed her to his god. Enraged, the king ordered every one of his citizens out to slay the Mexica. The resulting war left the Mexica homeless and diminished, and only the appearance of Huitzilopochtli held them together. It was time to go to the promised land.

On searching, they discovered a section of Lake Tetzcoco that was crystal clear, where every plant was purest white, and white animals swam in or flew above the waters. No greater sign could exist for the people from Aztlan, and the sign guided them to Huitzilopochtli's final sign: the heart of Copil, where its blood had watered a cactus, on which an eagle consumed a snake.

There they built their city, on an island in the middle of Lake Tetzcoco, surrounded by enemies, over two hundred years after their migration began. They called it Tenochtitlan.

Before Tenochtitlan

Where the mighty city of Tenochtitlan now sits was once a barren island on the salt lake Tetzcoco. The nearby



ruins that the Aztec name Teotihuacan, meaning "city of the gods," came from a time long before any tribe settled on Tenochtitlan's site. Devoted to worship of the early gods, it is built on a series of caverns that provide access to the underworld and sources of the world's fertility. It also contains the Pyramid of the Sun and the Pyramid of the Moon, and the Avenue of the Dead that connects them.

The Toltec, another culture known now by the name the Aztecs bestowed them, preceded the Aztec into the Valley of Mexico. They were a mixed people, made of Olmec, Mixtec, and even those Chichimec tribes that preceded the Mexica out from Aztlan.

However mortal they were, the Toltec developed a reputation for wisdom and skilled artisanship, and their city of Tula was the greatest city of its era. Though the city fell and the people scattered, the inhabitants of the Valley of Mexico retain a sense of the Toltec majesty and possession of the land. For that reason, no Aztec noble fails to claim descent from the noble Toltec, usually through Colhua heritage.

City of Gods, City of Devils

Teotihuacan was indeed built by supernatural forces for immortal motivations, but it was not the birthplace or meeting place of the gods as the Aztec believe. Instead, it was the creation of a ring of demons, seeking to construct a replacement for the cosmology that they had rejected. If they could impose it on the world, they reasoned, it might serve as a wedge through which they could displace the God-Machine, at least by a hairsbreadth.

Nudging settlers into building their city above natural caves and lava tubes, they inspired the powerful of the tribe. "These caves are of great importance," they whispered. "They lead to the underworld and grant the earth its fertility. Build toward them that you might better worship them, consider them highest." And the Teotihuacanos did.

The Unchained hoped to build Teotihuacan into a weapon with which they could break the God-Machine. They built a great army and familiarized the populace with the occult, and at some point the ring ruled openly. Some Unchained believe Teotihuacan's military and occult might was enough to hold off the God-Machine's angels and cultists, while others hold that the ring discovered a major piece of Infrastructure that the God-Machine wanted intact and held it for ransom. Some believe that the ring tapped into a source of arcane power so alien that the God-Machine could not understand or anticipate it, and wielded it in the defense of their Hell on Earth. A few outcasts insist that the Unchained of Teotihuacan found some way to wield the faith of their followers against their enemies, using it as a wedge and hammer against the God-Machine's overbearing influence.

No demon has yet learned the truth of the matter, and with the passing of the years, it seems ever less likely that anyone will. The only certain thing is that the city of the gods neither destroyed the God-Machine nor outlived it. The demons made their Hell, and in all likelihood they died with it.



Bloodline of Nobility and Madness

The Toltec reputation for craftsmanship is deserved. Their mosaics, metal ornaments, and ceramics are of the finest quality and still sought centuries after the people's fall. Even more sought after is their bloodline. Believed to be wise and represent the height of nobility, every noble from petty lord to king wants Toltec ancestry.

This is largely the work of one Toltec sorcerer, whose name and identity are lost to history. Having worked a great enchantment, the sorcerer ensured that any descendant who engaged in the art of skinchanging would return the sorcerer to life in the first-time skinchanger's body. Such a work of sorcery is useless if a bloodline dies out, so the sorcerer worked hard to have as many children as possible, and also to encourage the world to continue the bloodline.

Other Tribes

The Valley of Mexico was a populated place before the Mexica ever arrived and began their ascent from tribe to empire. Many tribes lived there when the Mexica came to the region, including the Otomí, Olmec, Mixtec, Colhua, and the six tribes of the Chichimec who had preceded the Mexica out from Aztlan, including the Xochimilcas, Chalcas, Tepanecas, and others. These tribes established more than a score of towns or small cities around the lakes of the valley.

In the late stages of the Mexica migration and the early period of Tenochtitlan, these tribes were rivals and enemies, all more established than the Mexica. As Tenochtitlan grew in power, these other tribes and cities became allies or tributaries. They retained distinct styles and cultures throughout.

Rise to Power

With the foundation of Tenochtitlan, the Mexica became known to the surrounding tribes as the Aztec. They still called themselves the Mexica, or the Mexica-Colhua to reflect their ties to the tribes that had preceded them. They had achieved the goal set out for them by Huitzilopochtli, but they were not yet a name to be feared. They had little food or resources, and they were still weak from the most recent trials that had almost destroyed the tribe. To worsen matters, nearby Azcapotzalco levied heavy taxes on them, demanding the tribute to refrain from driving them off, and the taxes became heavier when the Mexica asked for some relief.

The Aztec spent nearly a hundred years struggling in their promised land of Tenochtitlan before the third Aztec king Itzcoatl forged the Triple Alliance that would be the core of the Aztec Empire, allying Tenochtitlan with Tetzcoco and Tlacopan. Through strong military, the alliance freed the Aztecs from tyranny and allowed them to begin to spread their influence, conquering territory, establishing colonies, and exacting tribute. For the first time, wealth flowed into Tenochtitlan, and Itzcoatl's death was mourned with a lavish 80-day funeral.

Motecuhzoma Ilhuicamina was the first king of a truly powerful Aztec Empire. Ruling with the might created by his predecessor Itzcoatl, he gave the hand of friendship to allies and smote enemies, expanding Aztec territory and raiding their treasuries to fund the construction of a great temple to Huitzilopochtli. He is a remembered and revered figure among the Aztec of today.

The Huastecs were one of Motecuhzoma's notable conquests. Priests even today remember the mysterious stranger who came among them and convinced their king to look to the northeast. Their temple, she said, contained great treasure and power. She swayed the king, and he fielded the armies of the Triple Alliance. When his soldiers brought back treasures from the temple and placed the icon of Great Nahualpilli, the Huastec god, in the temples of Tenochtitlan, she held secret converse with Motecuhzoma in its presence and then disappeared. Thereafter the *nahualtin* became part of the priesthood.

Then to Now

From Motecuhzoma I to the present, the Aztec kings have expanded the empire's territory with mixed success. Axayacatl overcame a coup by Tenochtitlan's sister city of Tlatelolco and as punishment conquered Tlatelolco and integrated it with Tenochtitlan. He fared less well outside the Valley of Mexico. His attempt to conquer the Tarascans, long-lost siblings of the Mexica, ended in failure. The Tarascans still held a grudge and retained the fierce fighting spirit of the Mexica, and defeated Axayacatl in the field.

Tizoc was a weak king who pursued non-military interests. A military conspiracy deposed him with poison.

But King Ahuitzotl, current ruler of Tenochtitlan and most powerful king of the Triple Alliance, is a strong ruler with a good military mind, and the future of the Aztec Empire is bright.

Calpulli: Where We Are

Ahuitzotl sits the throne in Tenochtitlan, and all the known world knows of the Aztec and their military prowess. Tribute in the form of food, cloth, stone, labor, art, and slaves flows to the city from its many territories. The nobles of Tenochtitlan are fantastically wealthy, and trade brings even common laborers a level of prosperity uncommon elsewhere in the empire.

Daily Life

The Aztec are hard workers. They share the cultural knowledge that only dedication, effort, and community brought them through centuries of migration to a position of dominance. Every Aztec knows that the tribe came near extinction many times, and they carry that urge to work into their daily tasks, including their craftsmanship and farming.

Truth vs. Myth

This chapter presents the Aztec legends about their origin and migration as largely true: They came out of a Garden of Eden, exhorted by the god Huitzilopochtli, who promised them a great destiny at the end of the road. He guided them through dreams and led them through adversity to ascendance over the Valley of Mexico and much of Mesoamerica.

In the real world, it is more likely that a charismatic high priest inspired the Mexica to leave their home, and then a series of coalitions of priests continued to drive the tribe when internal conflict threatened to change its path. The priests had the tribe's welfare in mind and possibly believed their visions and dreams, but probably never quite forgot that they would lose credibility if they permitted the exodus to cease before finding Huitzilopochtli's promised land.

And of course, in the Chronicles of Darkness, it was probably a combination of the realistically political and the bizarrely supernatural.

A common family lives in an adobe, single-room home divided into four areas: sleeping, kitchen, dining, and the shrine. Every family also has a steam bath, a separate structure kept stoked for its therapeutic value. Cleanliness is an important Aztec value. The homes of the wealthy and noble, apart from the kings and high priests, are similar in shape to that of commoners, differing mostly in material and displayed wealth.

Up to twelve people live in a single home, in an immediate- or extended-family arrangement. Some family units comprise two families, often brothers, living together for economic benefit. Aztec culture doesn't limit other family forms, particularly polygamy. Only economic means limits a family, leading to more multiple marriages among the nobility. Fidelity and honesty are important Aztec values, which leads them to prosecute adultery with harsh punishments, often death.

Aztec families value children highly, but also believe that they require strict teaching to raise them to become good members of society. Parents love their children and discipline them with cuts, beatings, and forced inhalation of chili smoke to teach them proper behavior.

Children learn the skills they'll need as adults from a young age. A boy learns labor and traversing the marketplace and his father's trade. A girl learns weaving, spinning, the preparation of food, and animal husbandry. Both enter the public school system, beginning around age 15 but sometimes as early as 9 or 10, where they learn Aztec history and culture from respected teachers.

A noble child leads a similar early life to a common child. If her position of privilege makes life easier, it doesn't show. As exemplars of Aztec ideals, noble children must learn to embody that way of life, and they receive harsh punishments when they fail to meet those standards. When the age of public education comes, noble children attend *calmecac*, a school for priests, administrators, and generals, where they learn history, religion, and command.

Gender

Gender roles in the Aztec culture are strict. The traditional division of authority is that women manage the household internal affairs, and men manage the household's interaction with the rest of the world. Men inevitably learn the art of war, and all spend some time as warriors. Those who excel earn great honors and respect and advance socially. This is one of the few ways for *macehualtin*, the common farmers, to give their children opportunities for social advancement. Those who do not become honored warriors return to the trade inherited from their fathers, anything from the downtrodden pack carrier to the highly regarded book-painter.

Women marry earlier than men (mid-teens compared to early 20s), and widely serve as the economic backbone of their families. They prepare food, weave for home use and for the marketplace, and tend the family animals. Aztec culture most values and honors women for childbirth, and a woman who dies in childbirth receives a warrior's funeral and ascends to the same heaven as great warriors.

Some women earn respect by becoming matchmakers, integral parts of the rituals arranging marriage. A midwife also holds a position of respect worthy of wearing the turquoise earplug. The midwife manages the household while a mother-to-be is pregnant, and warns the newborn of the dangers of life after birth.

Society discourages people from breaking out of these gender roles through cultural pressure, expressed through shaming and occasionally violence. Women who want to exert their influence on the world, and men who are happier managing a household, can sometimes achieve these desires through cooperative spouses. It's understandably not enough for some.

Angered by the binding restrictions of their culture, a small number of women have found a way out of the system. They've discovered ways to take on the forms of men and walk whatever roles they like in the world. They call themselves the Cihualtlactah, when they bother with a group name at all.

Education

In Tenochtitlan, public education is mandatory. The people consider it a symbol of their unity and superiority, and both schools for common folk and nobles teach Aztec history and religion. *Telpochcalli*, the house of youths, additionally trains boys to be soldiers. *Calmecac*, the priest academy, additionally teaches oration, greater depth of religious study, military tactics, and leadership.

Admission to the *telpochcalli* comes with a lip piercing to indicate one's status, while a distinct scarification accompanies admission to the *calmecac*. A student attends school for seven to ten years, including the training for war the boys transition into once they reach 15. Girls leave once they become married, generally around age 15 but sometimes earlier.

Discipline is severe. A teacher might discipline an unruly student with maguey spines, fire, or the smoke of burning chili peppers. The *telpochcalli* is less strict than the *calmecac*, where students who drink or engage in sexual activities might be put to death.

Each school regards the other as its rival, primarily because of the social stratification. *Calmecac* students consider the *telpochcalli* students undisciplined, and the common students think the noble students arrogant. Additionally, the patron gods of the schools (Quezalcoatl for *calmecac*, Tezcatlipoca for *telpochcalli*) are traditional rivals. Students of both anticipate the month of Atemoztli for its mock battle.

Food and Drink

Maize is the Aztec staple, the most important plant in the Aztec world, and literally a gift from the gods. It makes tortillas, tamales, *atole*, *pozole*, and corn on the cob. Simply, it grows best and most widely in the region and provides good nourishment. It is a favorite metaphor for all that is good and valuable.

Beans are the second-most common food and the most common stuffing for tamales. Maize and beans are present at every meal. Chili peppers strike a close third as the most common source of flavor, and they are so important that some forms of fasting mean simply absenting chilies from one's diet.

Commoners also eat such foods as tomatoes, avocadoes, squash, amaranth seeds, honey, cherries, insects, fish, and even farmed algae. The prickly pear makes a succulent dessert. Nobles have broader selections of everything, enjoying a wide variety of foods. Some kings even eat fish from the Gulf of Mexico, 80 leagues from the city, every day.

Appearance

Strict laws tie one's appearance to one's social status. Commoners wear simple slip-on garments of certain materials and prescribed lengths with limited decoration. The higher-ranked a commoner, the more she can vary her dress. Nobles have access to luxury fabrics such as cotton and can dress in elegant styles that denote their importance. Soldiers who achieve success in war receive permission to wear specific garments to honor their service and elevate their status.

Hairstyles and accessories are similarly divided. Specific styles of hair mark one as a youth, successful warrior, commoner, teacher, mother, and so on. Priests wear their hair long and, in contrast with the Aztec penchant for cleanliness, do not wash out the blood of sacrifices they conduct.

Ear and lip plugs and nasal piercings also mark status. Materials such as jade and turquoise mark one as a noble, respected elder, or as a commoner who has earned additional status. Only nobles may wear lip plugs, and only the most powerful (such as royalty) may wear a ring or staff piercing the septum.

Priestly Life

Priests lead clean, chaste lives, striving for purity and piety in all things. Their duties are to perform the holy rituals, administer to the priesthood, and educate future priests. They pray three times each day and once each night, pay penance through fasting and ritual self-sacrifice of blood, and perform heavy physical labor. Their black cloaks and long, blood-matted hair make them easy to recognize on sight.

Highest of the priesthood are the **high priest of Huitzilopochtli** and the **high priest of Tlaloc**. These are elected positions. Candidates can nominally come from any walk of life, but most often come from the nobility. They are the only priests permitted to marry, but they still live in moderation.

Fire priests perform the human sacrifices. They wield the flint knife used for cutting open the chest, and they pull out the heart and offer it to the sun. Theirs is a pivotal role, for if the Aztecs fail to sacrifice to the gods, the sun will stop rising and the world will end.

A ***tlamatini*** is a revered teacher-priest, broadly considered wise, trustworthy, and good. One does not have the authority of a priest administering to the entire priesthood or teaching at the *calmecac*, but he has immense respect.

Nahualtin are the priests of the Great Nahualpilli, god of magic, sorcery, and deception. The Aztecs stole his idol from the temple of the Huastec after defeating them during the reign of Motecuhzoma I. On the advice of a stranger, they took the icon and his power for themselves. The remaining Huastec wish to steal him back, but they could never do so without trickery, as befits the god.

Nahualtin are few in number. They are feared for their ability to take on animal shapes and learn one's shameful secrets, but revered for their role in bringing rain to the fields and mitigating the damage of hail and storms. A *nahualli* lives an even more ascetic life than most priests, and believes this devotion grants him great power. Though all priests guard their codices and reading from the commoners, *nahualtin* are the most secretive and guard their learning from all other priests.

The ***tetonalmacani*** is the priest of the true name. Each Aztec child receives one such name from the divinatory book

at birth, an astrological name that shapes her destiny. This true name, and thus a person's fate, can become diseased or lost, and the *tetonalmacani* retrieves the name or helps it recover. The *tetonalmacani* knows a secret language that only he and others who know his mysteries can speak. He uses this language to heal sick names, or to curse them.

Cihuatlamacazque are the female priests of the Aztecs. They teach girls who go to school, lead worship of the Earth-mother deities and the maize goddesses, and direct certain related festivals, though the priesthood does not permit them to officiate or preside over sacrifices.

Warfare

For the Aztec, war has two functions. The first is economic: Conquest opens further markets to their trade and submits those territories and tribes to demands of tribute. That tribute funnels wealth into the capital city of Tenochtitlan (and the other cities of the Triple Alliance), making the nobility very wealthy and raising the city's general standard of living.

Second is religious. The gods require the energy of mortals to continue sustaining the world. They have already sacrificed what they can to propel the sun through the sky and prevent the end of the Movement Sun. It is now the Aztecs' duty to do the same, and that requires human sacrifice. The priesthood and the faith of all Aztec people encourage the king to send them to war, where they take captives for the sacrifices that keep the world whole.

As a result, while the focus of war for the Aztec is similar to anywhere else — conquest and economic gain — individual tactics focus on disabling and capturing the enemy, not killing him. A warrior who kills his enemy receives no recognition from his superiors. A capture, in contrast, is worth such honor that the Aztec have a clear method for divvying up ownership of the captive among those who share the success.

An average battle between the Aztec and an enemy tribe opens with bows and slings. Some generals hold the opening volley until the enemy comes within 80 yards or so to maximize damage. They time their assault to use up their ammunition as the enemy comes within range for the atlatl, at which time the archers and slingers withdraw. After a quick few volleys of atlatl darts, the shock troops advance.

The most experienced and bravest warriors enter the fray first, supported by squads of mixed veteran and novice warriors. Warriors cycle in and out of the front line to relieve those before them and ensure that the front line remains fresh. The general tries to keep the line from being outflanked and, when possible, to surround the enemy and cut them off from reinforcements.

Strategically, the Aztec value any tactic that succeeds. Honor derives from victory and providing captives to the priests home in Tenochtitlan, not from a fair fight. The ambush is a signature of the Aztec, particularly retreating to draw out the enemy and then attacking from concealed locations once the enemy passes. In more than one instance, the Aztec king deceived the enemy with a retreat only to defeat them with soldiers hidden under mats of grass or straw.

Now that their power and influence has grown, the Aztec draw on tributary states to supply their army in the field. That same broad range of conquered territories gives the Aztec a defensive advantage over their foes, because any army marching on the city has great difficulty finding support or supplies for their troops.

Flower Wars

The Triple Alliance cannot easily conquer every enemy. Other empires own much of the land that the nobles of Tenochtitlan would like to claim as tributaries. Marching on them directly isn't as simple as taking a city. An overrun city has few remaining warriors, most having been slain or taken captive. Virtually all swiftly offer tribute. A larger enemy, one that owns a great deal of territory, meets the Aztec warriors at its borders. The battles happen on less valuable ground, and when the enemy loses, it can retreat and recover while the Aztec must secure territory worth little. Flowers wars offer another option.

Called *xochiyaoyotl*, a flower war is a ritual war on a small scale, consisting of prearranged battles with limited armies. Though warriors seek to capture enemies in any engagement, in a normal war the goal of gathering sacrifices is equal with that of achieving territorial gains. Not so in a flower war, where the primary purpose is to provide both sides with captives for sacrifice. Warriors eschew killing in a flower war, trying only to take captives.

Flower wars provide the Aztecs an opportunity to impress the enemy with their military might. Over a series of flower wars, or even a single decisive engagement, the enemy might elect to join the empire and pay tribute rather than face that military on a field with fewer rules. And if not, the empire arranges continuing flower wars until the mock combats achieve the desired effect, all the while gaining sacrificial captives.

The ritual battles have the bonus effect of giving novice warriors an opportunity to learn on the battlefield from more experienced warriors, and of freeing up much of Tenochtitlan's military to attack other enemies and expand in other directions. These benefits remain secondary to capturing enemies and pushing the Aztec's political agenda.

Economy

Tenochtitlan depends on trade. Built on an island in the middle of a salt lake, it is in a disadvantageous place for agriculture. It isn't possible to sustain a population of around 200,000 without a great deal of food from outside. This is one reason the Aztec spent the first century after founding their great city in their promised land paying tribute to another tribe. They gained power slowly through trade and diplomacy, until they were strong enough to cast off external tribute and become a conquering nation.

Having operated at this disadvantage for so long, it's little surprise that the Aztec merchants are both skillful and respected. Their deals brought in what little advantage the Aztecs could eke out while they were the underdogs. Now that they're on top of the heap, it only brings in more and more.

The Great Market

Tlatelolco houses the greatest market in the Americas. Tlatelolco was originally a distinct settlement founded by the Mexica. It shares the island with Tenochtitlan and remained independent until its ruler tried to conquer Tenochtitlan through trickery during the reign of Axayacatl. In the aftermath, Tenochtitlan took control of its sister city. They grew together into one large metropolis, though retained their distinct identities.

Over 20,000 people visit the Tlatelolco market on a daily basis. Every five days, a special market day draws over forty thousand. Rulers of the city keep the market an orderly affair. They divide the marketplace up by commodity, making it easy to find all the instances of a given object, and making directions through the market (past the goldsmiths, right at the feather workers...) relatively simple. To keep things fair, a panel of a dozen judges sits in a hall at the market to hear disputes between consumers and vendors, and officials walk the marketplace to track quality, market trends, measurements, and fraud. They punish infractions with fines.

Administrators regulate the prices of several common commodities, primarily cacao beans and standard sizes of cotton cloth. Traders less frequently use small T-shaped bits of copper, or gold dust stored in the transparent stem of a quill, as units of exchange.

Everything and anything that can be found in the empire can be found in the Tlatelolco market, from the most basic foodstuffs to the greatest luxury ornaments permitted to those not royalty. There are other markets in the Valley of Mexico, some of which have reputations as specialty markets for luxury goods, jewels, dogs, or other things. But none matches the Tlatelolco market for sheer size, quantity, and variety.

Pochtecah

Not all trade takes place in the great market in Tenochtitlan's backyard. The ***pochtecah*** are traders out of Tenochtitlan who travel the breadth of the conquered territories and outside them as well. Anywhere trade goes, they go.

The *pochtecah* aren't just merchants. They are observers and agents of Tenochtitlan, feeding not just wealth and goods into the city, but also intelligence. They are the primary source of information for the nobles and military on where and when neighbors are weak. External tribes know this, but they also know that killing or evicting a *pochtecatl* can be grounds for the Aztec to sweep in with their armies and conquer. It's a lose–lose scenario for any nation not strong enough to give the Aztec king pause.

Though technically commoners, the *pochtecah* are honored with a great deal of privilege. In addition to their personal wealth, they receive public acclaim, wear special capes and other clothing to mark their rank, and their children have access to education in the *calmecac*.

Traders known as ***tlaltlanime*** are some of the richest merchants in exchange for their valuable service: They bring slaves to Tenochtitlan from other lands. Bringing slaves is considered a religious duty, because slaves often wind up sacrificed. Even when the slaves all go to labor, the *tlaltlanime* are honored with special privileges, even among other *pochtecah*.

Nahualoztomecah are the merchants who go deepest into enemy territory and run the greatest risk of discovery. They disguise themselves as local natives and mimic their customs, learning everything they can. When they evade capture, they return with rare goods and valuable intelligence about enemy vulnerabilities and plans. When they are caught, they are killed and sometimes eaten.

Cosmology

The Aztec people have a complex theory of how the world works — the heavenly and shadowed realms, and the many gods. Luckily, they have a great many priests to help them keep it all straight.

The Celestial

Thirteen layers of celestial realms float above the Earth. They do not necessarily encompass what is good, but they do include all that sustains life on Earth, excepting the Earth itself and the human sacrifice that keeps it all running.

It begins with Omeyocan, the home of creator god Ometeotl. The three layers beneath that are the red sky, the yellow sky, and the white sky, all of which can sometimes be seen from Earth. Following those are the sky of ice and rays, the blue-green sky of wind, the black sky of dust, and the sky of stars of fire and smoke (containing the stars, planets, and comets). Next comes the home of Huixtocihuatl (goddess of salt) and birds, the course of Tonatiuh (the sun), the home of Citlalicue (the Milky Way), and the home of Tlaloc (rain god) and the moon. The habitable Earth is the thirteenth of the celestial layers.

The Underworld

Where the celestial plane has thirteen realms, the underworld has nine. It begins with the habitable layer of the earth, overlapping with the last of the celestial layers. Beneath this lie the paths of waters, the entrances to mountains, the hill of obsidian knives, the place of frozen winds, the place where the flags tremble, the place where people are flayed, and the place where the dead lie in eternal darkness. Each of these is an obstacle, a challenge for the dead to navigate on their trip from life to Mictlan, the ninth layer, the underworld where most Aztec live for eternity.

The Earth

The habitable Earth exhibits the duality of Ometeotl and so many other facets of the divine. It is part of the Earth, and therefore the underworld. It is part of the sky, and therefore the celestial. The Aztec call it Tlaticpac.

Directions and Associations

Direction	God	Color	Other
East	Xipe Totec	Red	Reeds, the region of Tlapallan
North	Tezcatlipoca	Black	Flint, Mictlampa, the region of the dead
West	Quetzalcoatl	White	House, the region of Cihuatlampa
South	Huitzilopochtli	Blue	Rabbit, the region of Huitztlampa
Center	none	none	Tenochtitlan, the Great Temple

Home to the people created by Quetzalcoatl, the Aztec consider the Earth composed of five directions, each associated with one of the four Tezcatlipocas and several other aspects. Tezcatlipoca is an important god, but the four Tezcatlipocas (of which Tezcatlipoca is one) are the children of Ometeotl.

The Gods

Many gods occupy the Aztec pantheon. While the Aztec primarily worship Huitzilopochtli, Tlaloc, and Tonatiuh (both an aspect of and distinct from Huitzilopochtli), they are syncretic conquerors. The gods, spirits, and revered figures of the tribes they defeat and incorporate into their empire gain a place in the Aztec rites and the Sacred Precinct of Tenochtitlan, though perhaps not a large one.

The Aztec believe that Ometeotl, the dual-gendered creator, birthed the four Tezcatlipocas — Tezcatlipoca (rulers, sorcery, conflict, change), Quetzalcoatl (wind, creation, water, life), Huitzilopochtli (the sun, war, the patron of the Mexica), and Xipe Totec (goldsmiths, spring, rebirth). Other major gods include Xiuhtecuhtli (turquoise, fire, time), Tlaloc (rain), Yacatecuhtli (merchants and travelers).

Every major god has several aspects and avatars. These facets of the gods are sometimes considered individuals, and sometimes treated solely as a part of the greater god. Huitzilopochtli is simultaneously the child of Ometeotl at the beginning of time, and of Coatlicue far later, and slew his 400 half-brothers upon his birth. Some rituals reference all the gods, even the greatest, as different faces of Ometeotl. Their identities are fluid.

A host of lesser gods and spirits also receive worship in various rituals throughout the year. The Tlaloque are among the most frequently revered. As servants of Tlaloc, they are responsible for helping to bring the rain, which is so valued that it makes Tlaloc one of the priesthood's two most revered gods. Individually, the Tlaloque are the spirits of the mountains and many natural phenomena, from mists to different kinds of clouds or rains.

Gods are not omnipotent. Some are limitless, such as the original creator Ometeotl and his/her children (or aspects) Tezcatlipoca and Quetzalcoatl. But Huitzilopochtli, Tonatiuh, and Tlaloc, among others, require energy to perform their tasks of moving the sun and bringing rain. Just as the most powerful deities used their power to create and nourish humanity, it is now humanity's responsibility to nourish and sustain the gods that keep the cycles of the world turning. Thus the human sacrifice.

The Afterlife

Most Aztec go to Mictlan when they die. Everyone who dies of old age, natural causes, disease, accident, or anything that doesn't send them someplace specific comes to Mictlan, regardless of social status. They are often buried with a Techichi dog, which they need to pass some of the challenges between them and Mictlan. The journey takes four years, after which the soul dissipates.

Those who die by drowning or lightning go to Tlalocan, the paradise garden of Tlaloc. Men who die in war and women who die in childbirth go to Tonatiuh-Ilhuicac, the Heaven of the Sun. This is a place of honor, and those who come here accompany the sun on its travels and occasionally visit Earth in the form of birds or butterflies. Finally, infants who die go to Chichihuacuauhco, where they suckle on the wet-nurse tree until the time comes for them to be reborn. These souls, unlike those that make the trip to Mictlan, are immortal.

Some victims of human sacrifice, particularly captured warriors and those slaves who have lived as an avatar of a given god, also go to one of the honored heavens, typically the Heaven of the Sun.

Current Events

Ahuitzotl reigns over some of the Aztec Empire's greatest years. A series of events from his reign, in rough chronological order, follow. Use these as settings or inspirations for chronicles set in this period.

- The year is 1486. Ahuitzotl, son of the revered King Motecuhzoma, takes the throne. Rumors abound that a military conspiracy poisoned the previous king, perhaps at the instigation of Ahuitzotl's brother Tizoc or Ahuitzotl himself. The elite that elected Ahuitzotl murmur with discontent after their dissatisfaction with his two older brothers.



- Early in Ahuitzotl's reign, he takes the Aztec armies to the field and crushes a Huastec rebellion. This demonstration of Aztec military power and Ahuitzotl's tactical skill cements the favor of the Aztec nobility. Unknown to most, the Huastec rebellion covered for an attempt to recover the icon of the Great Nahualpilli. Success would rob the Aztec *nahualtin* of their sorcery and return it to the Huastec.

- Ahuitzotl presides over the completion of the Great Temple to Huitzilopochtli. Though it had been considered complete many times, the most recent renovations and enlargements took many years, and the people of Tenochtitlan consider the completion of this phase momentous. All the city and more come out to the holy celebration, where Ahuitzotl leads the highest priests in sacrificing nearly 80,000 people over four continuous days.

- *Pochtecah* return from the Tarascan lands to the west to have a private council with King Ahuitzotl. The king dispatches soldiers to build and reinforce fortresses on the border with the Tarascans, but not to keep them out. Priests with secret orders reside in each fortress.

- Word of great wildfires, described as raging gods of flame, reach Tenochtitlan from the north and west. Soon after, a great wildfire rises in the west and rages toward the Valley of Mexico. While refugees pour into the valley, Ahuitzotl commands the *nahualtin* to call rain from Tlalocan to protect the valley and douse the flames. When a stranger performs the task instead, the *nahualtin* save themselves from shame by naming her a lost member of their order.

- Ahuitzotl leads a number of military excursions, adding many names to the list of tributary states and expanding the borders of the empire. After a great success against the Zapotec, he declares himself and his successor *huey tlatoani*, great king, higher than the other members of the Triple Alliance and ruler of the Aztec Empire without peer.

- Out of a need for more soldiers and to better defend the expanding empire, Ahuitzotl decrees that all men of age 18 or older be trained for the arts of war. This applies to the entire empire, not just to Tenochtitlan, where all boys are already trained for war from a young age. At the same time, Ahuitzotl passes a secret decree to loyal kings, ordering them to train all women of age 16 or older in secret arts, to defend against an unspoken danger.

- As *huey tlatoani*, the king declares a royal hunt for his namesake. The ahuitzotl is a legendary creature that lives in the rivers and has a taste for human flesh. Covered in spikes, it has hands like a man, and another on the end of its tail, and it drags men down to drown them before eating them. Declaring that he will either eat its flesh and gain its cunning or live forever in the paradise of Tlalocan (as victims of the ahuitzotl are said to do), he takes a hunting party and seeks the creature.

  He holds a small private celebration of his return two months later, but makes no public announcement of what occurred on the hunt. Word spreads among the noble warrior societies that he encountered a god instead of the water beast, and he learned forbidden wisdom.

- Further war against the Mixtec brings much of the Valley of Oaxaca under Aztec rule. The king consults the elders of the warrior societies before leaving, and he takes with him a contingent of the *nahualtin* trickster-sorcerers. In addition to conquering the Valley of Oaxaca, he combats something other than people while there. Whether that secret war is a victory or loss goes unreported.

- On his return from Oaxaca, Ahuitzotl suffers from a mysterious disease. The priests cannot cure this affliction sent from the gods, though Ahuitzotl in private insists the disease was not of the gods. He eventually dies, not of the disease but of an accident, though onlookers watch as he stares up at the loose masonry for minutes before it falls on him.

Tonalpohualli: What is to Come

Using the sacred divinatory calendar and signs sent from the gods, the priests of Tenochtitlan can see what is to come. They read the futures of nobles and kings, of commoners, and of artisans and merchants. Do any of them see truth? Or is it all lies and trickery?

Motecuhzoma II

On the death of King Ahuitzotl, the council of elders convenes and elects Motecuhzoma Xocoyotzin as the next *huey tlatoani*. As the son of King Axayacatl and a prominent general during Ahuitzotl's successful military campaigns, the elders choose him from his brothers and cousins. Thus begins a most tumultuous period in Aztec history.

His ascension to the throne includes the most lavish coronation ceremony of all the Aztec kings. It begins with ritual cleansings, meditation, incense, four-day fasts, and blood penances. Those done, Motecuhzoma emerges to a cheering crowd wearing full regalia: gold armbands, emerald piercings and earplugs, a gold-and-emerald crown, and robes of jaguar hide and the finest fabrics. Days of speeches and feasts follow, periodically interrupted for more bloodletting from the new king. Motecuhzoma II makes promises to be humble and serve Tenochtitlan.

Then comes the coronation war. Motecuhzoma II leads the largest ritual war in history after his coronation to celebrate and honor the gods in his name. His armies capture

hundreds of the Tlaxcala, and the priests sacrifice them all. Following the sacrifices, allies and enemies attend the official inauguration feast. They bring gifts of gold, turquoise, rare feathers, exotic animals and foods, and so on. Motecuhzoma gives away gifts of enormous value as well to demonstrate his power and wealth. Nobles and powerful administrators jostle and politic for his favor to earn the greatest gifts and valued appointments, unaware everything is about to change.

Motecuhzoma makes changes immediately following his confirmation. Within months, he replaces all positions of authority with people from noble lines, and releases from service many of Ahuitzotl's appointees. The thousands of people who manage the city and empire are in turmoil, not least because under Motecuhzoma, release from authority often appears to be synonymous with execution. Administrators and lesser nobles who negotiated for the new king's attention a month ago now evade it.

In a dangerous move, he disbands the eagle warrior society, the eagle elders, and eliminates the position of eagle lord that sat on his council. Angered, the eagle elders publicly acquiesce and promptly go into hiding. Some stay within the city. Others flee to other territories where they can wait and watch and guide their brothers from a distance. The jaguar warriors escape a similar fate through a moving argument from one of the jaguar elders, convincing Motecuhzoma that those of common birth hold no positions of importance in their society. Some individual warriors manage to join the king's personal guard, as long as they are from the appropriate bloodlines.

Desiring a generation of nobles loyal only to him, Motecuhzoma takes in young boys from most of the noble families. Describing them as wards and apprentices, he trains them in loyalty and devotion more than strategy and religion, and has them executed at the slightest signs of disloyalty. Perceived treason in others, such as his administrators, results not just in their execution, but also in the enslavement of the traitor's family and confiscation of their property.

Altogether, these changes further divide an already-stratified society. Where before Tenochtitlan ran on limited egalitarianism, now there is no opportunity for advancement in social status or wealth. Where once commoners believed that the nobles lived harder lives as exemplars of the Aztec ideals, and thus earn their privileges and wealth, the people begin to doubt. Voices in the districts of Tenochtitlan dare to wonder aloud whether bloodline alone should decide so much. Most fall silent before long.

Motecuhzoma also shakes up the empire's external politics. He consolidates Aztec rule over many conquered territories with displays of military might. From existing tributaries, he demands crippling taxes, subjects them to harsh laws that do not apply to the original members of the Triple Alliance, and refuses them any voice in the politics that affect them. He also embarks on several military campaigns, adding lands to the south and to the east to the list of Aztec tributaries.

Though his new conquests remain quiet, older territories react to the increasing pressure. Several rise up with military force or refuse to provide tribute. Quetzaltepec and Tototepec, for examples, build defensive walls and trenches, refuse to pay taxes, and claim independence from the empire. Motecuhzoma crushes them with 400,000 soldiers, destroys both cities completely, and sends every male in both cities to be sacrificed as captives of war.

Even so, other cities continue to rebel. In an effort to impress and intimidate other territories he thinks might become restless, Motecuhzoma holds many flower wars. These demonstrations of military power slow but do not stop the trend of uprisings.

Arrival of Cortés

A dozen or so years after Motecuhzoma's ascension, neighboring ruler and friend Nezahualpilli of Tetzcoco brings him a warning. He has seen a comet in the sky, an omen that disaster is coming. He predicts powerful strangers will come, bringing with them the end of the Aztec Empire. Terrified, Motecuhzoma calls his closest cadre of astrologers, sorcerers, and priests. Their answers about the event, largely that the comet had passed unnoticed, enrage Motecuhzoma and earn them executions.

Some of the learned ones, particularly the *nahualtin* elders who survive the unexpected purge, go underground. Their powers of disguise enable them to remain hidden. They continue to perform their duties when able and watch history unfold. Several form small fellowships within the *nahualtin*. More than one fellowship has the downfall of the king as its central goal, but some are unrelated to the current troubles. It's only within the current chaos that an obsessed *nahualli* can get away with pursuing certain ends.

When ships arrive, Motecuhzoma sends emissaries to meet them. They try to dissuade the Spaniards from exploring deeper into the continent. When that fails, the emissaries bring the Spaniards to Tenochtitlan. In consultation with his new priests and diviners, Motecuhzoma decides that the strangers are descendants of the fair-skinned god Quetzalcoatl, and gives them rooms in the Palace of Axayacatl.

Believing the gods desire that he treat peacefully with Hernan Cortés, Motecuhzoma agrees to house arrest in his palace. He controls the empire from there, even leading wars from a distance during his imprisonment. Internal conflict plagues the priesthood. The high priest of Huitzilopochtli advocates for evicting the Spaniards or sacrificing them, due to anger at their imposition and fear that they truly are here to elevate Quetzalcoatl over Huitzilopochtli. The high priest of Tlaloc advocates patience and diplomacy.

Cortés brings the conflict to a boil when he insists on placing a cross atop the Great Temple alongside the Aztec gods, on the threat of pulling down the Aztec icons by force. Motecuhzoma and his advisors agree, but it shatters the priesthood. Outside of a few limited brawls, the priesthood manages not to go to war with itself. Politically, the spears are out between the few who support the king and the many angered

by the mistreatment of their gods. Dreams and visions from the gods begin insisting that the Spaniards be killed.

Angered warriors and nobles elect a new king: Cuitlahuac. Away from the Spaniards' eyes, he organizes resistance. When Cortés leaves the city to fight an army sent from Spain to arrest him, it seems like the perfect moment. Cuitlahuac conspires with many nobles to overthrow the Spaniards and drive them from the city during their lord's absence.

Strange, beautiful figures walk among the streets and canals of the city. They disappear whenever an observer looks away, and where they walk, people become ill. Disease spreads through Tenochtitlan. Spaniards appear immune, further inflaming the citizens against them.

While some will say that Pedro de Alvarado learned of the Aztec treachery and moved against it, in fact he acts out of greed. While Cortés is away, de Alvarado permits thousands



of Aztec nobles to attend a festival celebration only if they go unarmed. At the festival, he massacres them all. Some few escape into the city and rouse the soldiers against the Spaniards.

Tenochtitlan riots. Commoners and nobles alike rise up in anger over the murder. Alvarado insists the nobles were members of a plot to assassinate the Spaniards, but the insistence calms no one.

Cortés returns and forces Motecuhzoma to quell his people. In the midst of the king's speech, angry citizens hurl stones and darts, wounding Motecuhzoma. Riots break out everywhere, but the smallpox outbreak has left the resistance disorganized, and the Spaniards contain the riots. Motecuhzoma refuses treatment for his wounds and dies within days under mysterious circumstances. Aztecs insist the Spaniards killed him. King Cuitlahuac dies of smallpox with thousands of other Aztecs.



Resistance

In a secret ceremony, tribal elders pronounce Cuauhtemoc king. A son of Ahuitzotl, the elders and nobles hope that he will lead them to a victory against the occupying Spaniards. He gathers the resistance and channels Huitzilopochtli on Earth to drive out Cortés and his army.

This is Noche Triste, the Night of Sorrows. In addition to a god-warrior storming through their midst, warriors in eagle form harry the Spaniards and jaguar-men strike and vanish into the shadows. The *nahualtin* don the visages of ghostly women and inflict horrors and hallucinations on the conquistadors. Even a monster of metal and light rises up against the invaders, though other monsters appear to wrestle with the great beast.

The attacks devastate the Spaniards, who flee the city and take refuge in nearby cities, which they have already subjugated in the Valley of Mexico. While resisting attacks from Tenochtitlan there, messengers from nearby tribes come to Cortés. The greatest of these tribes is the Tlaxcalans, angry from mistreatment at Motecuhzoma's hands. The tribes see an opportunity to cast off the oppression of the Aztec Empire and become free. Few conquistadors remain, and the native tribes now become Cortés's army.

The new alliance lays siege to Tenochtitlan, cutting it off from fresh water, supplies, food, and reinforcements. Despite what sacrifices the Aztec make to their gods, no relief comes. Cortés sends messengers to Cuauhtemoc promising to leave the government in place as subjects of the crown, but Cuauhtemoc and his council refuse. After three months of hunger, skirmishes, and further deaths to smallpox, Cortés assaults the section of the city where Cuauhtemoc hides and flushes him out amid much destruction.

Captive, Cuauhtemoc resists interrogation about the location of the imperial treasures. He maintains that he has done his duty as king and now wishes only the release of death. Cortés insists that Cuauhtemoc accompany him on an expedition, a position of honor. Cuauhtemoc never returns. Aztecs accuse the Spaniards of taking him away to murder him, but the Spaniards are adamant that his disappearance is a mystery to them. Some use his disappearance to rally the resistance, but the Aztec are too scattered and broken. A handful retain the belief that Cuauhtemoc will return, an avenging avatar of Huitzilopochtli, to destroy the Spaniards.

Cortés's allies soon learn that the war for their freedom only put them in yoke to a different master. They, too, fight back. Weak from the war against Tenochtitlan and disease, and unable to form any alliances with other tribes amidst the feelings of distrust and betrayal between them, they fail.

After Conquest

Hernan Cortés becomes the governor of the land he named New Spain. Within about a decade, Antonio de Mendoza will become the viceroy of all Mexico. Laws pass restricting natives from living in Spanish areas and vice versa. The natives become unpaid labor on the massive estates given to arriving Spaniards. These landowners are responsible for the natives' well-being and their conversion to Christianity, but most land owners are exploitative and abusive.

Missionaries arrive soon after the conquest. They push Christianity on the natives, beginning by converting native nobles and leaders in the belief that they will influence their people to do the same. The conversion is a long process. Despite building over 12,000 churches with native labor, the missionaries never manage to eradicate the indigenous beliefs. Instead, they form a different flavor of Christianity.

Tecuani: The Supernatural

Strange things live outside of the Valley of Mexico. The more the Aztec nobility and priesthood claim to have the land pacified, the more the commoners wonder whether the monsters that stalk the deserts are part of the nobles' plans.

More than one group of skinchangers exists in the Aztec cultural milieu. The *nahualli* priest takes on the shape of various animals, hunting and haunting the populace in the name of social unity and cultural cohesion. Eagle warriors induct a select few of their number into their inner circle, teaching them how to transform into the creature they are named after. Jaguar warriors follow a similar tradition.

Other skinchangers do not serve the Aztec. The Kanaima, spirits serving a lost legacy, now stalk the deserts and sometimes wonder whether they are doing right. Creatures transformed by the mysterious functions of the God-Machine crawl the Earth and play out unknown roles in its calculations.

Servants of the Empire

Aztec culture is rich with people using supernatural talents to further the interests of Tenochtitlan. From priests wearing the skins of owls and ghosts, to warriors sharing blood with eagles, they aren't common, but they could be anywhere.

Nahualtin

Tenochtitlan is home to many thousands of priests, in many varieties. Fire priests make sacrifices to the sun, warrior priests march with the army, and priestesses run the worship of the Earth and maize cults. Jaguar priests, or *nahualtin*, stand apart from the others. Though part of the official priesthood, they are equally honored and feared. Their missions are to bring rain, and to pass among the people in animal forms and discover unacceptable behaviors.

A *nahualli* strikes an intimidating figure. All priests fast and bleed themselves out of respect for the gods, but a *nahualli* is an extreme ascetic even among the priesthood. His ears and lips are scarred from bloodletting. His hair hangs down to his knees — a symbol of great honor — and matted with blood old and fresh. His frame is gaunt, and his eyes have seen too much. He wears blood-red sandals and, when exercising his office, carries a golden shield.

No Aztec, commoner or priest, is happy to see a *nahualli* unannounced. The *nahualli* is the guardian of social order and proper behavior. When no one else is watching, one of the *nahualtin* may be watching from behind the eyes of an owl, jaguar, or other creature. Some take on the forms of ghostly women, and the methods they use to acquire those forms are uncomfortable topics even in a culture at ease with human sacrifice.

Equal to their role as eyes in the darkness is their role calling rain to the fields. It is far more welcome to the populace, and is the facet of the *nahualtin* that most Aztec prefer to think about. The power to influence the rain is far rarer than that of taking on animal shapes. It is a mystery few can peer through, and the *nahualtin* value their few members with the ability highly. Some achieve this power through negotiation with spirits, and perhaps a handful over the history of the empire are Obrimos, pursuing other mysteries in addition to those of the *nahualtin*.

ICHTACA, JAGUAR PRIEST

Did you really think no one was watching?

Background: Born to the nobility, Ichtaca has never wanted for anything. Even as a youth, that luxury felt unfitting to a member of the chosen people, responsible for sacrificing unto the gods to ensure the sun continues to move across the sky. Placed in the *calmecac* at an early age, he studied under the mysteries of the priesthood with eagerness and focus. Self-discipline came easily to him, and he always found his joy in exercising control over his emotional urges. If school bore any disappointment for him, it was that his strict behavior spared him the punishments others received for daring to taste *pulque* or look at women, and thus deprived him of opportunities to sacrifice more.

Ichtaca's entrance to the ranks of *nahualtin* surprised no one, though it strained his relationship with his parents. Ichtaca gained the respect of his peers with his many fasts and his dedication to self-sacrifice. Upon mastering the mystery of changing his shape, he spent many nights over many months watching his parents in the belief that finding transgression there would signal his true freedom from worldly bonds.

He never found such transgression, and a quiet word from his mentor eased him away from that obsession. Today, Ichtaca is a figure of some renown and much trepidation, even among the nobility and other priests. He does not command

other *nahualtin* — none has authority over any other — but many respect his opinion.

Description: Ichtaca stands tall at six feet, but his gaunt frame and visible ribs make him seem even taller. His blood-matted hair reaches nearly to his ankles and draws attention to the blood-red sandals that mark him as *nahualli*. When acting with the authority of his office, he bears a simple shield covered with a thin layer of beaten gold, owl feathers hanging below.

Ichtaca's face sits in a constant grimace of disapproval, and he looks at everyone around him, with only a few exceptions among his peers, as though he is examining them for some indication of wrongdoing. He wears little jewelry, but what he does wear is valuable, marking him with the high status befitting an honored *nahualli* of noble birth.

Storytelling Hints: Ichtaca treats everyone he meets with disapproval and suspicion. He considers transgressing against Aztec cultural ideals tantamount to betrayal of the empire, the king, and the gods, and he takes that very seriously. He is dedicated to the idea of sacrifice keeping the world from ending, and anything that threatens the Aztec culture risks the world's end. He's not being cruel to people who can't live up to his near-impossible standards. He's saving the world.

He's also cruel. As a youth, his pleasure came from mastering his emotions and urges, but that's become routine as he's aged. Now, he finds punishing those who transgress most rewarding. He prefers to punish a transgressor by finding something she loves, preferably related to her fault, and ensuring she can never enjoy it again. Just as frequently, though, transgressors simply become sacrifices.

Even the priesthood is not safe from Ichtaca's judging gaze, and his opinion is respected enough that he can make life difficult for anyone. Other *nahualtin* pose a similar issue, but Ichtaca is particularly motivated and relentless. Anyone breaking with tradition and social norms — as players' characters tend to do — may earn Ichtaca's unpleasant attentions.

Virtue: Disciplined

Vice: Vicious

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics (Religion) 3, Investigation (Transgression) 3, Occult (Skinchanging) 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Stealth (Owl Form) 2, Survival 1

Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Empathy (Deceit) 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 2, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Allies 2 (Priesthood), Mystery Cult Initiation 4 (Jaguar Priests), Skinthief (owl, Bare Necessities 2, Resilient Form 2, Twisted Tongue) 5*, Status 3 (Priesthood

*Three dots in this come from Mystery Cult Initiation.

Health: 7

Willpower: 7

Integrity: 5

Size: 5

Speed: 9

Defense: 3 (5 with shield)

Initiative: 5

Armor: 0

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Flint Knife	0L	1

To recast Ichtaca as one of the rarer *nahualtin* who influence the weather, replace his Skinthief Merit with Skinthief (rain spirit, Essence Pool 2, Renewable Skins, Spirit Powers 2) 5.

Eagle Warriors

One of the two premier warrior societies of the Aztec Empire, the eagle warriors (*cuacuauhtin*) are approximately a thousand of the most skilled and seasoned warriors in the Aztec army. Treated with high honor by all ranks, they have the right to wear certain forms of dress, including eagle feathers. Greater than even that honor is the opportunity for their sons to study at the *calmecac*, as nobles' children do.

Even among the *cuacuauhtin*, few join the ranks of the *cuauhualtin*, who practice the art of donning the eagle's shape. It is a sign of Huitzilopochtli's favor and Quetzalcoatl's blessing to learn such a thing, and the elder warriors of the *cuacuauhtin* guard admission to those ranks well.

To be considered, one must capture at least 10 enemy soldiers of worth, spend 13 days tracking an enemy's movement without getting caught, and bring down an eagle with a single atlatl-propelled dart. After these achievements, the elders weigh whether a candidate will bring further honor to them through his actions. If so, they induct him.

The rites to join the ranks of the *cuauhualtin* involve prayers to Quetzalcoatl and sharing blood with a captured eagle, releasing it otherwise unharmed. For a period thereafter, the eagle warrior can take that eagle's shape and soar into the sky. Once every 260 days, the *cuauhualtin* must seek out this or another eagle and renew the bond. Many sustain an ongoing relationship with the same eagle and mourn when that eagle dies.



CUAUHTEZTLI, EAGLE MYSTERY WARRIOR

Yes, I understand completely, great lord. Thank you.

Background: Born to commoner parents, Cuauhteztli always excelled at the arts of war. In a sense, he had no choice: He detested his father's trade as a lowly pack carrier, and if he had not earned recognition as a warrior he would have had no choice but to follow his father's footsteps or flee Tenochtitlan in shame.

Cuauhteztli distinguished himself in the war against the Tarascans during Axayacatl's rule. In a series of battles otherwise considered a disaster, Cuauhteztli brought several captives home to Tenochtitlan during the retreat. Successes in later flower wars earned his admission to the eagle warriors and brought honor to his family.

Despite his ascent through the ranks, the honors heaped upon him, the privileges given him, and the exalted company he now keeps, he retains a keen sense of his origins. He feels both pride that he has so far exceeded his humble birth, and also a disbelief that his stature has truly changed. When surrounded by warriors of noble birth, which is most of the time now, he retains a tendency to follow their lead rather than exercise his own now-considerable authority.

Description: Cuauhteztli is a lithe and muscular Aztec of average height. He rarely smiles, and stands in a way that conveys he is ready to act the moment it is right that he do so. He looks at strangers like he knows how to dismantle them and is ready to do so. That softens into love when confronted with his family. Among his wife and children, he is all smiles, and it changes his appearance considerably.

Cuauhteztli wears the moderately decorated clothes of an honored warrior, with the eagle adornments permitted by his membership in the *cuacuauhtin*. In battle, he wears a full suit of padded armor adorned with eagle feathers, and a shield with similar decoration.

Storytelling Hints: With most commoners, Cuauhteztli is confident but kind. He's come from that stock, and he knows both how hard it can be and how intimidating it can be when confronted with a high-status warrior. Because of this, he tries to make it easier for commoners who interact with him, speaking gently and encouraging their input.

Among other warriors, he is confident and full of camaraderie. With most, he is on an equal footing and comfortable. When more than a few noble-born warriors enter the mix, he quiets and offers fewer opinions.

Cuauhteztli is earnest, dutiful, strong, and self-sacrificing. He's not cruel and he doesn't relish others' pain. He can serve as a welcoming introduction to the culture, or a reminder that not everybody is a monster.

Virtue: Loyal
Vice: Timid

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Crafts 1, Investigation 1, Medicine 2, Occult 2, Politics (Warrior Societies) 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl (Grappling) 4*, Stealth 2, Survival 1, Weaponry (Spear) 4 *

Social Skills: Animal Ken (Eagles) 1, Intimidation 1, Persuasion 1, Socialize 1

Merits: Contacts (*Telpochcalli* Teachers, Warriors), Professional Training 2 (Warrior), Resources 1, Skinthief (eagle, Animal Speech 1, Bare Necessities 2), Status 2 (Eagle Warriors)

* Asset Skills from Professional Training.

Health: 8

Willpower: 5

Integrity: 6

Size: 5

Speed: 10

Defense: 4 (6 with shield)

Initiative: 5

Armor: 0/2

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Dice Pool	Notes
Spear	2	7	9-Again
Unarmed	0	6	7 when grappling; 9-Again

Notes: Cuauhteztli only needs to renew his talisman every 260 days.

EAGLE

Description: Eagles are powerful birds of prey found around the world in over 60 species. They use superhuman eyesight to locate prey from high in the air and snatch it mid-flight. While eagles usually take prey back to the nest to eat, they occasionally kill animals up to five times their mass and eat them on the spot.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 3, Resolve 1

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 1, Composure 4



Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl (Talon) 3, Stealth (Sky) 2, Survival 3

Social Skills: Intimidation 2

Notes: Eagles get a +2 on all perception rolls involving eyesight.

Jaguar Warriors

Like the eagle warriors, the jaguar warriors (*ocelomeh*) are a proud warrior society, respected throughout Tenochtitlan. There are fewer *ocelomeh* than *cuacuauhtin*, which the jaguar warriors say is because they have higher standards and the eagle warriors say is because more warriors want to fly high than creep through the jungle. This friendly rivalry encourages both societies to greater heights of martial prowess.

In addition to the right to wear jaguar markings on clothes and armors, some jaguar warriors earn consideration for admission to the ranks of those who can don the skin of the jaguar and prowl the jungles in its shape. A jaguar warrior who captures at least 13 worthy enemies and performs at least 20 brave deeds earns consideration for Tezcatlipoca's blessing.

Once a candidate passes that threshold of worth, the jaguar elders offer him a choice of tests. He can choose to hunt and kill a jaguar with his bare hands, bringing back its tongue as proof. Or he can slay one of the First Sun People, as Tezcatlipoca's jaguars did at the end of the Jaguar Sun, without aid. This task seems impossible, but the Aztec value ambush and so does the jaguar, and candidates are expected to seek any advantage to achieve victory.

Success in either task admits the warrior to the inner circle. The elders teach him how to take on the form of the jaguar, which involves sacrificing the candidate's blood from select locations onto a shared talisman, a jade figure of a jaguar that rests in the society house. Each adherent to the mystery must renew the sacrifice every 260 days at minimum.

The society hunts the rare warrior who fails but does not die. The existence of the First Sun People is a close-held secret, and the *ocelomeh* do not hesitate to kill to protect it.

AMOXTLI, JAGUAR MYSTERY WARRIOR

No, no, that's not at all how it happened. Look, I was there, and...eh...nevermind.

Background: A child of lesser nobility, Amoxtli's parents pushed him toward the priesthood. To their disappointment, the ascetic life of a holy man never appealed to him. Amoxtli really wanted a family. To make up the shame to his parents and earn recognition, he strove to become the best warrior he could. He excelled throughout *calmecac* and captured his first enemy at the age of 14. It should not have been so early,

but he snuck into battle with the older boys and exercised great stealth, giving him an advantage against the full-grown warrior he brought home for sacrifice.

Amoxtli is no longer a disappointment to his family. He has two wives and a growing family that are his greatest joys. To keep the family honored, he continues to engage in battles and flower wars. Though his order does not require it, he has hunted two additional giants since the first that earned his admission into the society's inner circle.

Though he is getting older, Amoxtli continues to fight as though he were a younger man. Some friends and peers have recommended he stop and take on a role as one of the society elders, or as a general, since he is already known as a great captain. The idea of taking a less hands-on role discomfits him. He feels like the only way he's provided worth to his people is through skill in fighting directly, disregarding the long experience he has as a leader. The thought of letting go of that and accepting his aging so far hasn't been something he can do.

Description: Though still muscular, Amoxtli is an older man. His hair, now dashed with grey, is worn in the traditional style of the warrior elite. He wears the garb of a noble warrior with easy comfort.

A scar runs from the joint of Amoxtli's left jaw down to the point of his chin, and another crosses the back of his neck. He's happy to tell the stories of how he got those and other less visible scars. If at first they make him appear intimidating, that sense disappears quickly when he smiles, which is often around children.

Storytelling Hints: Amoxtli is a man uncomfortable with his transition to an older age and a new role in life. He shares his experience with those who ask, but each request makes him feel more keenly his increasing distance from his vigorous youth.

Still not too old to fight, Amoxtli is a good character to dispense advice and share cryptic wisdom while retaining the ability to fight fiercely if the moment demands it. He's also a viable candidate to lose a fight to something unknown and scary to demonstrate just how terrifying it is.

Virtue: Loving

Vice: Unforgiving

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Medicine 1, Occult 1, Politics 2 (Nobility)

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Stealth (Jungle) 3*, Survival 1, Weaponry (*Macuahuitl*, Disabling Strikes) 4*

Social Skills: Animal Ken 1 (Jaguars), Expression (Inspiration) 2*, Intimidation 1, Persuasion 1, Socialize 2

Merits: Armed Defense 2, Contacts (Generals, Noble Warriors), Defensive Combat: Weaponry, Fame 1, Professional Training 5 (Warrior), Resources 3, Skinthief (jaguar, Bare Necessities 3) 3, Status 3 (Jaguar Warriors)

*Asset Skills from Professional Training.

Health: 7

Willpower: 5

Integrity: 5

Size: 5

Speed: 11

Defense: 5 (6 with weapon, 8 with shield)

Initiative: 6

Armor: 0/2

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Dice Pool	Notes
Macuahuitl	3	8	9-Again

Notes: Amoxtli only needs to renew his talisman every 260 days.

JAGUAR

Description: Jaguars are the third-largest of the great cats. Quiet, strong, and deadly, they frequent the jungles and forest of Mesoamerica and South America. They also travel the plains, but prefer dense forest where their stealth serves them best.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 3, Resolve 1

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Stealth 3, Survival 3

Social Skills: Intimidation 4

The Cihuatlactah

The life of an Aztec is strictly divided by gender. Men learn trades and crafts and the art of war, or become priests. Women learn weaving, cooking, and animal husbandry, and bear children. Some go to the priesthood at a young age and become priestesses of select female sects. Others become midwives or matchmakers and earn respect that way. But war, priesthood of the important gods, leadership of the empire or even a *calpulli*, all are out of reach for women. Even the *cihuacoatl*, second

in command to the king, a role named after a goddess and intended to represent the female side of the universe in rulership—and literally containing the word "woman"—was a man.

Some Aztec women manage to bend these restrictive cultural boundaries, making names for themselves as "that woman trader" or "the woman that the gods hear." It is often easier to simply leave, looking for a culture that accepts women in different roles, or to act through an open-minded husband or male relative. Many women do exercise their authority in this fashion. They already manage the economy of the household, and through cooperative male allies they influence the direction of the Aztec culture.

Or one can disguise herself as a man and change the role she plays that way. This is a dangerous game. Bending the socially defined roles is one thing, but breaking them, particularly through trickery, typically ends with the iconoclast under the knife atop the Great Temple. The small sect that calls itself the Cihuatlactah takes this further.

There are many small sects among the priesthood of Tenochtitlan. The Aztecs acquired many gods during their migration and expansion, and all of them receive at least a little attendance. Many of those sects have their mysteries, granted only to the most trusted adherents. But the Cihuatlactah sect is perhaps the only ones whose existence is completely secret, for if anyone discovered them the priesthood would sacrifice them all. They take the skins of men, and use them to take on men's shapes and enter roles that otherwise, society would categorically deny to them.

A *cihuatlactatl* (plural *cihuatlactah*) knows only two or three others in the sect. In some ways, it's organized similarly to a cell of subversives, but without any agenda other than allowing its members to operate outside the strict gender roles demanded by Aztec culture. Few *cihuatlactah* exist, some believe as few as two dozen. They occupy positions throughout Aztec society, if somewhat more in the upper strata because noble women have more opportunities to stumble upon the mysteries. Though more use their newfound freedom to ascend through the ranks of Aztec society and gain the power they never could as women, some also simply enjoy the freedom they have as male artisans, laborers, and merchants.

While the majority of the Cihuatlactah explore this occult option to escape the social constraints placed on them, some arrive there out of a genuine greater comfort in the skin and form of the opposite sex. For many, there's little difference: the social role and the gender are so entwined that to desire a man's responsibilities is to need to be a man.

CENTEHUA, A CIHUATLACTATL

You have no idea what it's like.

Background: Centehua's mother died in childbirth, leaving her an only child and her father Matlal a doting parent. For a time he joined households with his brother to make raising her easier, but by her seventh birthday he again had an independent home. As a most-honored *tlacuiloque*, a writer of the beautiful codices that priests consult for their histories and mysteries, he had sufficient wealth and a lot of leeway in how he managed his household, including the eccentricity of not remarrying. Absent a son to teach his craft, he passed it to Centehua in secret.

Their discovery by one of the *nahualtin* put them both in danger. Already accustomed to breaking social boundaries, Centehua studied the texts given them by the *nahualli* for the creation of his codex, and she learned something of the *nahualtin* mysteries. When the time came for the priest to kill her in a ritual that would claim the form of her ghost, she overpowered him and took his skin instead.

Now she walks the halls of power as a respected *nahualli*. She spared her father the fate society says he deserved for teaching her, and she strikes out against those who would have killed her from within their ranks. Additionally, she has taken the skin of a stranger to Tenochtitlan and uses it as a cover for her to exercise the artistry she learned from her father. She suspects her father will one day recognize her ruse from her artwork, and she worries about that day.

Having found her own path into the Cihuatlactah, Centehua has only recently made her first contact among the others. Despite the person she's met being in a similar position, Centehua is withholding her trust for now.

Description: Centehua is a slight woman, pretty but not remarkable, with long hair that she favors coloring with an herb to produce a slight purple tinge. Before becoming a skinchanger, she kept a carefully neutral face and sometimes pretended to be simple. Now, she's more likely to look cross or impatient with the people she's talking to.

In her other forms, she either looks like a wealthy, powerful priest with all the accoutrements and a piercing, judgmental gaze, or an unremarkable craftsman of modest means.

Storytelling Hints: Centehua is always on guard, even when she's in control or at an advantage. She has been keeping secrets so long it's second nature, and she knows better than to open herself up to anyone. She would rather deny everything than give away any of her secrets. A conviction for her crimes would lead directly to her death. Even strong suspicions could ruin her, and she knows it. When possible, she turns the tables on her accusers. With her stolen role as a *nahualli*, offense is a fantastic defense.

Centehua favors anyone who works outside the system, or who represents the potential for change. She strives to remain a hidden ally of such people, pushing small advantages toward them without any sign of where those benefits come from. Only something very important to her would be worth the risk of exposing herself to anyone.

Virtue: Brave

Vice: Secretive

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 1, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 1

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 1, Crafts (Codices) 4, Investigation 1, Medicine 1, Occult 2, Politics 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl (Self-Defense) 1, Stealth 1, Weaponry (Knife) 1

Social Skills: Empathy 1, Persuasion 2, Socialize 1, Subterfuge (Disguise) 3

Merits: Alternate Identity 1 (*Nahualli* Priest)*, Alternate Identity 1 (Craftsman)*, Safe Place 1, Skinthief (man, Bare Necessities 2, Renewable Skins) 3

* These merits are her stolen identities from her skinchanging. As the priest, she has Status 1 (Priesthood). As the craftsman, she has Resources 1. In either alternate identity, she cannot access her Safe Place.

Health: 6

Willpower: 5

Integrity: 5

Size: 5

Speed: 10

Defense: 4

Initiative: 5

Armor: 0

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Fist	0	3
Knife	0	4

Cryptids and Other Things

Many creatures wander the deserts and jungles of Central Mesoamerica during the 15th century. Some of them are remnants of the Aztec's past, echoes from their mythic history. Others have no place in the Aztec cosmology, and the priests of Tenochtitlan do their best to ignore or destroy them for daring to suggest unwelcome truths.

First Sun People

First among all peoples, after the gods themselves, were the giants of the First Sun. They were the primordial people, the gods' first creations, and they ruled the Earth in the gods' names for untold years. The giants did nothing to deserve their destruction, but the rivalry between Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca grew too great and Tezcatlipoca destroyed the giants with a plague of jaguars out of spite.

Legend and the priests say that none survived. Some few know that isn't true, including the most learned priests familiar with obscure mysteries, and those of the inner circle of jaguar warriors, who hunt the First Sun People to prove their skill.

How they lived in the era that created them is lost, even to them. Today, the giants live in the deepest jungles, concealing their clans in the treetops or in vast systems of caves. Their lives are simple: They hunt and gather local resources for food, and they sacrifice to the gods as any good people must. They live in peace.

On occasion, humans of the current era discover a First Sun People clan. Communication is difficult, as the giants speak a heavily localized Nahuatl, but not impossible. The giants often kill people who discover them to keep their peace, but occasional travelers impress them as trustworthy and open lines of trade for the giants' unique art and jewelry. Some First Sun People, the few filled with wanderlust, leave the clans and travel alone through the world, often hiring out services as exceptional laborers or impressive warriors.

The First Sun People are vulnerable to the creature that nearly exterminated them at the end of the First Sun — the jaguar. Whether it's a mental weakness or a supernatural curse, jaguars are deadly to the First Sun People, and the giants flee from them if at all possible.

Chicahua, First Sun People Mercenary

Yes, I suppose I will crush him for you. If I must.

Background: Chicahua, born Ilhuimatl to her family, has never found any joy in quietude. Growing up in her treetop clan, she found more joy in hunting, less in crafting. More in fighting, less in talking. And the prospect of marrying into one of the other families in her clan did not please her at all.

Once she came of age, Chicahua took her hides, her spear, her atlatl and darts, and left the deep jungle. She wandered for a time. Some people she met fled. Others attacked her and died. She found a joy in the battle and a native skill for learning from their fighting styles simply by watching.

When she came upon the Tlaxcalans, they fought her first to take her captive as a kingly sacrifice. When they could not, they made peace with her and offered her all the war she would like if she would join them. A woman of few words, she did, and she serves there still. The Tlaxcalans are careful to deploy her in whatever battles involve them. If Tlaxcala should become less warlike, Chicahua won't hesitate to leave, probably with some casualties on the way out.

Description: Three times the height of a man, Chicahua has almost-human proportions, but on prolonged examination is somewhat stretched tall. She wears a simple loincloth and a long draped cloth over her shoulders. When entering battle, she dons armor of stitched hides. Her long spear and large shield give her a fearsome reach, as does her atlatl.

Chicahua wears her hair long and woven with tokens from her enemies. Broken hafts, bent darts, and special clothing all adorn her thick black hair.

Storytelling Hints: Chicahua is happiest when she's active. She prefers fighting, hunting, and physical labor, in that order. If she's denied the opportunity to do something she likes, she's apt to make her own opportunities.

In conversation, Chicahua is quiet. Preferring action to discussion, she usually lets others do the talking and waits for something interesting to happen. She does so calmly, but if a conversation looks like it's leading away from immediate conflict, or leading the region away from larger conflicts, she may become disgruntled.

Chicahua is an obvious candidate for a physical challenge, but offering her an opportunity for greater physicality is a good way to circumvent her as an obstacle.

Virtue: Active

Vice: Impulsive

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 8, Dexterity 3, Stamina 7

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Crafts 2, Medicine (Battlefield Medicine) 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Survival (Jungle) 2, Weaponry (Spear) 4

Social Skills: Animal Ken 2, Empathy 1, Intimidation (Armed) 2, Persuasion 1, Socialize 1

Merits: Danger Sense, Defensive Combat: Weaponry, Heavy Weapons 2, Striking Looks 2

Health: 15

Willpower: 5

Integrity: 6

Size: 8

Speed: 18 (speed factor 7)

Defense: 6 (7 with Defensive Combat, +2 with shield)

Initiative: 6

Armor: Stiff hides (2/0)

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Dice Pool	Notes
Giant Spear	4	13	Used one-handed
Shield	2	12	
Fist	0B	10	

Notes: As one of the First Sun People, Chicahua has a weakness to jaguars. Against any jaguar, divide all her combat dice pools and her Defense in half and rounded up to the nearest whole number.

SMOKING MIRROR JAGUAR

When Tezcatlipoca called upon jaguars to consume the giants and end the First Sun, he did not leave the conclusion to mortal creatures. He came to Earth and walked among the beasts, granting them extra strength, skill, and cunning. He also gave them mysterious powers to make them more deadly to the chosen people of the First Sun, and thus a graver, more personal blow to his rival Quetzalcoatl.

A smoking mirror jaguar is immortal but does not breed. Over the generations and generations since the First Sun, most have died out. Some few remain, terrors of the jungle and supreme hunters within their territories. Some still hunt the remnants of the First Sun People, but most simply hunt out of hunger and territorialism.

Half made of smoke, the other half mirrors, the jaguars flow silently and invisibly through the jungle. When faced with competition, they use their unnatural camouflage to come at it from surprise, their smoky composition to resist damage, and teleportation to launch further surprise attacks and, if necessary, effect a last-minute escape.

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 4, Strength 6, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5, Presence 4, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl (Bite, Grapple) 5, Stealth 6

Adaptations: Alternate Composition (smoke), Mirrored Skin (as demon form power), Teleportation (as demon form power)

Rank: 2

Health: 9+

Willpower: 7

Size: 5

Speed: 16 (species factor 7)

Defense: 7

Initiative: 6

Armor: See notes

Notes: Smoking mirror jaguars have the following adjustments to their Adaptations:

Alternate Composition: Half-made of smoke, smoking mirror jaguars flow partially around most attacks. Divide by half any damage dealt to them.



Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Dice Pool	Notes
Bite	3	12	Permits immediate grapple check
Claw	4	11	

Monkeys of the Wind Sun

The people of the Second Sun were diligent, inventive, and proud. They crafted many great wonders for themselves: metals that were light but strong, cities so grand they took more than a lifetime to cross, and breathtaking works of poetry. They achieved so much for themselves that they considered their debt to the gods repaid and had the temerity to honor themselves as creators.

They underestimated Tezcatlipoca's pride. Enraged that the people of the Second Sun would endanger the world by refusing to honor and sacrifice to the gods, he cursed them all. His curse changed them into monkeys, painfully twisting them into their new shapes, covering their flesh with itchy hair, and dulling their wits. It left them little more than beasts, with a smoldering rage and an unquenchable thirst to be human again.

The conflict between Tezcatlipoca and Quetzalcoatl destroyed most of the people-turned-monkeys. Though it was Quetzalcoatl's love for them that moved him to war with Tezcatlipoca and call the winds that destroyed the Second Sun, it didn't move him to protect the people or return them to their longed-for shapes. He forgot about them and left them to hide their shame in the jungles and forests of the following ages.

Monkeys of the Wind Sun remain in small troops here and there throughout the world of the Fifth Sun. They spend most of their lives in hiding, wrestling with their anger and shame and struggling to live long enough to spawn another generation. When they encounter a vulnerable traveler, they beset and kill him, carve out a hollow in the victim's body, and walk it around from the inside as long as they can get away with it. Claimed bodies start to fall apart after about a month, but most monkeys are found out before then. Sometimes troops share the bodies they take so everyone gets a turn, but usually only the strongest monkey gets the body.

Having seen most of their fellows blown away by great storms (off the face of the Earth if legend is to be believed), monkeys of the Wind Sun are terrified of strong winds and heavy rain, and especially thunder and lightning. If one must travel through their territory, it is safest during great storms or the hours preceding them.

Hollow Xicohtencatl

Yes, of course I am Xicohtencatl. Who else would I be but Xicohtencatl. Don't I sound like Xicohtenacatl?

Background: Xicohtencatl was one of the well-known Aztec traveling merchants before the monkeys got to him. He had a route from the Great Market in Tlateloco to Huitztlan, through dangerous territory. In addition to a reputation for making clever trades that brought him much wealth, the information about other cultures he brought back to aid in future conquests brought him much honor.

For the last week, he has been exhibiting none of his usual charm or wit. He greets old friends as strangers and reacts to everyone with either overbearing affection or petty anger. People are starting to wonder if he is possessed.

Description: Xicohtenacatl is the perfect image of an Aztec *pochtecah*. He has earned the right to wear high-status clothes in Tenochtitlan, and he wears durable but fashionable traveling garb on the road.

Now, though, he is slovenly. His clothes are torn and filthy, he clearly hasn't washed, and he smells.

Storytelling Hints: Hollow Xicohtenacatl, being worn by one of the monkeys of the Wind Sun, is trying to convince everyone that he's the real person, but he isn't careful about it. He tells convincing lies in the moment, but he doesn't back them up with any logic or preparation. He's in it solely for the experience of being human again, and once that's run its course, he's gone.

Use Xicohtenacatl or another monkey to give characters something obvious to focus on. They'll see that something is wrong and explore it, and the gruesome answer won't be hard to find. It can give them an easy victory when they need one, or it can distract them from more subtle danger.

Virtue: Sharing

Vice: Greedy

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 2, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Crafts 1, Investigation 1, Medicine 1, Occult 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl (Bite) 3, Larceny 1, Stealth (Jungle) 1

Social Skills: Empathy (Suspicion) 2, Expression 1, Intimidation 1, Persuasion 2, Socialize 2, Subterfuge (Disguise) 3

Merits: Area of Expertise (Disguise), Interdisciplinary Specialty (Disguise), Fast-Talking 1, Skinthief (human, Unshared Flesh) 3, Sympathetic

Health: 7 (5 as monkey)

Willpower: 6

Integrity: 3

Size: 5 (3 as monkey)

Speed: 10 (12 as monkey, species factor 7)
Defense: 4
Initiative: 6
Armor: 0
Notes: The monkeys still speak Nahuatl, the language of the gods, so there's no language barrier.
Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Fist	0	5
Bite (human)	–1	6
Bite (monkey)	0	6

Jaguar Outcasts

Not every jaguar warrior who excels at the arts of war, passes the tests of the jaguar elders, and masters the art of transformation into a jaguar can handle the strain. The tests weed out all but the most worthy and capable, but even the most resolved can break. Any jaguar warrior can lose control, and he may cause some harm and find a way to repent (perhaps volunteering as a sacrifice). But a jaguar warrior who shatters, while still mystically bound to the jaguar, changes both mentally and physically.

He loses control of the transformation that once served him so well in battle. It changes him permanently, infusing his muscles with tissue like that of the jaguar, reforming his legs until they are digitigrade (walking on toes, like wolves), and giving him claws and sharp teeth. He looks at every creature as his prey, and stalks by instinct rather than learned tactic.

Each outcast reacts to this differently. The jaguar elders do not speak of it often, but one jaguar warrior loses his way like this every generation or so. When that happens, the jaguar warrior society mobilizes to end the threat and the embarrassment to its reputation. For most, it is hunting a monster. For the inner circle, it is putting a friend out of his misery.

Coaxoch, Mad Jaguar Monster

Background: Everything came easily to Coaxoch. Wealth was his from birth, and though his father was strict with him as befit a noble's son, Coaxoch wanted for nothing. He had natural talent. Where talent was not enough, he had tutors and the best teachers in *calmecac*. Excellence was his.

He entered the ranks of the jaguar warriors (and more rarified societies) with fanfare. The jaguar elders saw him as a rising star in their midst, and before long he had slain his jaguar bare-handed. The elders taught him the ritual and admitted him into their inner circle. His family was proud, and he was a paragon of Aztec warriors.

In a flower war with nearby Tlaxcala, Coaxoch disappeared and did not return. Shortly after, word came from a



village near the site of the battle: A monster had appeared, killed three, and hauled one off into the wilderness. The three dead were clawed to shreds, and survivors of the attack described the monster as a jaguar with a man's face.

Jaguar elders led the society to the village and into the wilderness but found nothing except the body of the captive. The elders recognized what the monster had done to the young man: a series of marks mimicking those used in the ritual to grant shapechanging to a worthy jaguar warrior.

Despite the month-long search that followed, they found nothing but further sacrifices. Unable to bring the beast down, the warriors returned to Tenochtitlan. Some, particularly those on the inner circle, still stalk the region looking for their fallen, broken brother.

Description: Coaxoch now looks like a bipedal cross of a jaguar and a man. His features, once remarkable in their beauty, are now furred, half shaped like those of a great cat and half human. The dividing line runs roughly from his right chin up to his left ear. Everything below that is human, and everything above is jaguar. He hates his appearance, and one way his hunters track him is by the enraged clawmarks he leaves nearby anytime he sees his reflection.

The transformation has also made him larger. He is over six feet now, and while he walks on two digitigrade feet, he slouches as though he might run on all fours at any moment. Sometimes he does.

Storytelling Hints: Coaxoch discovered himself tearing an enemy's guts out with his teeth in the midst of a flower war. Something about that moment sent him mentally spinning away from the memories relating to becoming a jaguar and gaining the instincts that drove him to that point. No matter how hard he tries, he can't remember how to release the jaguar form and become human again. All he wants is his human life again, but every step takes him further from knowing what that really looks like.

Fleeing from his brethren and bombarded with the instincts of a territorial hunter, Coaxoch slides between forgetting that he was human and madly trying to remember how to become human. His sacrifices are part of a half-lost memory of the ritual that bestowed on him the jaguar shape, so he defaces the corpses in an effort to conjure himself another new shape and become human once more.

Coaxoch can be the monster that reveals the consequences of the jaguar warriors' mysteries, the embarrassing mistake that provides leverage against the jaguar elders, or the lost soul who desperately needs help.

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 2, Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 2

Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl (Bite, Claw) 4, Investigation 1, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 1, Politics 1, socialize 1, Stealth (Jungle) 4, Survival 3, Weaponry 1

Rank: 2

Health: 9
Willpower: 4
Size: 5
Speed: 15 (species factor 6)
Defense: 6
Initiative: 6
Armor: 1/0
Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Bite	2	10
Claw	1	10

Mother Maguey

Maguey, or agave, is one of the most important plants in the Aztec world after maize and beans. The maguey provides food, fibers for paper and clothing, and a sweet sap that ferments into *pulque*, the Aztec alcoholic beverage of choice. There are many varieties of maguey, each better suited to one use or another, and they grow well all across often-dry Mesoamerica.

Mother maguey is one variety of many, and hard to tell apart. It mimics the appearance of nearby varieties to blend in, increasing the danger that it will victimize an innocent animal or sap harvester. Thankfully, these plants are rare. Like most maguey, its long leaves have sharp ends and spiny edges. It is easy to cut oneself on maguey, and harvesters often do. Maguey spines are sometimes used as disciplinary tools in Tenochtitlan schools.

This maguey injects a subtle toxin when it punctures a living creature. The toxin is rated at Toxicity 5; it inflicts no damage but makes the subject lightly woozy (–1 penalty to actions for one hour). It forces another check each hour, but decreases in Toxicity each time until it hits zero, whereupon it dissipates. A living mother maguey spine can spread the toxin to as many creatures as it punctures. Recently dead it can infect perhaps five, and removed and ignorantly used for discipline it runs out after the first two or three injections.

A creature that fails three checks against the toxin becomes infected with the mother maguey's spores. Over the next week, the creature develops a great thirst for water and desire for sunlight, and feels compelled to stand in terrain ideal for maguey. She gains the Obsession Condition for pursuing these needs. After one or two weeks of this, she enters the second stage of the infection, as her digits grow slightly green and develop spines at the ends. During this two-week phase she is infectious, just as was the maguey that infected her.

Aztec medicine has a treatment for the toxin of the mother maguey. A priest who knows the remedy muddles two toxic plants in the blood of a swallow, mixes it with the powdered stone found in the same swallow's stomach, and feeds it

to the afflicted. He follows this with a bleeding from the affected fingers. The priest applies a tincture of the burned heart of a deer mixed with gold and certain other rare plants to the area around the cut. The cure itself is not expensive, but the care required to recover (or at least recover quickly) from the toxic plants makes it feasible only for the wealthy. Priests honor less affluent victims by sacrificing them to the gods, so many of those afflicted by mother maguey's poison simply conceal the condition.

At the end of stage two, the infected individual becomes dangerous to others. She wants to water the ground she has selected during stages one and two. Beasts in stage three kill members of their own species and water the ground with their blood. Humans have access to more humane methods of irrigation, but many still choose murder. They sense their doom and may no longer care whom they take with them. Creatures in this stage have a more visible green tint, and their flesh feels more like the meat of a succulent than that of an animal.

Once the land is watered, the victim sits down and plants roots. She begins to sprout the blade-like leaves common to maguey, and she transitions into the stationary phase of the mother maguey's life cycle. Her flesh ceases to receive nourishment and sloughs away, further nourishing her new form. Her skeleton takes longer to wear away, and may serve as a lure to future victims, animals interested in sniffing at a bone, though the mother maguey doesn't develop its toxin until four to five months after being planted.

The heart of the mother maguey is a peculiar color, mottled red, grey, and green. Occult legend says that consuming it gives one the knowledge of the creature that became the plant. Those who whisper of the plant's dangers tell stories of people who eat the heart and learn the instincts and language of the animal that became the maguey. They also whisper of priests, usually *nahualtin*, who pierce innocents with the mother maguey so that once they become plants, the priest can eat the maguey's heart and learn all that person knew.

Self Vines

In the jungles and some forests, occasionally on infrequently used trails, self vines hang from the trees and change innocent victims' lives. A form of liana, they resemble other vines that grow up into the trees. Like some of those vines, they can be sources of water for travelers: Make an incision and sip out some of the water the vine is carrying to its length up in the branches. The self vine also drips fluid from various points along its length, and animals often take water from these.

Drinking from the self vine is dangerous but not in itself a fatal mistake. It is a toxin that induces drowsiness, encouraging travelers and animals alike to sleep nearby. Sleeping in contact with a self vine — not a guarantee even when the toxin has the intended effect — exposes the victim to the true danger. The vine absorbs the sense of identity, perhaps even the soul, from a creature touching it for a prolonged period, just as its roots draw up water. The Storyteller rolls anywhere from five to ten dice, depending on the age and size of the vine, contested by the subject's Resolve + Supernatural Tolerance. Some supernatural defenses may also protect a subject from the effect.

The vine stores this identity and replaces it with the previous stored identity. Day to day, most victims are animals, so the region around a self vine growth has a higher incidence of animals acting out of character. A jaguar tries to fly, a bird seeks to burrow into the ground, and a squirrel stalks human prey. When the self vine affects a human, the result is usually a human running around with an animal mind, with the human's self implanted in the next animal that falls victim to the plant. When a group of travelers all fall prey to the self vine at once, one ends up with an animal mind, and the rest end up in each other's heads, except for the poor individual absorbed last and retained for a future victim.

Whether the vine takes some sustenance from the identities it temporarily retains is unclear. No one is certain whether a stolen identity loses any memories, clarity of recall, or anything less substantial such as ambition, love, spirit, or soul. People have no recollection of the period of absorption beyond turbulent nightmares and then waking up in a new body, usually a new shape. Some recall memories that couldn't have been theirs: the feeling of air beneath one's wings, or the taste of blood rushing past one's fangs.

Self vines aren't a well-known phenomenon. Strange things happen in the jungles. But some whisper of a way for an old man to walk out into the jungle and come back in the body of a younger man, and others talk of a priest who returned from the jungle as a jaguar and continued performing sacrifices until the beast died of old age.

Infrastructure

The deserts and jungles of Mesoamerica are rich with the Infrastructure of the God-Machine. In an era of people inculcated to obey the priesthood even unto death, a small cult of God-Machine worshipers in the right place can accomplish great things.

Huey Tzompantli

A *tzompantli* is a skull rack, a wooden palisade where the priests display the great many skulls of those sacrificed to the gods. These stand high in the air for all to see and admire. The *huey tzompantli* is the great skull rack adjacent to the Great Temple, one of the most important sites for sacrifice and for remembering those sacrificed. The *huey tzompantli* holds approximately 60,000 skulls at its maximum capacity.

This particular *tzompantli* stands on a stone platform, and like most the structure itself is wood. Unlike most others, beneath the stone platform lie occult patterns, distributed in three dimensions throughout the sand filler, and made with molten silver dribbled into the sand and permitted to cool. The carpenters who assembled the palisades anointed

each piece of wood with a smear of blood from someone suffering the agony of a sting from the bark scorpion. And standing at the base of the structure and looking up, one can see a pattern in the arrangement of skulls, as though making arrows pointing at the sky.

The priests throw the corpse of each sacrificial victim down the side of the pyramid, and the old men at the bottom dismember it. Some parts go to the nobility, some to the warrior who captured the sacrifice in war, and the head goes on the skull rack. One of those old men must arrange the skulls just so to make the occult pattern, but no one seems to notice. The head makes quite a feast for the carrion birds, who strip away the flesh, the eyes, and everything else with juice.

Except the brains. They disappear overnight, and the following morning before dawn, a handful of scorpions emerges from a hole at the base of the *huey tzompantli's* platform. People who spend time near the skull rack notice scorpions around the platform, but make little note of it. There are many scorpions in the Valley of Mexico.

Type: Logistical

Function: Channel brain matter from the skulls of sacrifices into the nest of bark scorpions living in the base of the skull rack. This changes a few at a time into animera, animals with human thinking capacity that can acquire and store human knowledge, providing tactical data and opportunities for Covers for angels.

Security: The entire Aztec priesthood, backed by the warrior societies, act to preserve the skull rack against any harmful acts.

Linchpin: Throwing a handful of skulls out of the pattern disrupts the function until they can be pushed back into place, generally ruining that day's batch of brains with rot or carrion feeders. The primary linchpin is the scorpion nest underneath the stone platform, lined with precise patterns of silver. Break the patterns and the function stops completely. Kill the scorpions, and excess energy might manifest as Aether. Replace the scorpions with another creature, or alter the patterns of silver, and it could be suborned to achieve something other than creating intelligent scorpions.

Thoughtful Scorpions

The product of God-Machine interference, thoughtful scorpions are scorpions with mental processing power closer to that of a human. One can distinguish them from standard bark scorpions by the presence of irregular lumps on their backs, the result of forcing a functioning (if tiny) braincase into an invertebrate.

At first glance, thoughtful scorpions act no differently than normal scorpions. With few exceptions, they want nothing to do with those large, dangerous flesh-beasts that cluster in groups — humans. The scorpions hunt in packs, using their numbers to corner small prey or take on larger prey, resulting in larger food supplies for the nest for lower energy expenditure and risk.

Tilt: Thoughtful Scorpion Swarm

When thoughtful scorpions attack humans, they do so in strength. A nest typically has numbers to form a four- or eight-yard radius swarm, and they are tactically savvy enough to tighten their radius to finish their prey faster.

A character who takes damage from the swarm also gains the Poisoned Tilt. Thoughtful scorpion venom is moderate, but inflicts such pain that the shock and numbness can incapacitate limbs. Each time a character takes damage from the swarm, the Storyteller rolls a single die. On a success, apply Arm Wrack or Leg Wrack as appropriate for one hour.

Each nest develops its own form of communication, and periodic inter-nest contact disseminates different styles. The current state of the art is a touch-language using a combination of locations and rhythms to communicate rough ideas and emotions. Some of the nests have conceived of deities, and at least one has begun conquering other nests in order to learn of and assimilate their gods. Another mimics the warlike nature of the Aztecs, conquering other nests and demanding tribute.

Since these nests originate in Tenochtitlan, many of them are still in the city. Most nests realize it is safer to be farther from humans, and migrate out into the desert to better survive. This also limits communication with other nests, slowing social development.

On rare occasions, thoughtful scorpion nests gather in full for a human hunt. Usually seeking only a single human as prey, they will take as many as they can get. When they succeed, they use the entire body for food but feast on the brain. Through an unknown mechanism, the scorpions acquire the human's memories and knowledge. Thoughtful scorpions don't have the capacity to understand most of what they consume this way, but they keep it and pass it along to their next generation. Angels and cultists of the God-Machine can consume scorpions from a given nest and learn what the scorpions have learned.

The Teotihuacan Chamber

The Aztec named the city Teotihuacan, the city of the gods. They revere the location as a place of power and of importance to the gods that came before them. And while Teotihuacan was a city of mortals, the Aztec aren't wrong that it has been touched by powers not human.

The famous Pyramid of the Sun is likewise mortal construction. Beneath it, on the bottom side of a maze,

lies a chamber that no mortal mind conceived. It is half of a sphere, the flat ceiling made of crystal and holding up a pool of mercury. It ripples endlessly with the tiny tremors of the earth, sending reflections cascading across the room. At each of 13 points, a gold-plated skull is embedded in the wall, and a trail of healthy green grass connects those 13 points through a complicated pattern grown into the floor despite a lack of any direct sun.

Speak the correct word to a given skull, and it will answer with another word. Speak the correct word to each of the 13 skulls, and the room will shake. That is the only time the mercury-filled ceiling is still. The shaking ends with a flash of blinding light which, when gone, reveals that everyone there is in a different room. Depending on the words spoken, the traveler might be in Africa, Europe, or Asia. In a different room with different code words. Behind a different maze laden with traps.

Type: Logistical

Function: Transport servants of the God-Machine between continents without crossing the intervening distance.

Security: Whatever security existed when the God-Machine's servants built this Infrastructure during the rise of Teotihuacan around the year 100 CE, it is now gone. The chamber's only defense is secrecy.

Linchpin: None of the chamber's many distracting facets is its linchpin. All heal over the course of years if broken, or regrow if stolen. Mercury drips back up into a crystal ceiling that's healing its cracks, and so on. The true linchpin lies in a wooden pipe connecting a dead-end box 20 feet above the chamber with the Pyramid of the Moon along the Avenue of the Dead, where it dead-ends in another box. The pipe and boxes are filled with seawater and a single tuna, swimming back and forth forever. Drain the pipe and the Infrastructure breaks. Replace the fish and the chamber's nature changes.

Continent 02 Facility 995

Deep in the jungles of Oaxaca, an explorer might stumble upon one of the secret underground lairs of the First Sun People. A dozen or so giants live in peaceful secrecy, surviving off hunting and the largess of the land. In the farthest corner of their subterranean village, a solid metal door masked by Concealment Infrastructure hides a secret laboratory.

That door hides a large facility of turning glass gears, filled with gusts of steam from its mysterious, underground power source. Bundles of wires hang in loops from the ceiling like great vines. They are various materials, from copper and gold to strung ivy to something resembling human umbilical cord and a never-ending chain of ants crawling along the path. Glass jars sit here and there throughout the large, open facility, surrounded by mechanized arms, needles, and saws of compressed keratin.

Animals occupy many of these glass jars, and humans occupy others. One contains a small swarm of bugs. The keratin arms keep them all alive with injections of nutrition and other necessaries, and forced withdrawal of waste. On an arcane schedule, the facility removes aspects of certain creatures and reassembles them as part of another creature.

The facility may retain a subject for months or years while it mixes and matches various creatures, letting them recover from surgery or injections and then adding to them or trying again with a different combination. When a subject is complete, whatever that means to the guiding intelligence, the facility releases it through the door.

An angel called Captor acquires new subjects for the facility and releases its completed creations into the wild. Captor is optimized for stealth and for subduing and capturing creatures. It uses its stealth to get past the First Sun People tribe, into and out of the door they can't notice.

Type: Logistical

Function: To take various creatures from all over Mesoamerica and mix and match their physical qualities, and to release successes into the wild. Some are designed to cause chaos, and some to provoke the world into creating relationships that the God-Machine needs for Covers. Others have no discernible purpose, and may simply be for research.

Security: Facility 995's primary defenses are its remote location and its secrecy, and the Concealment Infrastructure that makes the door slip past people's awareness. The territorial and secretive giants living above the facility are its secondary line of defense.

Linchpin: The bundled cables running along the ceiling make an intricate pattern, and examining it is likely to drive a mortal mad. Someone who manages to work out its pattern can work out the one point where all the cables disappear into the ceiling. Those are right beneath an aboveground tree. Harming that tree shuts down the entire facility.

CAPTOR

The subject's period of captivity is over. The subject will be released.

Mission: Captor hunts and captures living animal subjects and returns them to Facility 995 for processing. When something indicates that it is time to return a given subject to the wild, it does so.

Description: Captor is a humanoid figure, its joints made up of bronze pulleys and its flesh and sinews composed of rusted iron cables running through those pulleys. It shimmers in direct light and usually has its stealth field engaged, giving it camouflage with its surroundings that makes it nearly impossible to see.

Methods: Captor stalks future subjects of Facility 995. It tracks a subject until it has a great advantage: The subject is alone, distracted, weak, or asleep. Then it subdues the creature and takes it into the facility. It uses its stealth to evade the First Sun People when bringing in or releasing subjects.



Virtue: Relentless

Vice: Curious

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 6, Finesse 3, Resistance 4

Influence: Hunting 2

Corpus: 10

Willpower: 7

Size: 6

Speed: 15 (species factor 6)

Defense: 3

Initiative: 7

Armor: 3/1

Numina: Innocuous, Mirrored Skin*, Seek, Speed, Tether*

Manifestation: Twilight Form, Materialize, Discorporate

Max Essence: 15

Ban: Captor must pursue a fleeing creature.

Bane: The blood of a hunter slain by her prey.

* Mirrored Skin and Tether function as per the demon form abilities (see **Demon: The Descent** p. 203–204).

Type	Damage	Dice Pool	Notes
Whiplash	1	8	This melee attack has a 20-yard range
Tether	–1	8	This attack grapples the subject and has a 20-yard range

PATLI, ALTERED FACILITY SUBJECT

What am I now? Who am I now?

Background: Patli was a farmer with a family. When he was younger, he marched with his fellows against an Aztec invasion, and when he returned, his family was still there. He hunted occasionally, but he mostly worked the land and raised his children.

That changed when a monster captured him on one hunting trip. To the rest of the world, he simply disappeared. He has been gone for years, and his family has mourned and moved on. But Patli spent three terrifying years in a glass cage surrounded by strange arms of tusk-like material that poked and prodded and cut and sewed, that made him scream and kept him from dying.

He thought he was in the underworld, in the land where people are flayed. He cried in his isolation and ceased paying any attention to what changes the hell wreaked on his body. He didn't know why he couldn't complete the journey to Mictlan, but one day he found himself in the jungle, free.

Only then did he reassess his body. His fingers were tipped with dozens of small needles, proboscises from mosquitoes. His skin had been ripped off — he remembers the feeling acutely — and replaced with grafts from the tough hide of many armadillos. Dozens of swarms of insects had died to provide him with wings.

Now Patli wanders the jungle, torn between the desire to return to the life that alien circumstances stole him from and the knowledge that he can never truly return. He sustains himself by hunting, both with tools he's made and with his new gifts. On the infrequent occasions when he sees humans, he avoids them. So far.

Description: Patli still looks human in the face. It's the unassuming face of a Mesoamerican farmer. Looking closer, one sees centuries of agony in the man's eyes. Step back, and he appears as a monstrosity: thick grey hide making pauldrons on his shoulders and covering the rest of his chest, arms, and legs. His hands seem to have a fuzz on the ends, but looking close they are the maws of mosquitoes reinforced into dangerous little needles.

Storytelling Hints: Patli never asked to become a monster. The mechanical addition of armored skin and internal systems to derive sustenance from blood drawn through his fingers hasn't changed his basic humanity. Years of torture have, though, and he's half-mad at the best of times. He still remembers his family and the happiness he had before his capture, but so far he retains enough sanity to know that returning can only destroy the lives of people he thinks he remembers loving.

The best course for Patli may be putting him out of his misery, or inspiring him to a worthy cause and sending him off on a suicide mission. If he believed he was harming the entities that ruined his life, he'd risk everything to do as much damage as possible.

Virtue: Hardworking

Vice: Lazy

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Crafts (Farming) 2, Investigation 1, Medicine (Home Remedies) 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Stealth 2, Survival (Hunting) 3, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Animal Ken (Domestic Animals) 2, Empathy 2, Persuasion 2, Socialize 1

Merits: Hardy 2, Iron Stamina 2, Patient, Striking

Looks 2
Health: 8
Willpower: 6
Integrity: 3
Size: 5
Speed: 10
Defense: 4
Initiative: 5
Armor: 2/0

Type	Damage	Dice Pool	Notes
Fist	0 (bashing)	5	
Club	1	5	
Fingers	0	5	*

* If successful, Patli immediately heals one point of bashing damage, or downgrades one point of lethal damage to bashing.

Obsidian Catopsis

Catopsis berteroniana is a flowering plant that grows in the forested, humid regions of the Americas. Its seeds catch in the small branches of any tree above the canopy, and the roots hold it to the tree without harming the host. Its axils contain water that draws insects, some of which live out parts of their life cycle there and help the plant, others of which the plant consumes. Between the sunlight, nutrients caught by its axil fluid, and the insects it eats, it survives and grows.

The obsidian catopsis is a variation on the main plant — a rare example of cryptoflora manufactured to serve as Infrastructure. It can be identified by a chunk of obsidian embedded in the base of the plant, or by a weak magnetic field around the plant. Throwing a pinch of iron filaments at a catopsis can reveal whether it's of this altered variety.

If the chunk of obsidian grown within it were the only change, only the plant's location in the canopies would protect it from the Mesoamerican cultures who prize the stone. But the obsidian catopsis has methods of protecting itself. Just as the standard catopsis supports the life cycle of several insect species, so does this. But it alters certain of the insects during their development. Some of the mosquitoes grow bigger, reinforcing their forms with obsidian. A handful of these mosquitoes are near their parent plant at all times, prepared to defend it from large aggressors. Others develop camouflage to make them nearly invisible and carry infectious diseases.

Obsidian catopsis has a more direct purpose: Murder. Let a drop of blood from a living creature fall into one of the plants' axil reservoirs, and all the altered mosquitoes grown from that catopsis seek that creature. A supernatural sense guides them, though not infallibly, and when the mosquitoes find him they kill him, draining and slashing.

A metal tree deep in the jungle produces seeds for the obsidian catopsis. It is a perfect specimen of a common species in every respect except for being made of metal. Cultists pry the catopsis seeds from the tree's seed pods (which will otherwise grow into normal examples of the tree's species) and release them into the air where the God-Machine commands. By this time, the plants and their killer mosquitoes are all over Central America.

Type: Elimination

Function: Create the obsidian catopsis plants, which in turn create altered mosquitoes and direct them in the elimination of mortal targets designated superfluous or harmful to the God-Machine.

Security: Being remote, small, and similar to existing plants are the individual plants' primary defenses. When harmed, they can also call on a handful of nearby altered mosquitoes to attack aggressors. The source tree itself benefits only from being obscure.

Linchpin: Dropping a magnet into an obsidian catopsis destroys all the plant's unnatural functions, leaving it a standard *catopsis berteroniana* (with a mysterious chunk of obsidian inside it), and also scrambles the senses of all mosquitoes altered by that plant. The source tree's linchpin is a hawk. It seems at first glance to be riding an updraft above the tree, but it never moves. Bringing the hawk down stops the tree from producing its seeds. Poisoning the hawk is one way of suborning the Infrastructure, but the precise effect varies based on the poison used.

Tilt:
Obsidian Mosquitoes Swarm

Depending on the number of obsidian catopsis plants in the area and how long they've been operating, the swarm can be anywhere from one yard in radius to 16. Worse, the obsidian in their construction makes the mosquitoes immune to fire. They sink in water, and water confounds their senses, making diving into a river or lake a viable defense from the creatures. At least temporarily.

Obsidian Mosquitoes

About as large as the standard crane fly, obsidian reinforces the structure and proboscis of these mosquitoes. This adds strength and sharpness, making the insects able to cause harm rather than simple irritation. Fast and hard to hit, they still aren't a significant threat singly, which is why they typically attack in swarms.

Tenochtitlan Aqueduct (Suborned)

Lined with an amalgam of copper, tin, and blood every 3.3 feet, the aqueduct brings fresh water from Chapultepec



to Tenochtitlan. It's an essential piece of mortal infrastructure, as Tetzcoco is a salt lake and the city would otherwise be without drinking water.

Whatever the original purpose, one of the city's demons (Chipahua) altered it. She influenced one of the cultists who was supposed to inaugurate the aqueduct with a mixture of *pulque* and infant's tears. Instead, he pissed down the aqueduct, and that threw the entire thing off. Now it sheds a luminescent mist every morning at 2:21 A.M., and the next draws of water from the reservoir it feeds provide Aether for hungry demons.

Chipahua and her Agency manage the aqueduct and ensure its bounty gets shared out among themselves. They occasionally sell it for favors.

Type: Suborned

Function: Produce two points of Aether per chapter, shed a magical mist each morning.

Security: The mortal members of Those Who Cure the Tonalli keep a close eye on the aqueduct for their superiors, but the primary security is the city and its warriors. The aqueduct is so important to the city that anyone messing with it draws significant unwanted attention. The punishment for damaging it is death.

Linchpin: Beneath the aqueduct, five feet from one of its supports, a small jade frog sits on the lake bed. Moving this more than 10 feet away disrupts the magic. Replacing it with a jade figure of another animal alters the aqueduct's effects unpredictably and, given how many people live on its water, possibly fatally.

Agency: Those Who Cure the Tonalli

The Aztec belief in the divinatory power of astrology provided a group of enterprising demons something to exploit. People have always worried about being born under the wrong sign, being given the wrong name, or having a destiny spoiled or gone wrong. This destiny is called a *tonalli*. It is part of the person, and it can be lost or diseased and skewed.

Not long after the Mexica settled in Tenochtitlan, one of the priests named himself *tetonalmacani*, one who cures the *tonalli*. In addition to his priestly duties, he walked among the people, common and noble, and set right their ailments of the *tonalli*. For some, he discovered their *tonalli* lost, and he renamed their destiny from the divinatory book. Others he claimed had illness, derived from a great blow to the body, a great fright, or an offense to the local spirits. For these, he cured the disease and set their fortunes right. Many times, he provided a ritual scroll of some text, and the subject's task was to mark it at the end.

The *tetonalmacani* was so successful that other priests joined him, and he taught them the ways of recognizing an ailing *tonalli* and the steps necessary to cure it. The practice spread and embedded itself in the Aztec culture.

Today, hundreds of *tetonalmacantin* see to the health of Tenochtitlan's many destinies. At the heart of the *tetonalmacantin* priesthood are a handful of Unchained.

They benefit from dozens and dozens of pacts made with Aztecs fearful that their destinies have somehow gone wrong. While most of the *tetonalmacantin* are mortal and cannot funnel pacts into the Agency's pockets, they superbly deliver information on a mortal in a perfect position for a senior priest to offer a ritual cure to their *tonalli* sickness.

In large part, the sect's power all resides in the heart of the Aztec Empire. Outside Tenochtitlan, their influence is more limited. Hence the *tonalpochtecah*, Aztec traders who make a specialty of trading people's fortunes in addition to the standard luxury goods. Playing a dual role of priest and merchant, they bring both money and pacts from distant lands into the Agency.

A demon who calls herself Chipahua, or Ms. Pristine, runs the Agency, aided by a handful of other outcasts. They bill themselves as the most senior and wise of the *tetonalmacantin*, masters of all the sect's ceremonies and keepers of all its records. That includes its pacts, which they keep hidden in a number of select places through the Sacred Precinct and a few select spots elsewhere in the city.

Aides closest to Chipahua are all stigmatics, committed to the Agency cause, or mortal priests faithful to the Unchained as aspects of the gods performing divine acts in secret. These latter are the chosen successors of the demons' Covers, already bound in soul pacts and destined to one day conceal the demons themselves from the God-Machine.

CHIPAHUA, A.K.A. MS. PRISTINE

Your destiny has strayed from its course. May I set it right?

Ahhhhh, I sense a great distress in your tonalli. *I know the ritual to heal it. It requires something of you, though, but nothing you can't afford.*

Background: Ms. Pristine doesn't remember much of her life pre-Fall. She knows she erased people, but she doesn't believe she was a Destroyer. She thinks she arranged people's lives to be exactly what they were needed to be, with zero cruft. Absent any extraneous details, the God-Machine's agents could slot them directly into where they were needed without any additional work. She remembers taking pride in this work.

It's this pride that led to her Fall. She wondered why anyone didn't fit into their slots, why the parts designed for the world drifted from the original purposes. She thought that she could do the whole thing somewhat better if just given free rein rather than being held to restrictive orders. And she thought that if she had a chance to understand this free will thing and why it ruined all her lovely planning, she could figure out how to eliminate it.

That was the last piece of the puzzle. Ms. Pristine Fell catastrophically, appearing in the midst of a ball game in Toltec Tula, her collection of shattered Covers from all over the world sticking to everyone nearby. Native Mesoamericans had to deal with the sudden addition to their lives of long-term relationships with people on other continents, new memories and habits they'd had all their lives, and professions and skills that had no place in their culture. For agents of the God-Machine, it was a bonfire in the night, and Ms. Pristine fled.

She spent a great many years wandering the wilderness. If she contacts no one, she figures, no one will find her. Her one-time ambition of experiencing free will so that she could learn to circumvent it evaporated once she actually had it.

Discovering the Valley of Mexico, she saw the growing population and discovered her thirst for more information overpowered her need for anonymity. She acquired a series of Covers and integrated herself into several lives in the valley.

When the Mexica came, she thought they were going to ruin her good thing. Instead, they brought with them social and architectural innovations that produced greater populations and a higher degree of mobility, all of which aided her. As they became the local power, and then the regional power, she found her options expanding.

Ms. Pristine came up with her Agency as a creative trick for talking people into pacts. When it caught on, she ran with it, accreting power and influence around her like a black hole. She still runs it, now in her fourth incarnation, and she's acquired a group of fellow Unchained, stigmatics, and faithful mortals supporting her.

In addition to her Cover as Chipahua, the sect's senior priest, she also has Ueman, a *pochtecatl* who travels widely. By sending Chipahua into meditative retreats, she can travel as Ueman to foreign lands. She buys and sells goods, collects information, and occasionally makes pacts with people she meets. Usually this only buys her temporary gain and a foothold for the next time, but she occasionally brings home a soul pact that she can store against the future.

Description: As Chipahua, her favorite Cover, she looks like an Aztec priest: black hair to his waist, spotted here and there with dried blood from her personal penances, in a black robe. Chipahua is quiet but understanding to the commoner, firm but warm to her subordinates, and she demands similar attitudes from them — not least because she may one day take them on as Covers and she doesn't want to change her habits.

As Ueman, she is taller and wears the short haircut of a *pochtecatl*. Ueman is a wealthy man, and he dresses the part in colorful, patterned garb only permitted to the *pochtecah*.

In her demon form, Ms. Pristine is a series of eyes and hands, floating in the air in a roughly humanoid shape. A second look reveals that the eyes and hands aren't floating free, but are connected by a complicated arrangement of articulated wires, each eye or hand connected to two others.

Storytelling Hints: Ms. Pristine is secure in her Covers and in her power, both at the head of her Agency and the head of her small sect of the Tenochtitlan priesthood. As

such, she can afford to be friendly, and she is. She likes to talk with people, not least because the more they talk, the more likely they are to let something interesting slip.

Use Ms. Pristine as a guide or mentor for other demons, or as an antagonist if they are risking the security that she's built up over so long.

Virtue: Isolated
Vice: Controlling
Incarnation: Psychopomp
Agenda: Inquisitor
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Investigation 2, Occult (God-Machine) 1, Politics (Tenochtitlan Priesthood) 2
Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Firearms (Rivet Arm) 2, Stealth 1, Survival (Central America) 1
Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression 1, Intimidation 1, Persuasion (Negotiation) 3, Socialize 1, Subterfuge 3
Merits: Cultists 5 (Those Who Cure the *Tonalli*), Resources 3, Allies 1 (Priesthood), Contacts (*Pochtecah*)
Health: 7
Primum: 3
Demonic Form: Aura Sight, Clairvoyant Sight, Inhuman Intelligence, Memory Theft, Phasing, Rivet Arm, Sense the Angelic, Sonic Acuity
Embeds: Alibi, Devil's Advocate, Interference, Lucky Break, Unperson
Exploits: none
Aether/per turn: 12/3
Willpower: 5
Cover: Chipahua (8), Ueman (6)
Size: 5
Speed: 10
Defense: 3
Initiative: 5
Armor: 0
Glitches: None

Oddities

Many things in the Mesoamerican world simply don't work the way they're supposed to. It might be fate getting all twisted up, or a bit of God-Machine Infrastructure gone haywire, an occult matrix that fired off all wrong, or just something strange. Whatever it is, no one seems to be coming to fix it.

Rain Trees

South of Tenochtitlan, the small Mixtec village of Nuviko sits by a grove of trees in the middle of a stretch of dry shrubland. Irrigated farmland radiates outward from the trees, and the rocky, irregular terrain conceals the patch of verdant green from passing eyes. Travelers typically avoid the arid region, preferring to stay near the water and food of the tropical forests surrounding Nuviko.

Some mysterious effect reverses the standard causality of rain and trees. Everywhere else, rain falls from the sky and the trees' canopies keep the ground beneath them dry, or at least drier. The grove of trees beside Nuviko somehow undoes that. When precipitation comes to the area it pours out from beneath the trees. Everywhere else remains dry.

The people of Nuviko manage this logically. The rain falls from the trees, so their irrigation leads water outward from the trees into the fields. Remote from other Mixtec towns and off the trade routes, the people of Nuviko are savvy enough to know their arrangement is backwards. It doesn't change anything. They use the water they get, and the arid land around them protects them from most visitors.

Rain disobeying certain expectations is not the only strange thing about the grove of trees. The ground within the grove contains a collection of unusual objects: a series of umbrellas from a variety of cultures and times, most of them yet to come; stone-carved models of various sea vessels, also from many places and times and perfect in every detail; and a jade plaque with "water" written on it in every language ever on Earth, including several not yet spoken or written.

Thief-Fish of Popocatepetl

Popocatepetl is an active volcano roughly 45 miles southeast of Tenochtitlan. Its noises and periodic minor eruptions lead many to give it a wide berth, but as the region is fertile and has paths to other wealthy territories it always has some villages and traders traveling nearby. People who live there are safe, but anyone passing through the 10 miles or so around Popocatepetl risks an encounter with the thief-fish.

As large as a man, the fish is bright blue and red and floats some four feet off the ground. It can speak Nahuatl fluently, as well as a smattering of other languages. Beyond those peculiarities, it looks like a natural fish as it bobs in the invisible swells of the air.

The thief-fish robs travelers. It prefers to steal from merchants, but it is not above stealing from settlers and people moving from one village to another. Natives of the area are exempt, however, so an appeal to one of the local chiefs may procure a reprieve. Exceptions aside, the fish demands all one's wealth be left behind. It is not above murder to get its prizes, and it is happy to explain this while flashing rows of

razor-sharp teeth, but it prefers to reason that material goods are not worth one's life. Especially since, as the fish explains, being killed by a fish does not get one entrance to the heaven of Tlalocan or the Heaven of the Sun.

Over time, the thief-fish has acquired a number of followers — a small band of highwaymen who consider the fish a totem god that brings them fortune. Even they do not know how the thief-fish transports its stolen goods without hands, or even where they are kept. They only know that they get a share of the spoils, and the thief-fish's take disappears when no one is looking.

The Lost Valley

Deep in the Olmec territory to the southeast of Tenochtitlan, a hidden valley conceals a handful of remnants from another age: dinosaurs. Within just a few miles of lands brought under Aztec rule during the reign of Motecuhzoma Ilhuicamina, the valley is behind a spike of mountains the Olmec consider impassable and forbidden by the gods. The Aztec never went any farther because there was no one there to conquer, so the valley remains known to very few.

Perhaps the valley channels and retains heat in a way that spared the dinosaurs there from the cold, or natural thermal springs served the same function. Perhaps some other effect sustained the plant life and preserved a local oxygenation cycle. Perhaps it was magic. However it happened, a handful of species remain in the lost valley, with a few hundred of each keeping the lines going.

Eagle warrior Ihuitl of Tenochtitlan, a lifelong traveler and explorer, disregarded the Olmec's beliefs about the mountains and crossed them. Having seen the mountains from the air, he was confident there was nothing forbidding about them, especially compared to other mountains he had flown over. On the other side, he saw beasts that resembled the birds he knew but were monstrous in size. Inspecting them closer, he attracted their attention and barely escaped with his life.

Back in Tenochtitlan, Ihuitl is enthusiastically trying to convince anyone initiated into the eagle warriors' mysteries that they should return to the valley. The noble beasts there would make truly noble forms for great warriors such as them. Since the eagle elders aren't listening, he's considering going to the jaguar warriors, despite the betrayal to his warrior society.

Warriors from a Distant Land

A band of samurai warriors and the soldiers under their command marched through a thick fog to take the fortress of Hatakeyama Yoshinari. They never found the secret entrance to the fortress that the mysterious stranger had promised them. When the fog lifted, they were in a land both dry and wet, possessed of plants they had never seen and people who spoke an unknown language.

Still new to Mesoamerica, they haven't yet had the opportunity to have much impact on the people they've met and the places they've seen. A few of them are still learning the basics of Nahuatl. The ways here are very strange to them, but they recognize that they must adapt if they are to find their way home or make a new life in this strange place.

The Water People

Beneath the waters of Lake Tetzcoco, and the other connected lakes, the water people live and watch the surface dwellers with amusement. They farm the lake bottom and live in small caves or shelters they carve into the underwater slopes of the lake. They breathe salt water with ease and craft tools from the stone on the lake floor. A citizen of Tenochtitlan who sees them might mistake them for children, except for the blue tinge to their skin and the webbing between their fingers.

Their numbers are dwindling. A generation ago, hundreds of them lived in Tetzcoco. They tell stories of their past, indeterminate generations before, when the lands they could walk were broader and they could walk for days and meet their cousins far away. Now there are less than a hundred, and children are rare.

A few Tenochtitlan legends address the water people, describing fisherman catching one in a net or a warrior fighting creatures from the lake. Most consider them superstitions. One *nahualli* has stolen a water person's form. He sometimes uses this to explore their community, but only from a distance, as he cannot speak their language.

The Refit Chamber

A nondescript home in Tlatelolco conceals a small chamber buried in the ground. As Tlatelolco is nearly a part of the great city of Tenochtitlan, this unassuming house is within a few miles of the Sacred Precinct. The family that occupies the house has lived there for generations. They know about the secret chamber, but Concealment Infrastructure conditions them to ignore it and anything associated with it. They react to strangers in their home as any Aztec family would, but once a stranger opens the chamber they forget she was ever there.

A removable piece of floor in the detached steam bath opens up a cylindrical chamber of tungsten gears, unmoving and silent. Ten feet deep and eight feet in diameter, it's large enough for any human and most angels and monsters. Stepping on the floor plate sets all the gears spinning, and the first thing the massive clockwork does is seal the chamber by swinging shut a tungsten door at the top of the cylinder.

The chamber was once a reforging facility that disassembled angels and reassembled them with new parts. Agents of the God-Machine kept the device stocked with appropriate machinery, and it altered angels mid-mission or reequipped them for a new task. Forgotten and cut off from supply, the device now draws its replacement parts from wherever it can. It steals from the weave of fate and from budding and collapsing Infrastructure around it, distorting space and causality to possess them with irregular success.

Once activated by an occupant, the chamber gets to work. Grinding and clanking, invisible hands disassemble whatever

creature is inside it and reassemble it with whatever parts it can find. An hour later, someone or something probably different leaves the chamber. A creature of strong will may be able to influence the process, as the chamber occasionally accepts direction from the subject, a remnant of when angels arrived with directions from the God-Machine. This direction need not be conscious. The chamber reads its occupant's intent and desire for its body.

The chamber can tweak the human or animal form, changing a creature's apportionment of dots in Physical Attributes. It can also increase or decrease a character's Physical Attribute dots, add or reapportion dots in Physical Merits (or Merits that can derive from physical change, such as Striking Looks), and add inhuman physical characteristics. At the Storyteller's discretion, it can also add Supernatural Merits, if she determines that Supernatural Merits stem from some physical quality of the body. It cannot alter the mind or soul or related characteristics.

Make a Resolve + Composure roll for the character. Add a –2 penalty for each Merit dot and a –4 for each Attribute dot she wants to *add*. Dots she wants to shift apply no penalty, though wanting to stay exactly the same applies a –1, for the chamber is designed to alter those who enter. Add a –3 for each inhuman characteristic she wants to add, such as jaguar's claws, great big bird wings, or a vampire's ability to derive sustenance from blood. She can also use the chamber to resolve persistent physical Conditions, such as Blindness.

If the roll is a success, the character gains the alterations she desires. On an exceptional success, she gains one additional dot to her highest Physical Attribute. On a failure, the chamber alters her according to its broken programming, randomizing her Physical Attributes. On a dramatic failure, its broken nature breaks her as well. Apply a negative physical condition, such as Blindness, Disabled, or Mute, or an unwanted inhuman characteristic.

A demon who accesses the chamber can use it to alter his active Cover (identical to altering a human's form), or to reassemble his demon form with parts the chamber has available. The process is the same as for a human body, applying a –1 for each part the demon wants to change, and he cannot add new abilities without swapping them for existing ones. A failure on the Resolve + Composure roll indicates that the chamber replaces one of the demonic form abilities selected for swapping with whatever random technology is available. A dramatic failure replaces three at random.

In addition to refits, the chamber also repairs its occupants. Roll a number of dice equal to the number of points of Health the character is missing. Each success heals one lethal or bashing damage. Demons and angels, and other agents or former agents of the God-Machine, treat this as a rote action.

On the rare occasion that an animal finds its way into the chamber, it generally desires to increase its Stamina, or whichever of Strength or Dexterity is more useful to it. As animals are frequently weak-willed, this often has strange results.

The chamber is designed to handle one occupant at a time. Multiple occupancy during active operation causes unpredictable and unwanted results.

Type: Logistical (Rogue)

Function: Originally, repair and sidegrade angels. Now, the chamber changes any creature that enters it.

Security: Obscurity, through a family that lives atop it, studiously ignoring its existence.

Linchpin: A hexagonal, green glass rod lies hidden, built into the threshold of the family home that hides the chamber. Breaking this disables the device forever. Alternately, the chamber's programming lies in the coals in the family steam room, which never burn down (another fact the family pays no attention to). Several of them are cracked. Replacing these with the original specs brings the device close to its original function, though it doesn't have the logistical support it needs. Replacing them with compatible but different coals changes the chamber's programming, potentially adding command words, making it easier to control, or altering it to gather Aether rather than assorted resources for reconstruction.

Mississauga

November 10, 1979, a train carrying a dangerous compounds derails while passing through Mississauga, Ontario. Certain compounds explode, a detonation visible from over 60 miles away. Because of the threat of chlorine gas spreading through the city, authorities evacuate most of Mississauga, dislocating over 200,000 people for six days.

Conspiracy theorists insist the city-wide evacuation must be a cover up for something huge: an alien incursion, a secret government experiment, an outbreak of supernatural creatures, or something else altogether. Theorists insist that authorities removed the citizens of Mississauga to prevent them from seeing the secret or to adjust their memories after accidental exposure. The derailment and chemical spills, naturally, never happened.

In fact the derailment is true, and can be verified. After decades of cleanup, there are small patches of Mississauga that will never quite be clean. Tests can show the presence of chemicals in trace amounts that match the official history. In truth, the evacuation never happened because the people were already gone, and the deliberate chemical spill helped cover up the fact that the government just didn't know where the inhabitants of Mississauga had gone on November 8, 1979. Through some unorthodox sleuthing and a few consultants that the government never put on the books, everyone from Mississauga was back in their own bed by the evening of November 16.

After spending a week in Aztec-era Mexico, they were glad to be back. They appeared near the town of Tepotzotlan, within the Valley of Mexico but not close to Tenochtitlan, over the course of several hours, appearing out of the darkness of night as though they had walked a long distance. Bewildered by the journey and unable to communicate with their new hosts, it was a difficult time for the travelers. The locals treated them as visitors from the lands of the gods, at least at first.

Bygones

The Shamed Tecpatl

Durability 4, Size 1, Structure 4

Description: The Shamed Tecpatl is a flint knife in the Aztec style, with a handle of rough stone wrapped in maguey fabric worn smooth over the years. The *tecpatl* has been in use for decades without breaking and is in good repair. Despite its age, it still looks sharp, and it feels unnaturally comfortable in the hand. In a modern game, it has been in and out of private collections and museums for centuries, and its owners have kept it clean.

Effect: It is not easy to be a fraud in Tenochtitlan, but Ollin found a way. He stole fine clothing and adornments from the market in Tlatelolco, crafted his own wig, and posed as a priest from nearby Tlaxcala. The priests of Tenochtitlan hosted him as a foreign dignitary in the Sacred Precinct. After a week of successful subterfuge, they asked him to preside over one of the ritual sacrifices.

Necalli was a warrior from nearby Huexotla, captured in a flower war by eagle warriors of Tenochtitlan. He was ready to be sacrificed to the gods, to be honored for his warrior spirit and join other warriors in the joyous afterlife. Instead, he wound up on the sacrificial stone in front of Ollin. With a thrust of the knife, Ollin ended Necalli's life and gave up his heart to Huitzilopochtli. But Necalli knew in his soul that something was wrong.

His spirit never went to the heaven of Tonatiuh-Ilhuicac. It stayed in the flint knife, the *tecpatl*, used for the sacrifice, which stayed behind when Ollin fled his disguise and the Sacred Precinct. He took up a new life in Tenochtitlan, and then several more, deceiving several women into being his wives without the means to support such a family. He eventually died happy, but his extended family fell into disarray.

Necalli's spirit is with the knife still. It wants to make up the loss of the improper sacrifice and take vengeance on Ollin's family line. A person carrying the knife gains an additional Aspiration: End Ollin's Family Lines. In the Aztec era, a short while after Ollin's death, this is one or two dozen people. In a modern game, it may be hundreds or thousands.

Additionally, the angry spirit rewards anyone who uses the knife to make proper sacrifices. If a character uses the knife to remove a living person's heart and consecrate it to Huitzilopochtli (the knife can give its wielder the words), the knife grants that person a boon: a bonus dot of Athletics, Brawl, Survival, or Weaponry for one month. Multiple sacrifices within the same month can add additional bonuses, but not for the same Skill.

Shattering the knife releases Necalli's vengeful spirit into the world.

Atlocatl

Durability 3, Size 5, Structure 3

Description: This is a well-worn canoe in the style common to Tenochtitlan. Of local wood, it fits three or four, and a pilot can propel it along the water a good but not exceptional speed. In a modern game, the canoe is miraculously well-preserved. It might have spent many years as a museum piece, but it would look just as good after centuries of use.

Effect: Every time the canoe makes landfall, it breaks up into hundreds or thousands of small spiders that follow the canoe's pilot wherever she goes in a venomous swarm. The spiders attack her enemies and serve as equipment for appropriate Social actions (such as Intimidation) when not fighting. They are an eight-yard swarm (see the Swarm Tilt, **Demon: The Descent**, p. 179). A creature they harm also suffers their venom: the moderate Poisoned Tilt. When the owner of the boat steps into a body of water big enough for the canoe, the spiders rush into the water and form the canoe around her.

One of the Aztec's stories describes Huitzilopochtli warring with a spider-demon. The god hunted the spider for years, the two fought, and the spider got the upper hand. Huitzilopochtli fled for years, until he had recovered from the wounds and venom. He laid a trap for the spider-demon, in keeping with the Aztec favor for ambushes, and wounded it grievously. He was about to land the killing blow when Quetzalcoatl appeared and convinced him to allow the spider a different end. Quetzalcoatl broke the demon into a thousand pieces and wove them all into a boat.

Patolli: Playing the Game

This chapter contains rules modifications and additional rules for playing in an Aztec Empire chronicle, as well as a new method for creating playable skinchangers.

Demons in Mesoamerica

The Unchained operate differently in post-classic Mesoamerica than they do in the 21st century. The reasons are obvious, but some of the consequences are not.

Covers in a Small World

Anonymity is both easier and harder to come by in the Valley of Mexico. The only world-spanning systems tracking identities are controlled by the God-Machine, and it doesn't open the floodgates of information to anyone but its angels. It's easier to walk for a day and pretend to be someone from farther away, and gain some tolerance from the locals (as long as they don't have a grudge against the people you're pretending to be from).

But strangers can't expect trust. An Aztec knows the people in her *calpulli*, her district, and they are the ones she trusts. To gain a position of trust in a new place, a demon has to be from that place. Since the locals know everyone in their *calpulli*, they are hard to fool. And since they don't trust a strange demon, it can be hard to maneuver anyone into the soul pact that would give the demon a trusted identity.



Ranged Weapons Chart

Type	Damage	Ranges	Clip	Initiative	Strength	Size
Atlatl*	2	30/60/120	1	–1	2	1
Bow	1	40/80/160	1	–2	3	2
Sling**	1	60/120/240	1	–4	2	2

* An atlatl is about two feet long with a notch for the butt of a dart to rest before throwing.
** Despite the size, a sling can be folded up and concealed easily.

Melee Weapons Chart

Type	Damage	Initiative	Strength	Size	Special
Macuahuitl	2	–2	2	2	
Macuahuitl, two-handed	3	–4	3	3	9-Again, two-handed

Armor Chart

Type	Rating	Strength	Defense	Speed	Coverage
Ichcahuipilli	2/0	2	–1	0	Torso
Tlahuiztli	1/0	2	–0	0	Torso, arms, legs

Some acceptable types of strangers include *pochtecah*, messengers, or warrior scouts (depending on the warrior's tribe). By building a relationship as one of these outsiders, a demon can develop the level of trust necessary to make pacts with people.

A demon must also keep in mind the cultural differences between even nearby tribes. This tribe uses an oil to color hair, warriors from another tribe paint the face with blue instead of red, and *pochtecah* from the other side of the valley always have a certain popular dye. Forgetting these details is a good way to increase suspicion.

Pacts in a Pre-Literate World

With the global literacy rate sitting above 80%, modern Unchained usually don't have to worry about forging pacts with people who can't read. Even when a demon is making a pact with someone who can't read, all she has to do is produce the contract and invite the sucker to make his mark on the line. There are a few dusty corners of the world where the dominant language has no written form. While most demons want nothing to do with such places, all a demon has to do is produce a contract in a written language from nearby and explain it all. Sometimes, she delivers the pact in a foreign language just for an advantage over the mortal signee. Handing over a contract in German legalese is like small print plus-plus.

The Nahuatl writing the Aztec used is a proto-language, built on a combination of pictograms, ideograms, and rebuses. It relies on a certain amount of interpretation from the reader, and with few exceptions the only Aztecs who can read are priests, nobility, and the artists who make the Aztec codices. Writing out a pact in written Nahuatl is analogous to writing a modern contract in purple prose and metaphor. Two different readers may come away with very different ideas of what the contract means. A demon can use this to her benefit, making it potentially easier to manipulate a mortal into agreeing to the pact.

A commoner in the Aztec Empire would not know how to react to a paper contract placed in front of her. Nor would a noble, for that matter, but at least he'd know how to read it. With a little demonic guidance, either can make his or her mark on the local equivalent of the dotted line, but it would stand out as a strange behavior. In such a case, a demon may choose to return to how pacts looked in the ages before written language:

The outcast barters with her chosen pactbound until he agrees on the terms. Then, she marks a piece of stone, a building, a tree, or something similar with a symbol of their agreement. The symbol might be a pictographic representation of the terms, but it's just as likely something abstract. She declares that this mark stands for their agreement, and once they both put a mark on it, the pact is made. A soul pact still requires a trace of the mortal's blood on the mark.

Such demons keep secluded groves of trees covered with pact marks, or a secret cave, or vault with marked clay tablets.

They often use elaborate patterns designed to distinguish their pacts from those of other demons. Some of these patterns survive to modern times in occult texts, misunderstood references to the past.

Modern Unchained don't use meaningless marks because it makes the mortals more suspicious and the pacts less fungible. As annoying as legal documents are, they're an integral part of the modern world and mortals are more comfortable with them than they are with occult imagery. And no demon wants to trade favors for a pact when she can't be sure of what the deal was.

Of course, having knowledge of all living languages, a demon in the Americas around 100 BCE could use Greek writing to make a precise contract for any pact. And a local who couldn't read it could make a mark to commit to the contents just as easily. But it would stand out so much — in a way that an English contract in modern-day Poland wouldn't — that it would draw unwanted and unwelcome attention to the demon.

Aztec Weapons

Ranged

Aztec warriors fought with slings, bows, and atlatl-thrown darts. The atlatl in particular was considered a godly weapon, seen in much holy imagery, but bows and slings were more common on the Aztec battlefield.

Melee

When enemies reached hand-to-hand, Aztec warriors met them with clubs, long spears, and the obsidian-edged wooden sword called the *macuahuitl*. When possible, Aztec warriors also wielded shields for defense, the equivalent of small shields. Clubs (use batons or crowbars), shields, and spears are in **Demon: The Descent** (see p. 326).

Note that Aztec weapons have no Availability entry because possessing weapons was not a matter of resources or social status. Tributary states gave weapons as tribute, and the Triple Alliance distributed them to warriors as necessary for training and war. The Aztecs tipped or edged many of their weapons with obsidian, which was used to achieve exceptional sharpness. For any obsidian-edged weapon, increase the damage rating by +1.

Armor

For the Aztecs, armor was a sign of honor and rank, not a privilege all warriors enjoyed. Primarily nobles and warriors who had earned recognition wore the layered cotton-and-leather armor called *ichcahuipilli*. Greater recognition permitted one the *tlahuiztli*, providing some coverage to arms and legs.

Notes on Existing Merits

Among the Aztecs, some Merits are more or less common. Status is very important in Tenochtitlan. Nobles, priests, and warriors all have status among their fellows, and Aztec society recognizes that status broadly. That status provides privileges and social influence in a manner similar to how wealth does in the modern age. But commoners also have status in their *calpulli*, the district of the city that they run themselves, managed by a leader elected from among them.

New Fighting Merits

Aztec warriors train in a number of combat and Fighting Style Merits, especially those that enable them to more easily capture enemies. The masters of youth at the *telpochcalli* teach equivalents of Armed Defense, Choke Hold, Grappling, Iron Skin, and Police Tactics to young warriors (see **Demon: The Descent**, p. 302–306).

Disabling Tactics (Style, • to •••)

Prerequisites: Strength •••, Weaponry ••

Effect: Your character has training in disabling opponents, making it easier to bring live captives home to Tenochtitlan for sacrifices.

Breaking the Branch (•): Your character is skilled at striking arms and legs in the midst of combat. Reduce the penalty for making an attack specifically at the arm, hand, or leg by two.

Cast Like Sand (••): Your character can send enemies flying by encroaching on their space during a fight. When she successfully hits and deals damage with her weapon, you may spend a point of Willpower to inflict the Knocked Down Tilt on the subject.

Strike the Rising Dog (•••): Your character knows that the best way to keep someone out of the fight is by keeping them on the ground, and she's trained in doing so. When someone within her striking distance tries to rise from a prone position, you may spend a point of Willpower. The character makes a reflexive Weaponry attack against the subject. If successful, in addition to any damage from the attack, the subject also fails to rise.

Subduing Strikes (•)

Prerequisite: Weaponry ••

Effect: Your character is practiced at striking enemies in a way that leaves them breathing, even when using otherwise deadly force. When pulling her blows with a weapon, she can deal bashing damage instead of lethal without spending Willpower.

New Supernatural Merits

While the Aztecs are not the only culture to delve into the mysteries of stealing animals' skins and taking their forms, some of their traditions last into the present day.

Animal Speech (• or ••)

Effect: Through some mysterious agency, your character has the ability to understand and be understood by a specific

type of animal. Perhaps one of the fey blessed her, a possessing spirit left her with some unexplainable knowledge, or she ate the heart of the mother maguey plant. However it came to pass, she is one hundred percent clear on what those animals are trying to communicate with their sounds, scents, and body language. She gains a +3 to any Animal Ken rolls to understand that type of animal. With the two-dot version, she can speak to them in whatever tongue she likes, and her intent communicates clearly. The bonus also applies to trying to influence the beast. This Merit does not impart on the animals any intelligence or personality other than what they already possess.

Skinthief (••• or Special)

Prerequisite: Animal Ken •, Occult ••

Effect: Your character has discovered or created a ritual for taking on the shape of an animal. Specifics vary, but it almost always includes cutting the skin from the target animal and wearing it to complete the transformation.

Choose a general species or type of creature; your character can only steal that type's form. Sample choices include owls, jaguars, wolves, humans, ghosts, rain spirits, rage spirits, and so on. For more esoteric creatures, she must find a way to successfully hunt them; this Merit provides the knowledge of how to skin something like a ghost once it's been incapacitated, but no special ability to incapacitate it.

Creating the skin your character needs to transform requires enough time to skin the animal and a cost in Willpower depending on how long the skin will remain magical.

- *One-shot* skins last until the next sunrise or sunset, but do not cost Willpower.
- *Week-long* skins start to rot after roughly a week and cost one Willpower.
- *Month-long* skins last up to a month, often until the next full moon or new moon, and cost two Willpower.
- *Year-long* skins last up to a year, usually until a celestial event such as an equinox or an important annual holiday or festival, and cost three Willpower to create.
- *Permanent* skins are cured and never go bad, but if stolen must be recovered or recreated. Creating a permanent skin requires a *dot* of Willpower.

Changing form takes an instant action. While changed, the skinchanger is physically indistinguishable from the creature from which she got the skin, and has the creature's physical Attributes and Size. She also gains an additional Vice: Bestial. Once per chapter, she can regain a point of Willpower by acting according to the instincts of the creature she wears instead of following her desires. A bear may growl and threaten, a pigeon may fly away, or a ghost may inflict torments. No character can gain more than one point of Willpower per chapter by fulfilling Vices.

From Template to Merit

There's never enough room to do everything. We can't update the original skinthief template from **Skinchangers** here, so we've written a Merit designed to accomplish something similar.

Changing form using a stolen spirit's skin grants the skinchanger a Twilight form and vulnerability to the spirit's ban and bane. She must spend Willpower in place of Essence whenever the spirit she has become must spend Essence. If she is required to spend Essence and has no Willpower to spend, she suffers a point of lethal damage instead.

Dots in this Merit in excess of three are used to purchase additional effects:

Animal Speech (•or ••): Your character can use and understand the sounds and body language of the animal as though she were born to it. While in the animal's form, she can communicate with other animals of that type clearly. This does not make animals more friendly or intelligent. The two-dot version enables her to communicate with that type of animal even while in human form.

Bare Necessities (••or •••): Your character doesn't need to endure the difficulty of losing clothes during transformation and retaking her natural form naked. Her transformation absorbs her clothes into her new form and returns them when she changes back. With three dots in Bare Necessities, she can also carry with her a small amount of gear, such as a small pack or a weapon in each hand.

Essence Pool (•– •••••): Your character has a pool of Essence to draw from when using a spirit form. Her maximum Essence is equal to the dots spent on Essence Pool, and she can spend one Essence per turn. When in a stolen spirit form, she can feed on any Essence that the spirit could; otherwise, she can regain one Essence by spending three points of Willpower as part of successful meditation (see **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 75).

Hybrid Form (••or ••••): Your character can change into a human–animal hybrid of increased strength and fierceness. When in this form, she has a Strength equal to the greater of her human or animal Strengths plus one, and a Size equal to her human Size plus one. For two dots, the hybrid form is the character's only form. For four dots, the hybrid form is addition to the standard animal form.

Renewable Skins (•): Your character may renew an existing skin when its magic would expire instead of hunting a new one. Renewing a skin has the same Willpower cost and a time requirement on par with hunting and skinning a new form.

Resilient Form (•– •••••): Your character may take on the form of a smaller creature, but she doesn't gain all its fragility. Each dot spent on Resilient Form increases her Health in her animal form, to a maximum of her Health in her human form.



Spirit Powers (•+): Your character can use Influence from a stolen spirit form, but no more dots of Influence than the dots spent on Spirit Powers. Additionally, each dot spent on Spirit Powers grants her access to one of the spirit form's Numina or Manifestations.

Strong Instincts (•): Your character has learned how to integrate her animal form's reflexes into her actions. While in animal form, she uses the higher of her Dexterity or Wits as the basis of her Defense.

Quick Change (•): Your character can don and doff her skin quickly. She can change form as a reflexive action.

Twisted Tongue (•): Your character can speak human languages while in her animal form.

Unshared Flesh (•••): Your character's natural form does not share the wounds taken in her animal form. When she changes into her natural form, any damage taken stays with the animal form. **Drawback:** Wounds taken in her animal form do not heal while she is in her human form.

Your character can know how to take on the form of more than one creature; each is bought as a separate Merit.

Drawback: While in a form granted by this Merit, a character doesn't confront her breaking points. Everything is surreal and filtered through a different perception, a different instinct, so nothing feels world-shakingly wrong. But when she returns to human form, everything comes crashing home. Make all breaking point rolls incurred during the transformation after your character returns to her normal form, and at a –1 die penalty.

New Social Merits

These mystery cults represent just two of the many options for characters in the Aztec who want to belong to an occult society.

Mystery Cult: Jaguar Priests

The *nahualtin*, the jaguar priests of Tenochtitlan, use sorcery, trickery, and deceit to sustain the health of the Aztec state. They suffer the shame of dishonesty and the taint of a foreign culture's god of sorcery to find dissidents, malcontents, and people who defy Tenochtitlan's social contract, and to cut them out from the flesh of the city and ensure a healthy society.

Unlike many cults, the *nahualtin* do not hide. They are an accepted part of the priesthood in Tenochtitlan. While they serve as many other priests do, they hold the mysteries of their brotherhood close. Only members learn the secrets of the *nahualtin*.



Initiation Benefits

- Novices learn how to read people for deceit, in preparation for later hunts through the streets of the city in animal shape. They gain an Empathy Specialty in Deceit.

•• Now with the full duties of the priesthood, the priest gains Status 1 (Priesthood). From this point on, it's up to the priest to represent himself well among the priesthood outside the *nahualtin*.

••• The *nahualli* fully comes into his own and masters the Skinthief Merit, but must select owl or jaguar as his animal. *Nahualtin* must renew their talismans every 260 days or less.

•••• As a *nahualli* gains additional experience with his magic, he gains a dot of Animal Ken from the experience of living in another creature's skin.

••••• The chief *nahualtin* walk the world in multiple forms. They gain the Skinthief Merit again, gaining an additional form. This form is not restricted in choice or function.

Mystery Cult: Of Huitzilopochtli the Many-Wheeled

Priests of Tenochtitlan serve the many gods of Mesoamerica, but primarily Huitzilopochtli, god of sun and war and the patron god of the Mexica-Aztec, and Tlaloc, god of rain. Certain of the priests of Huitzilopochtli have come to recognize the integral connection between their god and the *tonalpohualli*, the sacred 260-day calendar that guides ritual. The interlocking gears that decide which day follows which in each 13-day cycle are just the beginning. If one looks, one can see gears everywhere.

Priests of Huitzilopochtli the Many-Wheeled see him as a god of cycles more than of sun or of war. They attribute the sacred and seasonal calendar to him, think of the sun as a giant wheel, consider the cyclic nature of war, and generally see wheels and gears as emblems of their deity. They don't know it, but they've conflated Huitzilopochtli with a glimpse of the God-Machine, and it has changed them.

Members of this cult do not initiate new members. Anyone who sees only the surface of Huitzilopochtli, only a god who keeps the sun burning, guides the tribe in war, and favors the Aztec over all others, does not deserve to understand the deeper truths. A novice into this cult takes the first step herself. Once she has done this, the signs inevitably point her to other initiates, and she can begin her progress. Some initiates are stigmatics, but not all.

Unlike most aspects of religious life in Tenochtitlan, the cult of Huitzilopochtli the Many-Wheeled does not divide by gender. Anyone who sees the inner workings of the Many-Wheeled deserves respect. That does not translate into public power, but behind-the-scenes influence goes a long way.

Initiation Benefits

- An initiate develops a sense for cycles and can detect them in all manner of improbable situations. She gains Cycles as an Investigation Specialty.

•• Having made contact with other initiates, the member gains access to friends in high places. She gains Allies 1 (Priesthood).

••• Opening one's mind fully to the expanded nature of Huitzilopochtli as the Many-Wheeled grants the devotee the Unseen Sense (God-Machine) Merit for free. If the devotee is a stigmatic or becomes a stigmatic later on (as is likely), she gains two free Merit dots to spend on Supernatural Merits.

•••• Learning more about the connection between Huitzilopochtli, the cycles of history, the gears that run through all the world, and the dual calendars grants the priest insight into the future. She gains the Omen Sensitivity Merit.

••••• Those who delve most deeply into the mysteries of the Many-Wheeled learn to recognize the cycles and infinite loops that exist in all places. At the cost of one Willpower, a priest can wrap herself in a twist of space, a temporary secure bolthole between the spatial dimensions. No one can see or interact with her there, though she can see out as though through a hall of mirrors. She can expand the bolthole to bring three additional people for each additional Willpower spent. The effect ends after an hour, unless she extends it with another Willpower.

Inspirations

Below are two of the sources that were useful in constructing this chapter:

Handbook to Life in the Aztec World, by Manuel Aguilar-Moreno (2007). An absolute gold mine of information about the era, covering a wide range of topics.

An Aztec Herbal: The Classic Codex of 1552, by William Gates (2000). A catalog of traditional Aztec remedies, many of which could serve as the inspiration for cryptoflora and other strange plants that grow in the Aztec Empire. In fact, several of them did.

Other Supernatural Creatures and the Aztec Empire

Many **mages** of the Aztec Empire have risen to high stations that ensure access to local Mysteries. Their enemies beyond the empire's borders both covet the Aztecs' Mysteries and fight to protect their own from invading Aztec mages. Tensions rise throughout the reign of King Ahuitzotl and come to a boil during the conquest of Cortés, although it is not clear how much the Wise influenced the events that followed. A significant number of the empire's **Sin-Eaters** have also risen high in the ranks of the priesthood, preparing sacrificial victims for death and banishing the ghosts of those who cling to life. The irony of their mission is not lost on the Bound, and those who do not serve the priesthood are frequently its sworn enemies.

Aztecs hold wolves in high regard as symbols of war and the sun, but their priests pay a bounty for the pelts of **werewolves**. Some whisper that the skinchangers among the jaguar and eagle warriors fear that the Uratha will supplant them as the elite warriors of the Aztec Empire, and that they have turned the priesthood against the wolves.

Unsurprisingly, the Aztec priesthood's predilection for bloodletting and human sacrifice draw **vampires** into its ranks. They swarm around the priests like biting flies, drinking castoff blood or acting as instruments of exsanguination. The *nahualtin* have long held that blood sacrificed to the gods should not be used for any other purpose, and certainly not to sustain parasites whom the gods have condemned not to look upon the sun — but until now they haven't taken significant action. The *nahualtin* have recently learned that the Kindred have blood-bonded nearly all the priests in the city of Xocotitlan, however, and this may finally convince them to eradicate the vampires in their ranks.

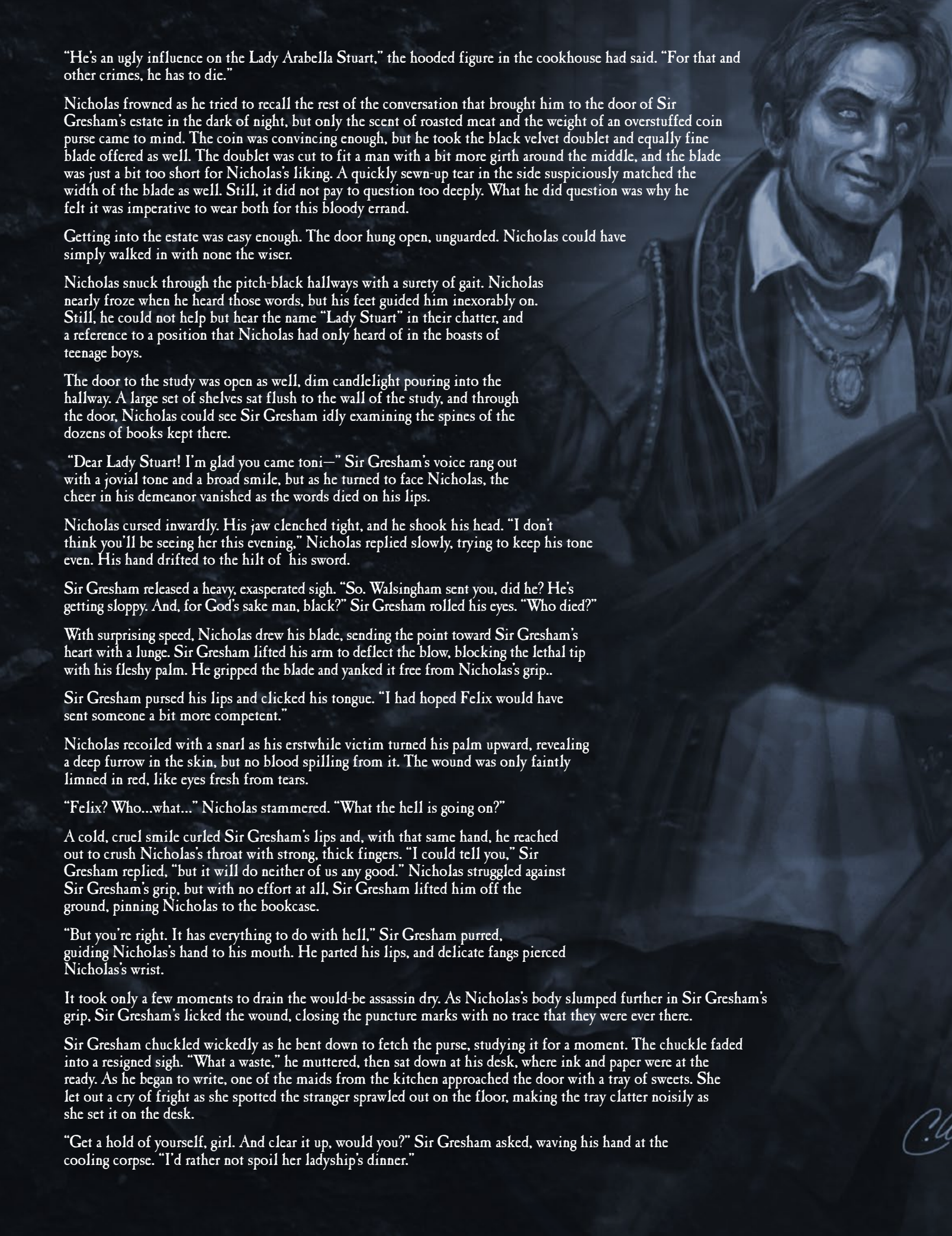
The Gentry frequently abduct travelers on the roads between Aztec cities, but very few of their victims escape. **Changeling** communities are small, and only a few cities have populations large enough to support a formal system of courts. Most of these are directional courts, but a few have seasonal courts based on the region's rainy and dry seasons.

The number of monsters in the Valley of Mexico is probably smaller than the number of monster **hunters** who seek to make a name for themselves in the empire. Most hunters do not live beyond their first hunts, but those who survive the first few years quickly build small compacts around their legends. A surprising number of these find themselves on the trail of the many **Beasts** that prowl the region.

Only a few **Prometheans** roam the jungles, and fewer still survive contact with humans long enough to complete their pilgrimages. **Mummies** were almost unknown in the region until an Arisen cult penetrated the labyrinthine Infrastructure leading from Great Zimbabwe to Teotihuacan (see above), but now more of the Deathless are establishing tombs in the Valley of Mexico to avoid the upheaval in the Mutapa Empire.




C. Wilkins



"He's an ugly influence on the Lady Arabella Stuart," the hooded figure in the cookhouse had said. "For that and other crimes, he has to die."

Nicholas frowned as he tried to recall the rest of the conversation that brought him to the door of Sir Gresham's estate in the dark of night, but only the scent of roasted meat and the weight of an overstuffed coin purse came to mind. The coin was convincing enough, but he took the black velvet doublet and equally fine blade offered as well. The doublet was cut to fit a man with a bit more girth around the middle, and the blade was just a bit too short for Nicholas's liking. A quickly sewn-up tear in the side suspiciously matched the width of the blade as well. Still, it did not pay to question too deeply. What he did question was why he felt it was imperative to wear both for this bloody errand.

Getting into the estate was easy enough. The door hung open, unguarded. Nicholas could have simply walked in with none the wiser.

Nicholas snuck through the pitch-black hallways with a surety of gait. Nicholas nearly froze when he heard those words, but his feet guided him inexorably on. Still, he could not help but hear the name "Lady Stuart" in their chatter, and a reference to a position that Nicholas had only heard of in the boasts of teenage boys.

The door to the study was open as well, dim candlelight pouring into the hallway. A large set of shelves sat flush to the wall of the study, and through the door, Nicholas could see Sir Gresham idly examining the spines of the dozens of books kept there.

"Dear Lady Stuart! I'm glad you came toni—" Sir Gresham's voice rang out with a jovial tone and a broad smile, but as he turned to face Nicholas, the cheer in his demeanor vanished as the words died on his lips.

Nicholas cursed inwardly. His jaw clenched tight, and he shook his head. "I don't think you'll be seeing her this evening," Nicholas replied slowly, trying to keep his tone even. His hand drifted to the hilt of his sword.

Sir Gresham released a heavy, exasperated sigh. "So. Walsingham sent you, did he? He's getting sloppy. And, for God's sake man, black?" Sir Gresham rolled his eyes. "Who died?"

With surprising speed, Nicholas drew his blade, sending the point toward Sir Gresham's heart with a lunge. Sir Gresham lifted his arm to deflect the blow, blocking the lethal tip with his fleshy palm. He gripped the blade and yanked it free from Nicholas's grip..

Sir Gresham pursed his lips and clicked his tongue. "I had hoped Felix would have sent someone a bit more competent."

Nicholas recoiled with a snarl as his erstwhile victim turned his palm upward, revealing a deep furrow in the skin, but no blood spilling from it. The wound was only faintly limned in red, like eyes fresh from tears.

"Felix? Who...what..." Nicholas stammered. "What the hell is going on?"

A cold, cruel smile curled Sir Gresham's lips and, with that same hand, he reached out to crush Nicholas's throat with strong, thick fingers. "I could tell you," Sir Gresham replied, "but it will do neither of us any good." Nicholas struggled against Sir Gresham's grip, but with no effort at all, Sir Gresham lifted him off the ground, pinning Nicholas to the bookcase.

"But you're right. It has everything to do with hell," Sir Gresham purred, guiding Nicholas's hand to his mouth. He parted his lips, and delicate fangs pierced Nicholas's wrist.

It took only a few moments to drain the would-be assassin dry. As Nicholas's body slumped further in Sir Gresham's grip, Sir Gresham's licked the wound, closing the puncture marks with no trace that they were ever there.

Sir Gresham chuckled wickedly as he bent down to fetch the purse, studying it for a moment. The chuckle faded into a resigned sigh. "What a waste," he muttered, then sat down at his desk, where ink and paper were at the ready. As he began to write, one of the maids from the kitchen approached the door with a tray of sweets. She let out a cry of fright as she spotted the stranger sprawled out on the floor, making the tray clatter noisily as she set it on the desk.

"Get a hold of yourself, girl. And clear it up, would you?" Sir Gresham asked, waving his hand at the cooling corpse. "I'd rather not spoil her ladyship's dinner."

Requiem for Regina

I looked for life and saw it was a shade

I trod the Earth and knew it was my tomb

And now I die, and now I was but made

Chidiock Tichborne, written on the eve of his execution, 1586

1587. Even just through the gate, you're quick to lose yourself in the London sprawl. The skeletons of new buildings are everywhere. There are more people here than ever before, and mostly they live in the shit. They're jammed, crammed into spaces that would nauseate the queen's horse. Tonight, tomorrow, it'll be this way for centuries to come. The city requires a constant stream of newcomers to devour and maintain itself. Perhaps you're one of them.

Disease is rampant. The filth is monumental, garbage and feces gild the streets. London, being London, corners the market on poverty. Its hovels redefine squalor.

London in the dark is all low'ring clouds and unfriendly shuttered buildings that close in on you when you look away. And the people. So many people. Just try and find a half-private place to piss or grope a Molly. You'll get used to doing it in front of strangers, just like everyone else.

Eyes are everywhere. Keep that in mind as you chance your unsavory business on darkened streets. There's someone watching you, always. Maybe just be a pickpocket, ready to chance his freedom for your pocket change. Maybe a sailor, nose sporting an angry carbuncle, insensate from drink in the corner. Or it may be someone you would not wish to encounter even on a crowded public street, in mid-day. Fortunately, daylight meetings are no longer one of your worries.

The merchant class is everywhere, eager to cadge you out of a coin or two in order to take that next quivering step up the ladder of prosperity. Yet the gulf that yawns between the most successful merchant and the least of the nobility remains staggering. To lead a prosperously comfortable, secure existence in these disorderly and dangerous times is something, but the upper crust drinks out of gold cups and picks the bones of quail from their teeth without a second thought to their good fortune.

And here you are, thirty-odd years into the rule of Elizabeth, long may she reign. After the terror of Mary, her sister is quieter. Heretics are no longer burned, and perhaps the stench has finally cleared your nostrils. Quieter, yes, but cannier and perhaps more ruthless.

Elizabeth is no longer a young maiden. That peacock Robert Dudley finally left court, in the most final way possible. He never did give up hoping that Elizabeth would marry him. Elizabeth rules from on high, the white queen. She is marble, inviolate, and people have mostly stopped saying she needs a husband. Meanwhile, Elizabeth, indifferent to all protestations, rules on.

Don't think, however, that Elizabeth does not share the paranoia of the age. She is constantly being threatened, in body and mind, by assassins and those who seek to undermine her confidence and her authority. She is threatened by the French and Spanish from without, and the reformers from within. She has foiled multiple assassination plots, and her first cousin, Mary Queen of Scots, will soon be executed on her behalf.

Elizabeth rules a growing police state, and men in her employ can be found permeating every large public gathering. Whether Elizabeth is due to be present or not, those who look suspicious are curtailed and led off for "questioning". This is how she keeps her country safe, she claims. Best to stay a friend of the state.

In this world, a vampire can live like a king. More than ever, clever, savvy men and women can advance in society to take their place in the upper echelons of

the court. Elizabeth favors those who amuse her, not just those who can trace their lineage back in musty old books. It's a time where the new and the violent push aside the old and the unchanging.

All strata of vampire society are feeling this shift. The Invictus, keepers of both secrets and proud heritage, are riven between an old guard who wish to rule the night as they long have, while their younger counterparts look back to the glories of Rome and plot a new Camarilla.

The Lancea et Sanctum face the mortal Church splitting into irreconcilable factions. Their own leadership is in constant argument over how best to deal with this threat to their way of life and society.

The Weihan Cynn wait and watch. Though the mortal Queen has passed less harsh penalties for witchcraft, it is a dangerous time to consort with Britain's dark forces. And the Gallows Post always exact their toll. Don't travel without them.

London is a living thing, chewing on its own tail, consuming itself. For this economy to thrive requires a labor force that is docile and exists only to work. But the people are tired of their ignoble conditions and they are muttering about injustice. There is never enough food and what there is could be called half-rotten at best. Lucky for you you're on a liquid diet.

Even during the day, it seems as though the sun never shines in gloomy, overcast London. The streets are a maze. Even lifelong residents can get lost in the chill fogs that sweep through the streets. These fogs are a vampire's friend, for who will miss one mortal who disappears therein?

The dead of London sleep and they hunt. They feast on the fear and superstition, for even the most stout-hearted citizen will shudder when the hour grows late and the walk home yawns large. In the dark, shapes half-seen become monstrous beasts. The Damned grow fat on the fear.

The clamor of the city is never-ending. From sun-up market calls to late carousing, the city never sleeps. Screams are common in the night — who cares if it is drunken laughter or signals an ugly death? The Thames carries the whiff of the dead today, fish and God knows what else.

Be wary — London will chew you up and spit you back in the gutter, to float away with the rest of the offal. But make the right friends, take the right gambles, and the night can be yours as never before.

Theme and Mood

The theme is *Schisms*. Bonds that were once viewed as impossible to sunder are have given way to implacable enmities. England has changed vastly even within the Requiems of ancillae.

The mood is *Someone's Watching*. Vampire governments have always tended towards being invasive, but mortals are beginning to poke into each other's affairs more and more. The government keeps its ears keen for the hymns of the old faith, and the cat and mouse games it plays with those believers might lead it to the havens of the Damned.

What Has Come Before

In the beginning, nearly every clan in Albion had a holy sage they could call upon in times of need; their secret names shared from chief to chief over generations of rule. These sages protected their flocks, negotiated great workings with the peoples of the wood and bog, and (when it suited them) taught their brightest a tiny shadow of their own power. And all they asked for in exchange was blood. They were not a tribe unto themselves then, but they kept a sort of society and called one another Weihan Cynn. And they did know the owls. The lucky survivors of those encounters were sharper and colder, full of venomous whispers and deadly plans, with eyes that shined a brilliant gold. And they were revered, if loved somewhat less well than before.

Groans of the Britons: The Saxon Period (30-1043 AD)

The blood of Albion never did lie still.

The Picts warred with the Gaels, and married them. The Cornovii struggled with the Dumnonii like brothers. Only the Silures and Ordovices tried to take up arms against the Romans, and were crushed for their troubles. The Romans would come, and did, and brought more than one society to their frontier. For a time those Kindred wild enough to choose a distant province over glittering Rome ruled here. They drove the Weihan Cynn (who were few and scattered) away from their tribes, leaving to them the dark reaches beyond torchlight. In the deep woods and under the hills, they waited. Their golden-eyed survivors had promised that no empire of man would stand; that Rome would collapse under her own weight, taking her Kindred with her. And soon enough, by the Weihan Cynn's reckoning, Londinium became too distant a province to maintain. The Pretanoi had accepted Roman roads, but they were far too busy fending off waves of Norsemen to shed tears when Londinium fell. When that night came at last, the Kindred of Albion didn't mourn, for they had never known the Camarilla.

So when the Weihan Cynn returned to their tribes, to guide them and hold their pacts, the refugees who had once been Kindred returned with them. They remained in the monasteries and cloisters, in the lush fens and spent mines they already called home. Slowly and uneasily, these tribes united against the escalating foreign threats. The seafaring settlers brought their own dead — demanding and unruly ancestors who ultimately failed to settle with their living kin, and continued northward toward the Orkneys. Then

The moon is more beautiful than the sun. The chill of night is softer on my brow than your hot breath. And it was worth it.

I was afraid, once, of the bargains that came in my dreams. I woke those nights, wild-eyed, burning with visions of grim wild things. Things I knew, unshakably, had the power to grant me any evil thing I might desire. The black dog that offered strength of will (and limb besides); enough to hold any heart in my hand, for only a sip of father's blood. Your child (for it was yours, that night) sickened, but it did not trouble me. There would be other, better sons. And I had new hungers to contend with. The laughing crow, who waited seven nights to be invited in, and gave me senses so fine and bright that I could hear the whisper of her every smoky feather. The salt and bread I offered her rotted; in my long nights abroad, I found I no longer cared for the hospitality of strangers. The she-wolf took a kith and kin I had no use for, and the river-wet mare ate the shadows off my heart; but their gifts were hardly sweeter than the burdens they freed me from. The lovely owl never needed to ask for my breath of morning.

came wave after wave of northern raiders picking at the edges of a newly forming nation. Where, in all this, did Rome's childer go? Well, ask that woman with the dark curled hair, or the short man with a face carved from olive marble; they are among us yet.

In time, the tribes became kingdoms. Æthelstan, above all, brought them together, fostering the centralization and education that created an *England*. And through his daughter, Æthelgifu (a young priestess of the Weihan Cynn), Kindred found a safe home to shield them from the storm of wars on the continent. Unfortunately, it wasn't to last.

Miracle Plays and Feast Days: The High Medieval Period (1066-1450)

The monastery and the cloister saved what fairy tales and legends of the Camarilla as remained to the Kindred of England. But mortal scribes were only occasionally literate, and Kindred scribes were no more likely to know Latin or Greek. There was too much at risk of being lost entirely for every scribe to be taught his letters, so shortcuts were taken. Flaws begin to creep into their histories, compounding over time into a narrative that bore only a passing resemblance to the long-gone Camarilla. Then a bastard arrived from across the sea, and cut off the head of the English church and nobility in one fell swoop, sharply dividing the rulers from the ruled, and the remaining predators from their prey. The two peoples never fully became one, and neither peasants nor Kindred forgave him. But bitter as the class war that started at the Battle of Hastings was, England's troubles would get far worse before they got better.

Two crusades, and several generations of absent kings, bled English peasants and clergy dry — leaving the wealth of their nation even more unequally distributed than before, while besieged by crime as they had never known. Then waves of famine and plague followed, punctuated by peasant revolts until nearly the end of the 15th century. John Ball raged against popes

The Tower of London

The White Tower was built in 1078, as both a necessary fortress for the defense of London and as a glaring reminder that William would not relinquish England easily. Its use as a prison began almost immediately, despite being a royal residence well into the 16th century. After all, the Tower is a large keep, and was lightly inhabited even at its peak. Curiously, the dungeons themselves don't seem to match the visible foundations. They're smaller, for one thing; whole corridors appear to have been omitted, with nothing by smooth stone and packed earth where they should have been. And yet, some prisoners have claimed to hear things running on bare stone just beyond those walls, creaking and hissing, and the echo of hundreds of tiny feet. The guards trade ghost stories about those noises — that they're lost souls of the Black Death seeking salvation, or of the native peasants who died in the Tower's construction, or a dozen other reasons an Englishman might linger past death.

and kings in the common tongue, asking "When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?" Johanna Ferrour burned Savoy Palace and beheaded a Chancellor, inciting riots and personally taking her fair share of noble blood. Wat Tyler destroyed deeds and records of debt, wiping out decades of legal obligations that bound serfs to lord and Crown. Kindred found themselves on both sides of this conflict, rioting with peasants and riding with lords, falling prey to mortal political assassinations as frequently as to one another. They began consolidating for their own safety, coordinating their infiltration of generation after bloody generation of new nobles and new royal houses and new clerical organizations. The Weihan Cynn had always thrived by their connections, but now it was everyone's responsibility to maintain them.

Æthelgifu, who became Ieldra while England's mortals starved and rioted, drove her clan's bargains with the other old creatures further. First, making common cause with spirits of Meadowsweet and Birch to protect all those who had fed on mortals from sharing their fate. Then, with the wolves who were sometimes women, to protect each other from hunters who came across the sea. Safe for a time, she began to husband the Weihan Cynn back to health. But before England's creatures had caught their breath, the Plantagenet families were tearing at one another's throats.

Boars and Dragons: The War(s) of The Roses (1450-1490)

The Black Death didn't leave England's nobility unscathed, but far fewer lords fell to diseases of the city, and an excess of sons always breeds war. Everyone who *could* be king thought that they *should* be king, and took up arms to prove it. Mortal alliances were shattered left and right, with Kindred society alongside them. Lancaster and York both had legitimate claims, and both houses had been important enough for one vampire or another to nurture a few attentive servants within them. And they became...invested. It wasn't enough to know the movements of the family, and exploit their resources as desired; your pet house had to *win*. For most, the game was over once the Lancasters won, but that was a mere century ago, and there remain some bitter losers. Fortunately, by some measures, the battered working and peasant classes were largely left out of the mess. They had no more say than a deer does who would be hounding them tomorrow, but for a moment the nobles were murdering one another instead of their servants.

The Book of Common Prayer: The Tudors (1500-1590)

As wars of succession often are, the resolution owed as much to marriages as battles. Overly ambitious lords and their families were largely killed; the rest opted to renounce or consolidate through their children, allowing them to return their attention to neglected farmlands and empty purses. Their peasant tenants had, all this time, been agitating for lower taxes and lower rents, for fair prices and protection. Landowners responded by enclosing the common pasture, and raised sheep instead of corn. They drove their formerly rural workers toward towns that were crowding into dense, filthy cities. The truly wild places where the Weihan Cynn once thrived got harder to come by. Even their woods were being parceled out as private hunting parks for wealthy mortals. Æthelgifu knew, finally, that they would need to modernize to thrive; not just accept the city, but join it. The Dygol Kepen, her bitter elders, are resisting; but the Moorish Qalandariyyah she's recently accepted into the Weihan Cynn's ranks have brought a casual acceptance of city life with them, and her youngest childer already love both bustle and woods.

It's well that she did, because shortly thereafter, Henry VIII began selling the churches of England for spare parts. Over the course of less than five years, those few Kindred who were still cozened within religious orders, and the thousands of men and women employed by them, were abruptly homeless. But these nation-shaking reforms to English Catholicism were a byproduct of Henry's real problem. He needed money, to refill a treasury he emptied with military spectacles and costly wars, and a male heir, to solidify his dynasty. Edward VI did succeed him, barely, but Catherine Parr had successfully reconciled Henry VIII with his daughters. So when Edward died young, he was unable to protect the Protestant nation he tried to build, or prevent his half-sisters from succeeding him.

Two weeks later, Bloody Queen Mary ascended to the throne, and set about reversing her brother's and father's reforms, re-instituting Catholicism and systematically burning hundreds of religious and political dissenters as heretics.

The Princes in the Tower

When Edward IV died suddenly, his two surviving sons found themselves at the center of a war for succession between two warring blocks of English nobles, neither of whom were particularly invested in the health and welfare of competitors for the throne. So when the boys disappeared, there was a great deal of outrage, but no real surprise. Their bodies have yet to be found; while both Richard III and Henry Tudor were both happy to use the missing children as a bludgeon against one another, *neither* was willing to open an investigation into their supposed deaths. But then, even stout guardsmen find excuses not to visit the Tower's cavernous depths.



Virgin Queens and Whores of the Devil

The Elizabethan woman has a lot more freedom of movement than her continental sisters. She can't purchase property, but she can inherit it from husbands and relatives, and bequeath it in turn. She marries largely whom she wishes, much older than her granddaughters will, and increasingly works outside the home in her own business (or that of her family). Her moral sense is defined by the appropriate use of her sexuality. Pursuing children is laudable; fully a quarter of women are already pregnant when they marry. It's responsible, after all, for a couple to ensure their fertility before wedding. Pursuing power is rebellious; spinsters, revolutionaries, and artists alike are decried as whores and witches. Queen Bess has cultivated a cult of personal virginity, but no other English woman may marry her nation.

The common man's opinion of her is still mixed; Catholics lament her loss, and Protestants rejoice at the end of her bloody purges. Her reign was marked by famine, a disastrous war in France, and an unpopular Spanish marriage; but she held Ireland, and tried to save an economy ruined by her father. For better or for worse, she was the first woman to successfully claim the throne under her own power, and she paved the way for Elizabeth to take her place.

Good Queen Bess walks a delicate middle path, repealing some of Mary's reforms, but not reestablishing all of Edward's, keeping a sort of religious stalemate in her country and her court. She has cautiously avoided conflict with the European powers, and allowed Parliament the room to legislate. In that comparative peace, English culture and trade are flourishing. These days her ships reach the Americas and the Ottoman Empire. The treasury is secure for the first time since her grandfather ruled, and her subjects are producing and consuming art in greater numbers than ever before. Kindred are freer to mingle with mortal society than they have been since the days of Rome and Byzantium, and some are taking a dangerously heavy hand with mortal politics.

The repeated attempts to overthrow or assassinate her are beginning to wear on Elizabeth. The most recent blow (though she fears not the last) has come at the hands of her cousin, Mary Queen of Scots. Whether or not Mary ever truly intended to overthrow Elizabeth, her friends and relatives certainly wanted her to, and Mary has spent half her life under house arrest for their efforts. Francis Walsingham, just a few months ago, found or conjured a silver casket of letters which proved Mary's ill-intent, and justified both her trial and imminent execution. Elizabeth grudgingly signed a



warrant, but has disclaimed actually ordering Mary's death. Walsingham was conveniently absent from court, sick at home, when the execution took place, and he seems to have escaped Elizabeth's wrath. Increasingly afraid of usurpation, Elizabeth has refused to name a successor, to the despair of her younger cabinet.

Tonight, Elizabeth's trials are beginning to exceed her capacity, and her behavior at court has become erratic and emotional. Plague is washing across the continent yet again, Spain is picking fights with her armada, Ireland is growing restless, and the treasury is being depleted by yet more costly and inconclusive skirmishes. The wellspring of art and science has brought with it a worrying phenomenon of "atheism," a kind of deadly anarchism that argues against both God *and* Queen. Her advisors, who have provided her with decades of good counsel, are old and sick and dying. Walsingham in particular has been increasingly ill of late. When he dies (as he must, very soon), there will be no one to take the reins of Elizabeth's spy network; and all his countless creatures will be left to their private machinations. His cousin Thomas is something of a diplomat, but does not seem to be made of the same stern stuff as Francis. He prefers to act as a treasured friend and patron to poets and playwrights, like his recent friend and employee, Christopher Marlowe. And Marlowe himself has been agitated and aggressive toward his colleagues, like a man in possession of a terrible secret.

What is to Come

In 1593, William Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* captures the imaginations of Kindred of all covenants, and an ambitious young vampire stages a private performance for the court. However, one of Ieldra Æthelgifu's Hounds comes to report an incident during his patrols along the Strand that nearly killed him. In his hunger, he decimates the cast during the final scene of Act Two, sparing the poor boy playing Lavinia from bleeding out from the stumps of his wrists. The Blood-Queen promptly bans the deaths of actors onstage in future Kindred performances, but many Kindred keep their eye on Shakespeare throughout his career. The theater flourishes in general, especially with the construction of the Globe Theater in Southwark and other playwrights seeking out the fame of both Marlowe and Shakespeare.

After the death of Good Queen Bess, James VI of Scotland becomes James I of England as well, ruling both countries simultaneously. He continues the encouragement of literary culture, which provides some small comfort to the Kindred court. His history of witch hunts in Scotland makes the Weihan Cynn uneasy, but fortunately, his views on witchcraft mellow before he takes the English throne. Even the Lancea et Sanctum see a beacon of hope with the Scottish king as he tries to reunite the Catholics and Protestants in his kingdom by blurring the lines that differentiate the two faiths. However, his belief in absolute monarchy and the divine right of kings causes a few dissenting grumbles in the halls of Parliament. The Invictus quietly defuse these rumblings where they can, as they have influence with and hence a vested interest in some of James' favorites.

However, the growing fringe movement of the Puritans takes greater umbrage with what they view as the corruption of their faith. All of Ieldra Æthelgifu's court agree to stay away from the Puritans. Their stark, bare outlook on life makes them decidedly unappealing, and even the most skilled Serpent has trouble swaying them into temptation. Even the Gallows Post, who are the least discriminatory when it comes to whom they deal with, shy away from the Puritans' strict dress and even stricter mannerisms.

England's forays across the Atlantic to the Spanish Main also capture the public's attention. Sir Francis Drake, already a legend for circumnavigating the globe, takes his final voyage to the Spanish Main, and Sir Walter Raleigh sails through South America in search of a mythical city of gold. These voyages end in death by dysentery and disappointment, but the desire to travel to the New World in search of riches and glory remains strong. In 1607, a crew heads out to Virginia to found a new colony, praying that it would have better results than the last one.

The natives inhabiting the New World provide no end of fascination. The covenants wonder if Kindred walk among them as well, and early reports indicate that they do. The Invictus see trade opportunities and a land of opportunity and conquest, prospects particularly attractive to those who want to build a new Camarilla. The Lancea et Sanctum see a whole new flock in need of tending. The Weihan Cynn see kindred spirits in need of protection from the First and Second Estates. A couple warriors of the Weihan Cynn find their way to the New World with the second group of settlers in 1610, pledging to send regular reports back to Ieldra Æthelgifu and the court at large. They return with John Rolfe, who has taken a dark-skinned bride who calls herself Rebecca. Her story of her previous life as Pocahontas becomes the talk of London. The returned Blood-Blessed express a great deal of urgency to reach out into the New World to preserve and incorporate the religions of the native people before the agents of the First and Second Estates assimilate them, convert them, or wipe them out. Ieldra Æthelgifu allows a few to go, but does nothing to legitimize it in the court. After all, the irony of the whole idea of Kindred invading to "save" a particular culture is not lost on her.

The Kindred who keep their eyes on affairs at home marvel and fret over the scientific advances coming forward at a faster and faster pace. While these advances really started nearly half a century earlier, the most interesting aspects of the scientific revolution came from the advances in anatomy. William Harvey provides a complete and refined description of the circulatory system, and many Kindred who fancy themselves scientifically-minded posit that extensions of Harvey's research could lead to a better understanding of the Kindred condition. Those Kindred who do try to experiment with this idea come



up with no conclusive results; in later years, some of them will join the Ordo Dracul. A handful of Invictus keep an eye on Harvey's research, while the Weihan Cynn and Lancea et Sanctum encourage more explorations into physics and astronomy, if only to keep the kine's eyes upward.

War, Restoration, and Fate

However, the course of kine politics soldiers on. Charles, in his belief in the divine right of kings and his quarrels with Parliament over the extensions of the royal prerogative, leaves the Kindred of London torn. After all, the very concept of divine right fits the mindset of the Invictus, the Lancea et Sanctum, and even the Weihan Cynn perfectly. However, with a more authoritarian government, the king of the kine could easily order deaths and investigations left and right, with little to no checks or balances coming from Parliament.

Only the Gallows Post sits firmly on the side of the Parliament. Many of the elders in the Gallows Post remember the atrocities they saw during the Crusades, which rivaled even the bloodiest and most sadistic rituals of the other covenants. They are not convinced that any power given by the grace of any god belongs in the hands of the kine. As a result, they are also the first to hear of the Parliamentarians preparing for war. Slowly but surely, the Kindred of the Gallows Post in London make sure they have messages that will bring them out of England entirely. Their disappearance does not go unnoticed, but most of the other Kindred write it off to the transitory nature of the Gallows Post's work.

Ieldra Æthelgifu does not write it off. One night, on the eve of the war, she simply disappears as mysteriously as she appeared after the Black Death. The council she leaves behind rules as best they can in her stead, even while each councilor jockeys for enough power to overtake the rest of the council. Through the entire English Civil War, the upper echelons of the Invictus, the Lancea et Sanctum, and the Weihan Cynn fight amongst each other, paying little to no heed to the neonates. Under Cromwell's rule as Lord Protector of the Commonwealth, careless Kindred find themselves quickly targeted; and more than a few neonates disappear entirely, only for graffiti written in their ashes to appear on the walls of the Tower of London. The rest of the court shoots impotent, venomous looks at those who are supposed to lead them while the squabbling council and the Roundheads turn their beloved city into an austere hell.

Finally, in the wake of the triumphant return of Charles II to London, the Gallows Post makes a resurgence with Kindred from all over the known world in their company, including a Daeva neonate hailing from the Ottoman Empire who goes by a single name: Kismet. His story captures the imagination of the entire court; he claims his sire is a great lady who lives west of England. Every time he tells the story, his sire's appearance changes. One night, she is tall and slender, dusky-skinned as he is, with hair like the night sky itself. Another night, she is all voluptuous curves and her skin is the color of fresh milk, with hair like rays of sunlight and eyes like the sky of a bright summer day. On yet another night, her tresses sprout from her head like flames, and her eyes are set with emeralds. Yet, no matter how many times he tells the story, her name is always the same: Kamilah.

While Kismet distracts what remains of the court with his stories, those who look upon the return of the Gallows Post unfavorably find their resources bound, their hands stayed by powerful Kindred in their own covenants in courts throughout Europe, and their mortal retainers swinging by their necks until dead at noon. When the young Turk asks the court if they would allow him the honor of serving them as their prince, those not won over by his own majestic charm are in no position to oppose him.

Kismet chooses his own council, respecting the tradition of the number of members, but ensuring whoever represents a given covenant will actually work with him. The Gallows Post approves of such a plan until the moment Kismet applies it to his own covenant as well. Throughout the entire court, Kismet flouts the concept that older is better and appoints whomever he feels is most competent for a given job to do said job. Anyone who tries to obstruct those who Kismet appoints receive public censure. Elders write scathing letters to their peers on the Continent asking why they or their allies would support such a fraud.

Due to the sensitive nature of the letters, several elders employ the Gallows Post to dispatch them as a matter of course. Only half of the letters actually get through to their recipients, and those that do survive the journey are the ones that aren't entrusted to the Gallows Post for delivery. Many of the replies disavow any support of Kismet or the Gallows Post, but bring no promise of assistance in ousting the young Turk. The authors of these replies frequently hint that their hands are tied for other reasons. The elders who do receive replies gather them with the intent to publicly oust and humiliate not just Kismet, but the entire Gallows Post covenant in London. They coordinate their efforts to decisively take Kismet down in the beginning of September 1666.

Of course, they cannot possibly plan around a fire starting in Pudding Lane that demolishes the majority of London in three days. The flames get too close for comfort before the elders can make their strike. A few lose control of their Beasts and abandon their letters completely in their instinctual urge to flee the oncoming flames. Nearly half the Kindred in the city simply do not escape the destruction at all. A few vampires even report seeing shadowy birds flying high above the embers and the screeching of owls.

When the smoke clears, those Kindred who remain turn to their prince to provide guidance and recovery, but he too is gone. He leaves a note of farewell, claiming that he has found his sire and entrusts his council to continue the good works begun in his reign. The letter is dated the night before the fires began.

The Invictus swoop in quickly to attempt to take power, with the main push for the throne coming from yet another Ventrue, Benjamin Cahill. He is a relatively young Lord,

with his Embrace falling just before the death of Christopher Marlowe. However, he finds his own undoing at the hands of Tarquin St. John, a Sanctified Shadow who also traveled to London with the resurgence of the Gallows Post. For Tarquin, however, it was a return home.

The two of them debate the finer points of the doctrine of Longinus compared to that of the Church of England. St. John counters every point Cahill throws at him with a beguiling calm until finally Cahill loses his temper and assaults St. John in front of the assembled crowd. It takes three Daeva and two Nosferatu to hold Cahill down until the frenzy subsides. After the incident, Cahill quietly retreats from society and Tarquin St. John ascends as the second Archbishop of London.

From the moment Archbishop St. John takes power, the Blood-Blessed are his primary targets of derision and scorn. Derision and scorn mark St. John's reign rather thoroughly as he belittles and humiliates those who displease him in short order. He is a cosmopolitan prince, much like his predecessor; and when his own breadth of experience is lacking, he looks to the courts of Europe for guidance more frequently than the council or even the elders among his covenant. While the council grumbles at the obvious snubs, they cannot help but concede the wisdom of most of Archbishop St. John's decisions. With the entire city, both Kindred and kine, in a state of rebuilding, Archbishop St. John's rule provides much-needed stability, and his deference to elders pleases much of the old guard.

The First Estate shows their pleasure at Archbishop St. John's reign most readily, despite the disgrace of their man Cahill. Masses enjoy full attendance from both the First and the Second Estates, even from those Unconquered who cling to the mortal faiths they held in life. The Weihan Cynn and the Gallows Post try to attend as well, if only to show deference to the prince as he preaches, but both covenants are turned away. The line "Let not seeds of wisdom be sown where no garden can flourish," once an admonishment in the Rule of Golgotha to not teach the word of Longinus to mortals, now becomes popular in the court to denigrate the intelligence of "lesser" covenants.

One of the few documented instances of the Archbishop St. John genuinely smiling comes from the Declaration of Indulgence from the Roman Catholic King James II. The Sanctified and Blood-Blessed breathe a sigh of relief, as it means their Catholic connections will have a reprieve from the prosecution they received at the hands of the Crown. The Blood-Blessed immediately funnel additional energy into their cult revolving around the Virgin Mary and compete fiercely with the Sanctified for the dead souls of fledgling Kindred. Many ancillae of the First Estate, still very much tied to their mortal faiths, bicker and squabble over the declaration, especially when the Archbishop of Canterbury himself refuses to proclaim it. More letters go to Europe to call upon their allies, and wherever possible, the Unconquered forego the usual practice of sending their missives through the Gallows Post.

The invasion of William of Orange in 1689 brings about the Glorious Revolution that brings an end to the reign of James II; he rules jointly with his wife, Mary. The event sends Archbishop St. John into a frenzy in his private chambers, the news of which reaches the court through his ghoul pleading for help on how to sedate him. Archbishop St. John slaughters the girl as an example to the rest of the court on discretion and obedience, looking rather pointedly at the leadership of the Weihan Cynn.

As if Archbishop St. John's only grudgingly tolerant stance on the Weihan Cynn wasn't trouble enough, stories of witch trials crop up all over Europe at the turn of the 17th century and the Weihan Cynn find themselves under attack yet again. The wild stories of witchcraft from Europe, and then the colonies, ripple across the ocean. No one has the facts straight, and ambitious Sanctified such as Archbishop St. John use this hysteria, much like they tried to use the hysteria of the Inquisition, to root out their enemies within the Weihan Cynn and other covenants.

The tactics of the Second Estate backfire spectacularly. They find themselves under almost as much under scrutiny as those they accuse, especially if they used their powers of the Blood to set their mortal hounds on their enemies. Still, their efforts are not entirely unsuccessful. The Spear find themselves distracted with trying to defend themselves from their own allies in the Church. These allies, with the fracturing of the Church and the Protestant threat of the last century, are less interested in protecting their Kindred overseers than they are in saving their own skins.

A More Secular View

Finally, a coterie of neonates of the First Estate declares that enough is enough. They are children of the Age of Enlightenment, eager to cut themselves away from the dogma that has heavily colored their mortal lives and the reign of Archbishop St. John. These neonates come primarily from nobility and academia, but their appeals to reason and common sense call to the Gallows Post, who long since burned their bridges with faith-based thinking. This coterie does not name itself, but when Archbishop St. John catches wind of their schemes, he decries them as "the faithless" from his pulpit. Instead of taking offense, the young Unconquered coterie takes on the name of The Faithless with pride. They continue promoting their ideas, which are remarkably egalitarian. Infuriated, Archbishop St. John demands that all of The Faithless come forward, with the intention of executing them all then and there for insubordination. The original coterie steps forward, as does the entirety of the Gallows Post, a handful of sympathetic Unconquered, and about half of the Blood-Blessed. The resulting coup puts Archbishop St. John in a box with a stake through his heart, and Paul Michael Hill, one of the founding members of The Faithless, as prince in St. John's place.

Prince Hill is a transplant from Ireland, having come to London during the reign of Good Queen Bess. He is one



of the new breed of Invictus, having come up from relative obscurity into power through his own wealth, and being unafraid to do what is necessary to preserve and improve his own way of life. He frequently tells the story about how he met his sire while wearing the clothes he had stolen from a minor noble who had tried to cheat him in a game of cards. The clothes never fit him well, but his sire assumed from young Paul's dress that he must have been nobility, and thus fit to become a Lord of the Unconquered. The rumors in the London court claim Prince Hill's sire disappeared mysteriously during a visit to Paul's hometown of Dublin.

Prince Hill takes a cosmopolitan and far-reaching approach to his rule, especially with the kine ratifying the union of England and Scotland into the Kingdom of Great Britain. He writes letters of friendship and goodwill to the Kindred courts across Great Britain and Ireland. In this letter, he posits the idea of an alliance among English-speaking domains in Europe and beyond, knowing full well that some of his comrades within the First Estate have traveled across oceans and continents worldwide to establish domains of their own with varying degrees of success. He calls for an end to the divisive nature of ad hoc courts and leadership styles, promoting a universal guide to Kindred society as a whole. While he does not immediately call the venture a new Camarilla, those princes who receive these letters and know their history can easily make the comparison. The Lancea et Sanctum, once they have licked their wounds and healed their pride from the downfall of Archbishop St. John, latch onto the idea as a vehicle for evangelizing the word of Longinus. The Weihan Cynn practically salivate over the idea of connecting with other tribes and cultures who may have come up with new variations of the blood magic that has lain fallow for far too long. The Gallows Post laughs as the rest of the covenants finally catch up; after all, they have leveraged their own far-reaching network since their inception.

The reply Prince Hill receives from Dublin is naturally warm and welcoming, even offering an invitation for him to return to his hometown for another visit. When he does visit, he is greeted by a familiar face: Kismet, the childe of the freshly-installed princess, a Daeva called Carmilla. When he returns, he returns with a firm alliance struck between London and Dublin, despite the tenuous relationship between the English and the Irish in mortal circles.

His visit to Edinburgh is not so successful. By other names, the Weihan Cynn hold full sway in the Scottish capital, to the point where the other covenants prevalent in England have only one or two members at best. Another familiar face greets him in Scotland: Æthelgifu, the Mekhet who reigned over London during his Embrace. She finds his downplaying of the importance of faith and spirituality disrespectful, regardless of which deities receive reverence. While she claims to understand his perspective, she is convinced that regional differences are simply too great to overcome. By her reasoning, if a network of cities does join together, the organization required to coordinate them is too great to fully avoid the notice of the kine, and she refuses to see those who cling to older ways than Christianity persecuted as witches. The union of Scotland and England as one kingdom chafes her as well. She even goes so far as to call Prince Hill himself a sellout, hearkening to his own Irish heritage and the treatment of the Irish at the hands of the English.

Notably, Prince Hill travels without the assistance of the Gallows Post, but his own personal guard. With each passing night, the Gallows Post stare their own obsolescence in the face. The severe damage in trust done by the reign of Kismet has never truly mended, after all. Elders have more secure means, and among ancillae and neonates alike, employing the Gallows Post is lazy and gauche at best. With traveling growing easier night by night thanks to infrastructure improvements, and deadly plagues becoming infrequent due to advances in medicine, the dangers the road posed before are simply nonexistent.

Upon Prince Hill's return, he immediately begins to pull strings within mortal circles of influence to decriminalize religious practices as a whole. He initially does this to appease Æthelgifu. Coincidentally, it also protects the members of the Lancea et Sanctum. While their actions follow a creed that draws inspiration from Christianity, they don't always dovetail well with mortal faith and spirituality. To that end, and to also complete damage control on the debacle of the witch hunts at the end of the previous century, members of the First and Second Estates promote the Witchcraft Act of 1736 in the mortal Parliament, which criminalizes claiming that anyone has magical powers or practices witchcraft. This move utterly surprises the Weihan Cynn in London, but they fully support the measure as well.

Lord James Erskine, a Scottish member of the House of Lords, is the only vocal opponent of the Act. Prince Hill learns that Erskine's fears of witchcraft are in fact very real. Erskine's wife became an inconvenience to him, so he had her kidnapped and made the world believe she was dead. The Weihan Cynn of Edinburgh knew better. They greatly resented the abduction of one of their ghouls, and now doggedly obstruct him as best they can. Prince Hill leaves them to it, laughing all the way, while Erskine receives no end of ridicule for his decision.

During this time, Charles Emerson tackles another religious problem within the ranks of the Lancea et Sanctum. A devout man in life, he strongly believes in the validity of the Anglican Church, but many of his brothers and sisters have, at least in his mind, more Catholic leanings in their practice of the teachings of the Monachus. He studies the *Testament of Longinus* and the *Sanguineous Catechism* night after night, even occasionally forgetting to feed. When he re-emerges from his period of intense study, he presents the Westminster Creed, a variation that marries Anglican principles and Sanctified doctrine. This new creed appeals to the Anglicans within the First Estate and the remains of the Gallows Post, and the popularity of Emerson's "new Masses" skyrocket. The elders of the Chapel and Spear immediately call in Inquisitors to curtail the spread of this new creed, but not before Emerson

sends letters to his Sanctified brethren in the colonies. These colonial Sanctified priests travel like other mortal evangelists during that time, staging "frontier revivals" to spread this new creed to nascent American Kindred domains.

They also spread the concept of allied domains creating a larger network of support to one another, taking Emerson's personal support of Prince Hill's ideas as new Sanctified doctrine. The neonates who have never heard of the old Camarilla of Rome latch onto the idea, and across the pond, Prince Hill delights in hearing his ideas have taken hold to the west. In the east, however, he comes across more opposition. Trade in India is highly contested, and the factions of Kindred are even more fractious. Branches of the same covenants from different countries fight among themselves, and the Rakshasa, a revered bloodline of Nosferatu, take great umbrage at their mere presence. They laugh at the idea that a prince half a world away and in no position to actually assert his own claims is even trying to reach out so far.

In addition, problems arise closer to home. Charles, the exiled Stuart prince and grandson of James II, sails to Scotland in an attempt to reclaim his throne. Ieldra Æthelgifu's court supports Bonny Prince Charlie wholeheartedly. So do the courts of Paris, offended that they were not included in Prince Hill's Anglo-centric vision, and they send their own agents to support the cause. However, the rebellion fails in less than two years, and both England and Prince Paul Michael Hill of London sit in a stable place once more. With the support of Carmilla in Dublin and various compatriots throughout England and the colonies, the promise of a new Camarilla seems quite real. However, in the clamor of the bright future ahead, Prince Hill cannot see the flash of golden eyes or hear the rustle of dark wings behind him.

London Tonight

London between 1587 and 1593 is a modern, cosmopolitan city of 200,000 people. To Ieldra Æthelgifu and her court, it is the shining crown jewel of all England, and she will hear no claims to the contrary. High-born or low, Shadow or Serpent, there is a little something to whet everyone's palate.

Accordingly, the Kindred are increasingly creatures of the city. Population centers have always attracted the Damned, but in ages past England had fewer vampires, and these cultivated blood cults in monasteries and backwater towns as much as in the city. By the late 16th century, however, the All Night Society has begun to gather in earnest.

The Food

The Kindred are no longer restricted to cultivating their own familiar herds and sneaking into houses at night. London has a thriving after-dark culture, and an exploding population. While elders may stick to their close-knit herds and even centuries-old blood cults, younger vampires take full advantage of the new opportunities for anonymous feeding.

Taverns and alehouses are the most obvious opportunities. Full of jostling crowds and raucous music, it's easy for a vampire to move among the food and seek out a victim. Indeed, the Kindred aren't the only ones on the prowl. A particular class of criminal called demanders for glimmer haunt the after-dark establishments. These young women solicit gifts from their marks, in exchange for an arranged meeting in some private spot. When the mark arrives, the demander and her accomplices mug him. This strategy is increasingly common among young vampires, who often take the opportunity to fill their pockets as well as their bellies.

Some Kindred make their way as entertainers, relying on their skill and charm to earn a little money as well as their supper. They're aided by the ubiquity of musicians at all levels of society, but it's not an easy Masquerade. Musicians are in demand as much by day as by night, and their low status is a double-edged sword. It can be easy to come and go as a lower-class entertainer, but as part of the riff-raff you'll always be scraping for a few more coins. Still, dwelling among the poor of London can provide opportunities to feed.

The faithful gather in churches all over the city, though mostly by day. Old records indicated Prince Gislebert forbade feeding on Sundays altogether during his reign, but no other prince has done so, not even Archbishop Wilfridus. Still, some who take sanctuary at St. Paul's Cathedral at night tell of a scarred monk wandering the grounds, usually rocking someone small to sleep in his arms. Well, the figure appears to be sleeping, anyway.

For those who use sex to feed and need a quick bite without the normal thrill of the chase, the brothels of Southwark and Cheapside are ripe for the plucking. However, Ieldra Æthelgifu keeps special watch on these women, and any Kindred who kill or abuse a prostitute will draw the ire of the Blood-Queen. Daeva of all covenants, and particularly members of the Weihan Cynn, frequently make visits to Love Lane and Maiden Lane in particular. For those with less coin to spend, Gropecunt Lane works almost as well.

Disease provides another avenue for Kindred who require steady meals. The mad are sometimes put under house arrest, confined to a single room and watched over by a caretaker who monitors their activities and diet. Regular bleeding from a vein in the head is a perfectly normal treatment for such a caretaker to apply, and no one pays any mind to what happens to the blood afterwards.

Likewise, London has its share of plague angels. Since 1578, harsh measures have been in place to curtail the spread of plague. Victims are quarantined in their houses, the doors and windows barred and guards set at the doors. Entire families can be barricaded in if even one of them becomes ill. Though most Londoners wisely shun these houses, from which the piteous cries of the imprisoned echo, poor and elderly women often volunteer to be confined along with the plague-ridden to cook and clean. The imprisoned pay these



women well for the risk they take, and no few of them are vampires, for who will notice if a plague victim is a little pale?

Funerals for plague victims also provide feeding opportunities for the enterprising Damned, for the law requires that they be held at dusk. For the living, this discourages attendance and thus, it is hoped, further contagion. For the dead, it provides access to mourners who might well welcome the temporary relief of the Kiss.

Although the Kindred have known since time immemorial that feeding upon the sick can spread disease, plague angels don't suffer quite the stigma that they will in later years. With the Kindred population of London growing even faster than the mortal one, the authorities are willing to look the other way at vampires who resort to such desperate measures.

The Folks

The divide between the city and the country grows sharper every year. The population of the towns is booming, and London is growing faster still. The people of the city increasingly see themselves as ambitious and upwardly mobile. Their beliefs shift to suit this: No longer is success solely a gift from God; instead, it becomes a measure of a person's own effort and worthiness.

Even as the middle classes begin to control more of England's wealth, the traditional upper crust begins to wane. There are fewer nobles than in prior eras, as Elizabeth rations titles and power tightly. Bishops, too, find their power curtailed. Where once their authority derived from an international power structure ruled by God's representative on Earth, now they are mere servants of the state, their power granted and taken away at the whim of the monarch. The age old struggle between monarch and pope for control of the Church seems to have been definitively won.

The powerful readily grant favors and intercede on behalf of those who serve them or further their interests. In the future, young Kindred will see the patronage and favor trading upon which Kindred society is built as corrupt. In the 16th century, however, survival by doing favors and soliciting patronage is the habit of both the living and the dead.

A deeply brutal streak runs through the culture. Torture is one of the state's many tools of power. While its use by mortal authorities is regulated and carefully (though often) applied, Kindred authorities exercise little restraint in applying fire and sun to those who do not cooperate.

Brawling among schoolboys is common, and most men are trained to serve in the militia. While excessively violent crime is punished, it's not unusual for a dispute between peers to draw blood. Kindred society is likewise less restrained than in modern nights. While the court of Ieldra Æthelgifu is nominally a place of peace, vampires regularly take justice into their own hands. It is almost customary for a neonate who transgresses law or custom to be beaten into torpor and dropped at the door of his sire's haven. If the sun should reach him before his sire does, there are rarely legal consequences.

The Faith

Even more so than in later years, religion lies at the heart of politics for both the living and the dead. The queen is constantly the subject of Catholic assassination plots, and the suspicion trickles down. In 1593, Parliament passes an act that mandates imprisonment for anyone who doesn't attend a state-sanctioned church for a month. Citizens are required to register the church they attend; while some slip through the cracks, the state is ever vigilant. This complicates the Requiems of those vampires who maintain a "living" legal identity, for services after nightfall are uncommon.

Since Kindred travel surreptitiously by necessity, they sometimes fall under suspicion of being Catholics. Catholics aren't allowed to travel more than five miles from their homes without a special license, so the business of forging these licenses thrives among the Damned.

Though Catholics are the primary political enemies of the state, they are not the only faithful who cause trouble for the nascent Church of England. Puritans and Calvinists also regularly conflict with the new orthodoxy. As the Kindred population of London swells, members of all of these faiths find themselves Embraced. While the Lancea et Sanctum of later years will learn to recruit from the many faiths of the newly dead, in 1593 it is riddled with cracks as it attempts to indoctrinate Christians with radically different beliefs.

Worse, belief in God is no longer a given. The word "atheism" has recently come to mean people who deny the existence of God. Although in 1593 it remains a slur, the Reformation has opened the door to public doubt. Until now, The Sanctified and most of the Invictus have been united in the assumption that their authority is divine. Tonight, however, increasing numbers of the newly Embraced don't accept this authority, and even reject the label "Damned."

Regardless of their living faith (or lack thereof), many neonates fought so hard in life to hold onto their religious identities that they don't wish to let them go after death. With the Icarian Heresy to the south, they don't want further schisms in their faith, even if the Monachus allowed for different perspectives in the Testament itself. How much diversity is too much?

The Fun

Leisure activities abound for Kindred, no matter how an individual's tastes run. For those with an athletic bent, hunting and fishing are readily available, as are indoor tennis courts. Nobles frequently gamble on a game of tennis or discuss matters of state over a drunken match. What better way to get a whisper of gossip than to listen in, or to take up a racket and play?

For watching other animals play with each other, the Beargarden provides frequent entertainments in the forms of bear-baiting and bull-baiting. Many of the Gangrel and Ventrue like to watch these events, and if the match gets boring, subtly



influence the outcome. Many of the young Invictus and the Gallows Post earn a fair bit of coin betting on the matches. In private, Kindred-only matches, ghouled dogs fight one another for coin, favors, and bragging rights for their domitor. To date, no one has brought in a ghouled bear for baiting. Yet.

For watching more intelligent animals play with each other, Kindred enjoy a good play as much as mortals do. In Elizabethan London, good plays, literature, and poetry are in healthy supply. However, an audience of vampires has slightly different standards; until 1593, real deaths litter the stage. For that reason, revenge plays are remarkably popular among Ieldra Æthelgifu's court. However, it is considered poor form to attend such a performance while hungry.

However, this year's summer fun may be cut short. Reports of plague in London have begun, and there is talk of shutting the playhouses and restricting large public assemblies until it passes. The entire court of Kindred prays the plague will pass them by, or if it must come, be blessedly brief.

The Fighting

Underneath all the hustle and bustle of London above and below, the blood runs high in kine and Kindred alike. Covenants butt heads with each other, and even Kindred in the same covenant squabble among themselves.

The Invictus is splitting in two, much in the way that power is splitting in two in the mortal world. While titles and lineage provide some legitimacy, the redirection of wealth to those without the "right" titles and lineage makes it difficult to immediately vet kine contacts and retainers. A growing faction within the First Estate simply does not care what the source of a given human's power is. They only care that they have it. This has led to many neonates coming from the merchant classes, much to the old guard's chagrin.

The Weihan Cynn enjoy relative peace while the First and Second Estates tear themselves asunder, quietly assuming influence through court mystics and astrologers. However, with the assumption of so many pagan faiths within their ranks, squabbles on doctrine still occur. The cult that reveres Mary has gone through several iterations, and the tensions between the Catholics and the nascent Church of England do not help.

On the surface, the Gallows Post seems to be the most stable of all the covenants in London. They enjoy a great deal of leeway, escorting travelers and bringing information back and forth to various Kindred for the right price, either in gold or favors. They also attract restless neonates who refuse to buy what the other covenants are selling. However, they sometimes discover too much information and struggle to not completely show their hand. They worry most of all about the sudden death of Christopher Marlowe; he clearly knew too much, so what's to stop the entire covenant from suffering such a fate?

The Gallows Post

The roads are lonely, especially at night. They wind through claustrophobic woods and exposed plains.

Lonely, but not empty. Agents of the Crown watch the roads, looking for Catholics and agents of the Man in Rome sneaking about in the dark. For one of the Kindred, travel is a dangerous business. Too easy to get caught in the sun. Easier still to get mistaken for a subversive and thrown in a cell until the sun rises. The skills by which the Damned might evade agents of the state and horrors of the night alike are not easily acquired.

Enter the Gallows Post. Part messenger service, part gang of highwayman, these oft-romanticized Kindred are a vampire's best hope to travel in safety and arrive in peace. They are welcomed in every town — perhaps not due to warm feelings, but rather for the necessity of the services they provide.

The Gallows Post, though a covenant in their own right, and certainly a bastion of wealth and influence, have until recently positioned themselves as apolitical. They claim don't care who rules in a city, so long as the lines of travel and communication are secure.

Yet, in order to maintain this neutrality, they must play the favor-game of Kindred society. To keep the wolves' from their charges' backs, they must do business with the Weihan Cynn. And they are no friend to the human state, for they have found that there's quite a business in smuggling human Jesuits across the countryside. The better they get at fulfilling their mission, the more compromises they make with their supposed independence.

In future years, this will tangle them more and more in politics, to the point of backing their own disastrous candidate for Prince of London. But for tonight, these growing links actually strengthen the Gallows Post, making the so-called "messengers" increasingly influential.

Sects

No one really knows if the **Foxes** exist, or rather if they're truly a part of the Gallows Post. But it's well known that Kindred who do not take advantage of the Post's protection find themselves in awkward situations or led to bad ends, and so the myth arises.

The Foxes, so say the whispers in the Ieldra's court, are the Post's insurance against obsolescence. They are Kindred highwaymen, preying upon those among the Damned who do not pay their mother-covenant's price. They act in the manner of the Wild Hunt, a raucous procession of frighteningly-costumed vampires who hunt down those who venture into the wild alone. They, as much as the wolves or the fae or the spirit of winter, are the reasons that a traveler might disappear on a journey as short as one night.

More certain are the **Sparrows**. Safe arrival cannot be ensured unless the destination can be made secure. So in addition to the guides, messengers, and nomads of the Gallows Post, there are also its Sparrows, its city informants and fixers, who prepare the way for the arrival of Post members and their charges. They are political animals, almost indistinguishable from certain elements of the Invictus and the Weihan Cynn. They know all the safe houses, and who has to be paid off to keep them safe. They know all the threats to the new vampire in town, and all of the ways those threats might be warded against or bargained away. A Sparrow is a newly-arrived vampire's best friend...provided, as always, that that vampire can meet the Sparrow's price.

Finally, there are the **Hounds**, the masters of road and wilderness, the staunch defenders of messages and travelers. Some are physically imposing, warriors who look like they come from some earlier age. Others are smaller, more furtive, but no less certain of their duty nor less courageous when the time comes to defend a charge. They portray themselves as loyal and self-sacrificing to a fault — the customer's needs are their own, and those needs shall be safeguarded regardless of the cost to the Hounds themselves.

Merit: Envoy (• to •••••)

Prerequisite: Status (Gallows Post) •

The Kindred do not travel lightly. There are the hazards of the road, but also the hazards of finding oneself in a foreign domain friendless and alone. The networks established by the Gallows Post address these problems, and a respected envoy of the Post can warm her welcome nearly anywhere in Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.

Effect: First, your character cannot be pursued or intercepted in inter-city travel unless the Skill, effect, or power achieves more successes than your character's dots in Envoy.

Second, part of smart travel is never arriving empty-handed. When traveling, announce your character's intended receiver, be it a person, faction, or even a vampire government. You or the Storyteller specify a gift, rumor, or other item of value which can be used as a one-time equipment bonus on any Social action when engaging with the stated receiver.

Third, once per story, half your character's Envoy dots (rounded up) count toward Allies or Contacts dots in a city she newly arrives in.

The Invictus

Leadership is not a gift everyone is blessed with. It takes a strong and sure heart, conviction that your way is the best way. Though lineage does matter, far more vital are the gifts an individual possesses that prepare him to rule. Others see the greed of the Invictus, the way they surround themselves with glittering symbols of their power, but they are sincere in their conviction that they are the leaders of the Kindred

because that is their destiny. That they are *not* the rulers, that the Blood Queen who sits upon London's throne is an ancient witch rather than a cutting-edge nobleman, rankles them deeply.

The Invictus are found throughout Europe and most of the Far East, and they have succeeded in attaching themselves to power. Among the courtiers of so many rulers (and some infamous) is often found a member of the Invictus, standing in the shadows. Sometimes, they are royal favorites; one in the time of Henry VII was rumored to have been groom of the stool. More often, though, the Invictus take positions of power that are not so public or under scrutiny. Prominence means attention, and attention threatens the Masquerade.

As for the Masquerade, the Invictus have long considered themselves the guardians at the gate. Of course their upper echelons *enjoy* mingling with the powerful of London, but at least aloud their devotion is always to the great secret of the dead. Occasionally their need for secrecy intersects neatly with the suppressive mechanisms of Elizabeth's government. But more recently and more often, the Tudor police state makes the Masquerade ever more fraught.

The Invictus see their machinations as an elaborate, courtly dance, spinning their intrigues into fine threads to wrap a duchess in. Surely, it is so much better to be in the shadows behind the throne. In the imaginations of the common Kindred, their supporters and subjects are sprinkled all throughout Whitehall, through Elizabeth's court and the great lords of the country. But threats to the Masquerade do not often occur in palaces. Even a member of the First Estate who holds a knightly title among the Damned may spend his nights prowling taverns, stalking a ghoul with loose lips.

Power, true power, does not require a show of force; it is the iron within the soft kid gauntlet. Invictus play their games with high-stakes. The loser risks her land, position, and sometimes her very existence. But why play if the stakes will not be high?

The old, old money of the Invictus face a challenge. Their ways are fading. Their vast manor lands and holdings from the Middle Ages are being sub-divided, split and fading. Elizabeth has no desire to expand the nobility, and economic changes are sweeping their power base from under them. The people who worked the land, once popularly imagined to be docile, are now demanding more than some tired turnips they can scrabble out of a dried-out lot. Though the oaths of fealty and service are still used, the peasants have more power to bargain. And on those out-of-the-way country estates where vampires rule almost openly, mortals are tiring of paying their rent in blood.

The newest of the dead, whom the Elders have trained in the ways of power-mongering, are stirring for a fight. They have money and power, but they want more. They are quickly building personal connections in the city, networks of mortals who have amassed their own wealth and power. Many of these merchant princes become patrons of new Invictus, not realizing whom they are supporting.

The young see the cities as the future, see the waves of people flocking towards London for a chance at a better life. They see herds to rule, choice pickings for servants and hangers-on. They are fascinated by the wave of inventions created at this time, a thousand things to make their Requiems just a little better and a little easier. Though they do see the wisdom in maintaining power structures that have been around for hundreds of years, new Invictus are impatient. Why start at the bottom if you can lunge to the top? What they don't realize is that fate is a wheel and no one is on top forever.

Sects

There have been murmurings amongst the new Invictus of the need for a **New Camarilla**, to guide the Kindred in this brave new world. Explorers are redrawing the parameters of the maps, discovering new lands and treasures. The power and influence of Britain grows — it challenges the dominance even of mighty Spain. To the young Invictus, the old power structures only confine — they need a new ruling body, one that has the flexibility to adjust to a rapidly changing world.

The young vampire may find himself chafing at the structure and etiquette of the Invictus. He sees himself as a new predator, able to amass power and do as he likes in the playground London and the cities which will follow provide. But there are always Invictus elders to step in to remind him of the proper perspective.

Mortals represent another divisive point within the Invictus. The young are more likely to befriend their thralls, use them as food and amusement, but also build a sort of friendship with those who capture their fancy or esteem. The older Invictus have learned by years of loss and betrayal to see such "friends" only as a means to an end.

The new and old Invictus also disagree on the best way to relate to other covenants, specifically the Lancea et Sanctum. The Old Guard sees the Spear as natural allies. They see the Sanctified as a moral center for Kindred society, and a way to put their own subjects into positions of religious power. The younger Invictus have scoff at the Elders for their ironically short memories: Have they forgotten what the Lancea et Sanctum did to the Camarilla in ancient Rome? As they learn the inglorious history of the Damned, they will not forgive or forget. They disdainfully consider the Second Estate to be reactionary zealots who are to be tolerated at best and eliminated at worst.

Even the most rabble-rousing young Invictus, however, will not seek to topple the structure, to drive the mortals to anarchy or revolution. Leave such wild ideas to those who haven't found influence and purpose. The mob could quickly turn on them, for the Kindred must always bite the hand that feeds. They will, however, work within the constraints of their society, to bend matters to their will. They will enforce the Masquerade and deal with those who resist.

The Invictus establishment views death as a necessary tool, hand-in-hand with politics. Sometimes it is necessary to



kill to solidify power or acquire money, or to prevent a crisis from spiraling out of hand. Unlike some of their passionate brethren, they do not kill for love or sport. For the most part, the death they mete out is free of vengeance or spite. Or, at least, they would like to think so. As secular intellectualism becomes fashionable, they consider themselves the most logical of the covenants.

The most radical of the young Invictus have formed a group called **Canes Pugnaces** (War Dogs). This aggressive name belies the true nature of their group; most of them disdain getting their hands dirty. But they are definitely of the *neca ne neceris* school. They keep a list bound within a black, leather-bound book; it represents the mortals who have either crossed them, or have lands or treasures that they seek.

Once a name is on the list, the young vampires work tirelessly through their mortal instruments to ruin their intended target. Once their chosen mortal has been abased and reduced to nothing, they graciously move in as a means of salvation and offer a loan with ruinous terms. They have mastered the art of usury, while elder Invictus have a fastidious revulsion at the idea of being seen as money-lenders.

Though these two groups of Invictus can agree on almost nothing, they are of one mind of the importance of the Masquerade. Its concealments allow them to do their work quietly, knotting strings around the powerful in the city. Before they realize it, these mortals are tied into a web of Invictus obligation and the masters have become the puppets. True Invictus enjoy the thrust and riposte of human politics even more, sometimes, than Kindred politics. When one can die, the stakes are much higher.

By enforcing the Masquerade so sternly, the Invictus solidify their place of power within Kindred society. They are the guardians of the secrets, the makers of the rules, the enforcers of the errant. They have used this status to their advantage, for Kindred who run afoul of the Masquerade often find themselves indebted to Invictus as payment for covering their indiscretions.

As the keepers of the Masquerade, it is in the First Estate's interest to cultivate fear among humanity. This time is ripe for fear and for sowing poisonous seeds in the minds of the humans among them. Kindred are part of local lore and many do believe in their presence — this is not in violation of the Masquerade. The Masquerade is breached when an individual Kindred is unmistakably uncovered by a mortal.

Secrecy is their finest weapon. If an Invictus does not want to tell her secrets, she is usually beyond compelling. Bribery is a waste of time, as they often can buy or sell you several times over. If you want information from an Invictus, be prepared to give something far more precious than money.

The Invictus are not immune to the siren call of money. They enjoy luxury: fine clothes of velvets and silks, palatial estates, ropes of pearls and emeralds, even exotic goods from the New World. Some have pretensions to nobility, whether or not their lineage supports that. With enough money, the son of a hostler can dazzle. Others prefer to fill their pockets through the misfortunes of others, opening tenements and workhouses. A notable few have infiltrated Elizabeth's house of spymasters and laid foundations for their own machinations. The other covenants call them **Clauso Ostio**, from the phrase "Clauso ostio, ora aperta": Closed mouth, open pocket.

Invictus tend to embrace other wealthy, powerful people; they believe they are of the best stock to maintain the success of their covenant. Yet the wealthy and powerful while alive may find themselves working dirty jobs once Embraced. Conversely, when the Invictus select someone of merit outside their privileged class, the ability to blend in with the rich or their households is sometimes a key Invictus talent.

If a vampire loves the finer things in life, the Invictus lifestyle holds many attractions: the finest carriages, sharpest weapons, many-masted galleons, and manor houses with lands stocked with plump stag and stables full of pure-bred horses.

Unsurprisingly, the established Invictus are loath to change, especially when maintaining their lifestyle, prestige, and position requires full-time attention. Tradition has kept the First Estate strong and helped them survive the rise and fall of kings and queens, the splitting of religions, and the decline of their accustomed way of life. When you have it all, the status quo is quite attractive. Yet the newly Embraced Invictus continue to create ongoing headaches for their elders. There is not enough power and wealth to go around to suit the younger generation, who wouldn't mind if it were somewhat redistributed.

The Lancea et Sanctum

The living and the dead have lost their way. It is not the first time. It will not be the last. The living shatter their painted windows and turn their monasteries to ruins; the newly dead deny that the Second Estate is — must be — the moral center of the Damned. Perhaps they do not even yet realize they *are* Damned. But they will come around, as they always do. And they will join in the scourging of the mortal faithful, and all will be set back on the path of righteousness.

So say the elders of the Lancea et Sanctum. But for all they claim that the flock has been lost before, this time is different. The Sanctified never bent knee to Rome, but their mortal charges did; and in faith and loyalty there was strength and redemption. Now, the power of God rests in the hands of the Queen, and nothing will ever be the same.

Schisms

In 380 AD, the Edict of Thessalonica was issued by Theodosius I, Valentinian II, and Gratian, making Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire. The Roman Catholic church and, by extension, the pope, quickly became the most powerful religious organization in the world. That is, until Henry VIII, in one stroke of the pen, divorced Catherine of Aragon and appointed himself supreme head of the church.

This schism created deep fault lines in the church: Protestants plundered monasteries, shattered stained glass, and toppled statues. Catholics retaliated by calling forth the faithful, tearing families apart. Neighbors reported on each other for failing to cross themselves at mass. Mary I's attempt to restore the strength of Catholicism resulted in the burning of thousands of heretics. Now it is Elizabeth's choice, to navigate between the Scylla and Charybdis of Catholics and Protestants.

The Second Estate faces many conundrums. Does good behavior equal eternal salvation? Can a creature as cursed as a vampire save her immortal soul? Seeking salvation is heretical, but the gleam of temptation is always there. Is it possible to control the Hunger? When mortals execute their own brethren for false belief, is it the living or the dead who are doing the work of persecuting the faithful?

Many Kindred drawn to the Lancea et Sanctum were religious in their mortal lives. The covenant can bring comfort as well as the chill touch of judgment. Hell looms large in their imagination. Innocence is largely illusory. Religion is primarily about heavenly rewards. Vampirism is primarily about earthly rewards. Reconciling this seeming impossibility is at the heart of the Lancea et Sanctum.

Sects

The flock butchers itself before the eyes of the Sanctified, throwing the covenant into upheaval. Change blows like a diseased wind through the newest among them. The young do not readily part ways with their beliefs as Catholics and Protestants. Disagreement over spiritual focus has sundered the Second Estate. They have broken into factions with totally different missions and even squabbles over basic Church teachings.

The **Keepers of the Word** see themselves as protectors of the books and documents of their own history, such as the *Testament of Longinus*. Unlike the mortal Bible, the *Testament* has long since been translated into English, but the translations are archaic and poetic, not always accessible to the ordinary faithful. The Keepers shun the aggressive tactics of their brethren, preferring to focus on a life of discipline and study, moderation, and service to God. Lost souls who want to know their history and search for meaning *ad vitam aeternam* find their way to these Keepers, to seek answers and solace.

Of course, when the Keepers of the Word find texts or books that conflict with their carefully crafted histories, they are ruthless in destroying them. The *Testament of Longinus* is their holy writ, their version of the *New Testament*. In addition, the Keepers of the Word are notorious grave robbers and artifact-pilferers. They have been known to desecrate shrines in order to collect the holy relics therein. The dissolution of the monasteries has helped put many of these relics into their hands.

The Spear now believe they are the living instruments of justice, angels reflected darkly. With their spears of judgment, they prick the living and the dead who do not follow God's word. Some have come to believe it is time to step up publicly and take their place as an instrument of God, to begin a campaign of terror never before imagined by mortals. Why continue hiding in the shadows?

These Sanctified embrace their role as instruments of God's vengeance. In their fervency, they have little regard for the Masquerade, a tradition sacred to the Kindred (so they say) since the nights of Rome. They believe the world is ending in the cesspool that is London, the pit of mad greed and sensual pleasures. God wants them to purify the world, and why do it just one mortal at a time?

As always, there are those convinced that this is the most wicked moment in history and that only a flood of biblical vengeance will wash the city clean from the filth and vice that ravage it daily. Primarily, the younger or more hotheaded Kindred are drawn to this aspect of the Spear, and they call themselves **Keepers of the Flame**. Their motto is "*Caedite eos, novit enim Dominus qui sunt eius*," or "Kill them all, for the Lord knows those who are his."

When they gather, there are long speeches about preserving the morality of the flock, burning out the wicked, protecting the faith. To clear a boil, one must lance it and drain it of its contagion. When they punish a sinner, they are merely acting as *flagellum dei* or "the scourge of God." These Kindred seem determined to bring about a new Crusade, not on foreign soil but upon the streets of London. They do not fear flame when it is the flame of righteousness.

These Kindred are determined to eradicate **The Children's Crusade**, which is a growing threat, leading the hunt against the twisted collective of child-vampires whose personal mission is to kill all that is bright and beautiful in vengeance for what they've lost.

A splinter group of these young Kindred are known as **The First Temptation**. Much as the serpent tempted Eve with the Apple of Knowledge, so they arrange tests for their mortal followers. Some of these tests seem more like traps, and the punishment is almost always death, but members of The First Temptation maintain they are culling the morally weak from the herd.

Their favorite trick is what they call the "Apple of Discord," named after the choice that led to the Trojan War. They find a small, close-knit group of mortals — a family or devoted group of friends — and toss an irresistible temptation in their midst, whichever of the seven deadly sins is appropriate. Those who do not tear each other apart over greed or envy are finished off by the Temptation.

The elders of the clergy merely shake their heads, arguing that neither shutting one's self away with books nor dealing vengeance on the streets of London is the path to God. Tradition is their watchword. Tradition will save them.

A great many members of the Lancea et Sanctum believe that their morality is a badly needed core to Kindred society. They refer to other covenants as the Lost and consider it their personal mission to bring them to salvation, often regardless of physical

or emotional cost. These are the proselytizers, on a mission from God to redeem all the Lost, whether by comfort or cruelty.

While the Invictus blame the Lancea et Sanctum for the fall of the Camarilla in the days of the Roman Empire, the significance of the Spear has waned slightly as science and reason assert their primacy. As the glare of the Enlightenment approaches, the power of the Lancea et Sanctum recedes in conjunction with religion as a whole. Faith still has its place, though, and the Spear will hold the line *ab aeterno* against the tide of heresy till the end of days.

The Weihan Cynn

The Kindred style themselves Lords of the Dark. They claim they are Britain's aristocracy by night. They may not rule mortal politics, but they rule what really matters: human life and death.

The Weihan Cynn know they are wrong. Britain by night has other rulers. Women who are also nearly the last of England's wolves. Giants who walk like men and blight the land where they sleep. Spirits who claim domain over places both wild and overbuilt. Beauties of metal and glass who steal the faces of those they fancy. And those who just plain command the dead.

Any of these, all of these, could be a threat to the Kindred of Britain. There are too many of them to fight; they cannot, as a whole, be conquered and brought to heel. So the Weihan Cynn resort to the basest sorcery of all: They bargain. The Woods-Witches strike deals with the other monsters of the isles and play them against each other. Sometimes they even act as go-betweens, neutral parties between the forces of darkness. And so they weave a tangled web of loyalties and alliances that preserve the Kindred and allow them to prosper.

Between offering this safety net and wielding the power of their allies as a threat, the Weihan Cynn have managed to keep a dominant place in Kindred society despite the gods they worship having fallen more than once out of fashion. It is by these devices that Ieldra Æthelgifu stays secure upon her throne. For while the Invictus silencers worry about secrets given away and the Sanctified priests rant about blasphemy, they all know the truth: To cross the Weihan Cynn would be to find themselves unarmed among a sea of troubles.

Yet Ieldra Æthelgifu has reason to fear. Her own covenant-mates begin to make common cause with the Invictus, envisioning a great new nation raised in memory of the conquerors from Rome. Yet others covet magics that would change what it means to be Kindred, and so slip from her grasp. And then there are the mortals. For though in ancient times the Weihan Cynn ruled the occasional tribe as ancestor-gods, in recent centuries they have become more insular, maintaining only the human contact necessary for individual witches to survive. They no longer have many institutional roots, and as Elizabeth's state pries further and deeper, they become more vulnerable.

Worse, the Ieldra finds she has rivals. A bloodline of Spanish missionaries with ties to the Vatican but none to the Lancea et Sanctum (with whom she holds uneasy truce) have



begun to subvert her networks of monstrous allies. A rival cult called the Fuil-Beannaithe have recently crossed the water.

The threats facing the Ieldra and the Weihan Cynn are many. But they are ancient, and they are ruthless, and everyone dangerous owes them favors.

Sects

Despite some interruptions, the Weihan Cynn have been the most powerful covenant in London — and, indeed, Britain — for as long as anyone can remember. They have, in their path to power, made compromises, welcomed in strays.

Not all of them like this. The ancient vampire faiths of Britain were mystery cults, places where secrets, and thus power, were kept in silence and safety. The **Dygol Kepen**, the Secret Keepers, believe in this more strongly with every passing year. The Ieldra has become too open...too many of the treaties by which she binds the powers of the land are known to the rabble of the other covenants, or the not-quite-so-pagan infiltrators of some of the other sects.

The Dygol Kepen know that the genie can't be put back in the bottle. Instead, they delve for deeper secrets. They forge bargains on blackmail, bind mortals as they would once have bound the unnatural. They do not reject the Weihan Cynn's leadership over the other covenants...but they see no reason that leadership must be open or fair.

Some among them remember the powers brought to Britain by the conquering Romans and the vestiges of their Camarilla. The wicked arts of the Veneficia, pagan rites of power that rival the miracles of the Lancea et Sanctum. These secrets have been lost, but perhaps pacts with the hidden things of England...the Lambton Worm, the Primordial Beasts...perhaps these will reveal the secrets of sorcery once more to the true faithful of the Weihan Cynn.

Insular as the vampire society of London is, the Ieldra is well aware of these plots. But she sees potential in recovered sorcery, and advantages in having a hidden cult in her midst that can take action with plausible deniability. She encourages them through go-betweens and hidden messages in her addresses. For their part, they do not trust her, but are pragmatic enough not to shun a potential alliance with their covenant's present leader.

Among the strange bedfellows the Dygol Kepen are suspicious of are the Qalandariyyah. The core of these are a splinter sect of a human mystical tradition who found themselves Embraced during their journey to England. While their faith descends from Islam, and hence the belief in one God, their theology leads them to seek balance in the temporal world as a means to finding grace. Though they allow that embracing the unclean may be a path to balance, that still puts them quite at odds with what might be their obvious allies in the Lancea et Sanctum.

Instead, they see the contracts upon contracts of the Weihan Cynn as a form of balance — potentially, a path to grace. And they see the practical benefits, for in their native Andalusia there are many unclean spiritual powers which might be brought to heel with a canny bargain or two. Hence, despite differences in theology, they've thrown their lot in with the witches rather than the Sanctified.

Of course, there's a not-so-subtle streak of evangelism in this relationship. Even as they seek to replicate and export the methods of the Weihan Cynn, they use their cooperation as a wedge to force conversation on the core of their theology. It starts innocently enough. "Would you mind another god in your pantheon? Ours is mighty, and has many names." And then it goes further: "Don't you like our God just a little *better* than yours?"

Their primary aim, though, is not subversion but expansion. They would like to return to Andalusia with the uncanny contracts of the Weihan Cynn backing them up. They would like to build a power structure where all of the supernatural powers of the known world are indebted to them and their allies.

Merit: Contract With the Uncanny (• to •••••)

Prerequisite: Status (Weihan Cynn) •

The Kindred must share the night...but they share it from a position of power. The power the Weihan Cynn hold over vampire society is rooted in their ancient pacts with Britain's other supernatural forces. A member of the Weihan Cynn with the Contract With the Uncanny Merit can personally call upon her covenant's ancient bargains.

Effect: When you choose Contract With the Uncanny, select one faction of supernatural creature. Usually, this will be something like "Werewolves," but in a chronicle where you deal with the details of other supernatural cultures, you might instead have "Werewolves: Bone Shadows." You may also choose a more abstract supernatural force, such as a saint or a season, provided that force is capable of granting favors of the sort listed on the chart below. The number of individuals the bargain is with affects the favors available; if a contract is with Saint Alban, then a level 6 favor that requires a faction to go to war is unavailable.

You may take this Merit multiple times to reflect multiple supernatural connections.

When using Contract With the Uncanny, you may call upon a favor from the chosen entity or group. The Storyteller chooses the level of the favor, using the chart on the next page as a guideline.

The character has to return the favor in kind. For example, a level 2 favor would require the vampire commit a level 2 favor in recompense. If the character does not have the appropriate number of dots in Contract With the Uncanny, add the difference in levels adds to the favor required in return. This can result in a favor over level 5.

If the character reneges on the favor, she loses access to this Merit (but Sanctity of Merits applies), and the faction strikes out against her at a commensurate level. For example, the backlash for not reciprocating a level 4 favor means the faction or force



Contract With the Uncanny

Level	Favor
1	Favor momentarily inconveniences the individual.
2	Favor inconveniences the individual for hours.
3	Favor threatens physical harm or significant social backlash.
4	Favor threatens the life of the faction member in question, or risks ostracizing her.
5	Favor threatens the lives of more than one of the faction.
6	Favor requires the entire faction go to war or otherwise mobilize dangerously.
7	Favor means certain death for numerous faction members.

puts the character or someone close to her in danger. This does not need to be immediate; it can lead to lasting vendettas.

Depending on whom the Contract is with, it may or may not allow for pitting the subject against members of its own kind. The changelings of Elizabethan London are, for example, riven by intense paranoia that each other group is bargaining with the True Fae, and ready to go to war with each other if asked. The Sin-Eaters, however, have a tightly-knit cultic nature that makes setting them at each other's throats very hard. This may be cause to disallow a favor, or it may increase the favor's level.

Favors requested via Contract With the Uncanny are built on hundreds of years of mutual back-scratching between the Weihan Cynn and supernatural forces, so they don't require a great deal of additional negotiation. Therefore, a character using this Merit is almost guaranteed the intervention she wants — the Storyteller is encouraged to deny the favor only if it's severely illogical.

Britannia's Finest

These are the nights when Good Queen Bess fills her treasury with shares of private companies; when a merchant's daughter makes a more suitable bride than all the connections of a wilted rural scion. A title isn't enough to pave a young monster's way in society. She's got to have money too — in fleets or spices or silver itself — and a way to keep her hand on the lever of industry. So a pedigree is a virtue, but no more so than a fine purse or a privateer. After all, any ha'penny squire can purchase a plausible lineage, and a face which no portraiture has captured is quite useful in its own way.

By devoting their attentions to those just to the side of the seat of power, Kindred are learning to best gather the spoils of commerce without needing to tolerate its constant scrutiny.

Kindred of Power: The Queen's Court

IELDRA ÆTHELGIFU

Queen of the Weihan Cynn

Æthelgifu's perspective is farsighted, even among the Cynn. She's been a witch and a princess, an abbess and a diplomat, all as an apprenticeship to her true calling. Now she's Ieldra, and has had fifteen lifetimes to hone an instinct for treachery and manipulation learned at her grandmother's knee. Her induction wasn't certain by any means, but when she crushed Rheged during the Ostmen invasions, it was no more than had been expected of her. She tolerates the Lancea et Sanctum because some faithful children of Albion have found a home there, but considers their cryptochristianity a ridiculous affectation. Better to cultivate a willing flock than harry them into an unproductive grave, after all.

But the Ieldra can see her own ways fading. Fewer families petition to enter into the Weihan Cynn's protection; fewer children are being taught the old kinds of respect. Æthelgifu is canny, though, and has tightly guarded the secret to her substantial personal power, the threat of which has kept the Cynn in charge of an increasingly modern England. The Weihan Cynn, through Æthelgifu, hold the pacts that bind unnatural powers to their aid: wolves that walk, spirits of the sea and air, and the solitary beasts that remained in the bog and in the fen. And of course, her new allies from the south may be spun into a promising escape route if things go sour.

CÆDMON THE LLOEGYRWYS

Archbishop of the Lancea et Sanctum

An assumed name, surely, but the resemblance is striking. An amber-eyed poet who emerged from the wilderness speaking the lord's word. According to Cædmon, he lost his abbey and brothers to the Lincolnshire rising; and turned toward London for a sign. There he found his house in disarray and chaos. Scores lost to the royal father and daughters alike, and not one godly man with the strength to bring the church together against their "flock." Despite openly disdaining Protestants in his midst and lavishing favoritism on the Keepers of the Word, Cædmon has an uncanny way with words. Perhaps it's the wine, or Kindred simply drunk on fellowship, but penitents seem to come away from his communion believing he spoke to them personally, sanctifying actions so compelling they couldn't wait to set them into motion.

His bloody-minded devotion *is* keeping the fracturing Lancea et Sanctum together, but Cædmon is finding religious leadership more complicated than he'd anticipated. He never really stopped being a monk, and finds the diplomacy and logistics required of him to be a useless distraction from The Work. He and Æthelgifu have the barest of détentes, born out of a mutual need to crush The School of Night; but neither truly respects the other and a stiff breeze would shatter that frail bond. It is a wedge that Richard Bithewaye is eager to exploit.

RICHARD BITHEWAYE

Power Broker of the Invictus

Richard believes in nothing so much as power. Money doesn't equal power, connections don't equal power; power equals power. The only thing better is power over someone else. He's been keeping a careful eye on the Kindred who fled to his city from dissolved monasteries and enclosed homesteads, those who weren't welcomed to the bosom of Æthelgifu's court. They're hungry, and they're angry, and London is only a moment away from boiling over. And when it does, he'll be poised to step in and quell the riots, suggest some rules to protect the dead from the amassed mortals, and place himself at the head of this new civil order. And he'll make sure that riot comes soon. Certainly he's a thug, and more than a bit crass, but the very old and very wealthy are afforded some leniency in manner. After all, everyone already knows that they belong in the seat of power.

Trading on pedigree and a small personal army of ghouls, Richard bullied his way up the ladder and summarily removed his predecessor. Tragically, his sire was murdered by traitorous Spanish envoys while Richard was putting down an uprising among Bithewaye the Elder's unruly peasants. But Richard ascending so far surely would have pleased the elderly namesake, if he'd known sooner what a viper he'd clutched to his bosom. Because Richard has a secret: he's nobody, with nothing more than some sickly pigs to his birth name. He was Embraced to be a servant, not that Richard could imagine being truly loyal. Instead he feigned dutiful obedience and secretly lusted for his sire's power. When the moment to strike presented itself, he staked his master without a second thought, leaving Bithewaye the Elder only the sun to find his way home.

Kindred of Quality: Lords and Ladies of the Chamber

FELIX

Posing as Lord Francis Walsingham

It was surprisingly easy to slip into the real Lord Walsingham's place. He'd been very sick, after all, and was spending more and more time at home. But he had so much to do, and so few people he trusted to delegate to. There were plots to watch or meddle with, some of which needed to be driven toward public exposure, and some to be quietly destroyed. Catholics to be weaseled out of hiding. Spaniards to intercept. Propaganda to author and distribute. Felix has a beguiling face, the odd bit of experience in espionage, and a conscience totally untroubled by lies. It was even easier when Walsingham suddenly died.

And so, for the last several years, Felix (as Lord Walsingham) has been constructing a web of partially true to outright false rumors that are turning the Queen's court upside-down with paranoia. Attacks seem to be coming from every side; Jesuit spies peek through every keyhole. It's all rather fun when you don't care who's about to get the ax. Felix's motivations are a bit opaque to everyone but himself, but it's safe to assume he's in it for himself rather than any greater cause. This whole business with Marlowe and Frizer and Skeres is barreling towards disaster, though. Perhaps Frizer is simply jealous, but it's got Felix worried. Worse, word has gotten out in London that a private ceremony was recently held for Walsingham's death.

MARY SETON

Living Agent

Mary Seton was a courtier in the household of Mary, Queen of Scots, and well-loved by her mistress despite her sudden departure in 1585. When Queen Mary was later executed on the strength of a few French sonnets and romantic letters, some thought to ask who might know her handwriting better than her closest friend and confidante. But surely Mary had been a safe pair of hands to hold a silver casket of letters. Soon enough she'll disappear into a convent, but right now she's happily wealthy and being called on by foreign-sounding gentlemen unknown to the rest of her former lady's household.

ARABELLA STUART

Living Pawn

As the only child of a hasty marriage, and distantly in line for throne, Arabella is very much on the mind of Elizabeth's counselors. Fortunately, while she's talented and clever, her tutor "Morley" has been tacitly encouraging the romantic bent which is driving her away from advantageous marriages. That lack of ambition is protecting her from Queen Bess's paranoia, but her family is eager to marry her off while the potential alliances are still favorable. If only Marlowe hadn't introduced her to poetry.

Kindred of Character: Fleet Street

CICELY ROWE

Invictus Climber

It's unfair is what it is. Hasn't she strived with the best of them? Doesn't she have a string on every lordling worth counting clear out to Bath? Hasn't she put a boot in the throat of every ha'penny squire who's come sniffing after her deeds or right to same? She's earned her place again and again, but Bithewaye treats her like the clever hound who fetches his pheasants. Surely not everyone deserves the privilege of office, but she's still not in line for Richard's job, and she rather thinks she should be. After all, England has a queen, and so do the Weihan Cynn. Why not the Invictus?

Cicely is the proprietress of the finest of gentlemen's taverns and theaters, collector of bribes and favors, and distributor of same. For six weeks she's been sitting on a fat secret: Richard's real name. Trouble is, she doesn't quite know how to turn it to her advantage. Cecily views reformers like Adam as lying somewhere between rats and poets, and tolerates neither in her establishments. But a secret's worthless until you find a buyer.

CLEMENT THE MOOR

Insightful Foreigner of the Weihan Cynn

Not every man of color in Elizabeth's England was a slave, even formerly; some adventurous souls sought to visit the exotic northern kingdoms on their own power. A lifetime ago, Clement was such a man, eager to see England's strange ways and quaint folk beliefs. London was happy to accept his service — as a militiaman, as a curiosity, as a symbol of England's exaggerated influence over his homeland — but would not offer its respect. He had observed London as only an outsider could, with rapt attention and discernment. With insufficient pay to send himself home, to tell these stories he'd gathered, Clement had begun seriously considering selling himself into servitude. But a pale, bony woman approached him one evening, and asked him if he might mind telling her what he thought of the city. Flattered to be asked at last, the bite came too swiftly to see. Æthelgifu won a loyal agent with no more than an intense curiosity.

OSWYN CRESSWELL

Mortal Weihan Cynn Agent

Oswyn is the son of a son of a Weihan Cynn daughter. Quite mundane, if devoted to his ancestors, and willing to manage whatever a sister might need in the howling mob of London. He owns a dozen backstreet surgeons, dentists, and chemist shops, from which he relays messages, goods, and safe spaces for a great-grandmother's day trip.

Kindred of Notoriety: Bridewell and Gatehouse

NICHOLAS SKERES

Living Agent of Felix

Not every working man is an honest one, and not every dishonest man deludes himself as to his honesty. Nicholas is a confidence man, an usurer, and a liar of the first order — and he wouldn't deny a word of it. After all, men are weak and gullible, and anyone God lets him ruin surely deserved it. When Felix (as Lord Walsingham) approached him to put his skills to use catching larger and better prey, Nicholas was happy to lend a hand. He's hoped to catch Walsingham too; but the man always seems ten steps ahead of him, and amused by his efforts to boot.

ADAM NOMEN

Once Invictus, now of The School of Night

Everything you might wish a young Kindred to be: clever, driven, and fiercely active in maintaining the Masquerade. He's also shaking the foundation of the Queen's Court by calling their very power into question. A new movement is taking shape among mortals — it's terribly dangerous to admit to atheism in Elizabeth's day, but some hint at it. Adam works among them, but his plans cast catastrophically beyond those of his part-time philosopher friends. He wants to save Kindred society. Free it from the stranglehold of gods and demons, and fling open the doors to new, non-spiritual covenants. They are not damned, they are *superior*; not chosen by a god, but created as a glorious perfection of man. Adam is a heretic beyond tolerance, and it's only a matter of time before he storms the church gates.

The School of Night

Depending on whom you ask, the School of Night is either: a band of treasonous monsters plotting to overthrow both God and Queen, who even now are licentiously corrupting youths away from honorable and moral service; or the only honest men in England, devoted to uncovering the deepest truths about human and Kindred natures and sharing those truths with those men who are ready to hear them. It's difficult to catch the School of Night at study, though. Even clever, self-satisfied philosophers rarely publicly announce their devotion to treasonous scholarship. They exchange coded messages in pamphlets, plays, and small printings carefully dropped in predetermined locations. When they meet in person at all, they gather at the Mermaid Tavern, where they go unnoticed amid the poets crammed in thick as fleas.

MOLL

Living Gallows Post Agent

Moll doesn't quite know how old she is. She's graying now, but fit for her age, and mad as a March hare. She dresses like a man, keeps huge dogs, and has a small lilting voice she uses to repeat bawdy ballads written about her. Most of her biographies (including the one she wrote) are thinly disguised gossip and prevarication, but she's charming and debonair and well loved by ladies of her station. She's also a vicious highwayman, whose brigand band has killed hundreds of people as she lays siege to the roads of London. The Gallows Post may have bribed her to keep away from their delicately drawn lines of commerce, or she may simply enjoy watching them trying to be sneaky.

SEÇIL

No one at all

Seçil is just a ghost story. An eyeless specter seen in the Tower when plague's about to come around. They say if she catches you in her not-gaze, you'll be coughing blood by morning. She's got a weakness for pretty young women, though; sometimes a desperate girl will beg her for clemency.

Playing the Game

Elizabethan London has a wealth of opportunities for enterprising Kindred of all stripes. This chronicle provides a whirl of distractions for the player characters, bright flashes that draw the eye away from the ubiquitous filth and festering darkness underneath aged, gilded facades. While the Elizabethan era is described as a "golden age," the gold as ever is flecked with gore. Plots to maintain the status quo clash with those that seek tear the conspirators' rotting masks away. Ancient creditors come to collect on bargains struck in centuries past, and even preternatural power cannot overcome foul, natural disease.

To that end, we provide several stories that can be introduced either one at a time or layered upon each other until the players' characters search for conspirators or spies around every corner, never trusting that they are truly alone or safe. Some of these stories focus strictly on Kindred matters, while others reach out into the world at large, roughly taking the hand of a single mortal to tug him dangerously close or offering many a feather-light, chilly caress that promises death.

Rotten Fruit

Summer fast approaches, and a foul stench wafts upon the warm breeze: plague. Death has hung upon London since winter, and it will only grow worse before it gets better. While it only sticks around for a year, which is but a single note of a Requiem, a lot can happen in a year.

The Script

London is no stranger to plague. Small waves of it have passed through the city in the recent past, with the plague of 1556 wiping out nearly a quarter of the population. For many elders, the Black Death two centuries prior that swept through the known world is still fresh in their minds. Kindred struggle to keep their personal feeding stock clean and healthy, but those without such a luxury find themselves at risk of consuming tainted blood and spreading the disease every time they go out for a bite.

Opening Act

The first cases of this round of plague begin in December of 1592. When the risk makes itself known, the kine government reminds the population of the regulations for identifying plague victims (or those at risk of contracting it) and controlling the disease. Individuals from homes with infected victims carry white sticks to warn others to stay away. However, these measures only go so far. As the infections spread, whole families find themselves barricaded in their homes, dusk funerals grow more frequent, and the peal of plague bells greets many Kindred ears as they wake from their daily slumber. The theaters shut down, as do most other entertainment venues that gather large crowds, leaving many entertainers (kine and Kindred alike) out of work.

Pivotal Scenes

- Vampires spread the plague much like fleas: Their immunity makes them ideal hosts, and as they feed, their victims become infected. To combat this, the Ieldra Æthelgifu decrees that any Kindred confirmed to have



spread the plague by feeding will be publicly punished before the court for their negligence. In addition, any Kindred willfully spreading the plague in this manner will meet Final Death. This nearly brings the whole court into chaos as ambitious vampires try to throw their rivals under the plague cart, ensuring that the Ieldra continues to reign with little to no opposition.

- A relatively poor but populous neighborhood begins openly flouting the regulations, even when the residents therein are visibly infected with the plague. Upon further investigation, the residents of this neighborhood appear to gather weekly at a centrally located home in their neighborhood, which has been boarded up. While there, they offer prayers for mercy and small gifts at the door. The following night, the offerings left at the door are gone, and one of the residents is missing; no body, no struggle, just...gone. Stranger still, the residents of this neighborhood do not die from their afflictions. They remain alive and functioning remarkably well, despite the disease ravaging their bodies.

- A small circle of Kindred has found a method to ensure their bellies remain full during the plague: Embracing their victims before draining them dry. This method, while psychologically traumatic, ensures their food supply is free of disease. However, Vitae addiction and diablerie become all but certainties with constant practice. This trend is troubling enough in elders who have no choice but to sup on Kindred vitae, but when ancillae and neonates turn to this more potent diet, the entire court of London runs the risk of devouring itself. Literally.

- A troubling rumor begins to circulate among Kindred circles: the Ieldra Æthelgifu has had a private audience with a vampire developing the telltale buboes and exhibiting other symptoms of the plague that ravages the kine population. A general panic results among the court, as this implies that the disease can now infect Kindred. Some simply dismiss the idea, claiming that the rumored visitor was a Nosferatu who always appeared that way. The Haunts, however, aren't talking, and the Ieldra denies such a meeting took place. Still, Kindred scour their own bodies for signs of disease taking root.

That Damned Poet Marlowe

In 1593, a popular playwright and poet dies under mysterious circumstances; and his connections to the Queen's spymasters and a Mekhet enthralled with skullduggery cast a pall over all the Kindred of London.

The Script

Christopher Marlowe, the author of *Doctor Faustus* and a spy for the Crown, is killed while at the disposal of the Queen's

Privy Council, an advisory council to the Sovereign capable of circumventing the courts and Parliament (which they frequently did, under the rule of Henry VIII). The inquest into Marlowe's death is hasty at best, and members of the Invictus with direct ties to the Privy Council cannot help but suspect that the inquest was a sham and a cover-up. The implications are disastrous for the vampire court of London. If Marlowe could be held for questioning by the Crown with little to no accountability, what would stop kine authorities from apprehending Kindred and throwing the Masquerade into turmoil?

Opening Act

Twelve days before his death, Christopher Marlowe was called for questioning by the Privy Council for charges of atheism and heresy, and was ordered to "give his daily attendance on their Lordships, until he shall be licensed to the contrary." On May 30, 1593, Ingram Frizer stabbed Marlowe in self-defense, supposedly in an altercation over who would settle the bill at a local tavern. Marlowe died from his wounds. All of the men present when the crime took place were spies and confidence men, professional liars who had plenty to gain from Marlowe keeping his fool mouth shut. One of these men, Nicholas Skeres, is under the direct employ of Felix, an ancient Mekhet whose loyalties seem more to self and state than to vampire society. His methods are "graft, murder, and an occasional spot of treason," to hear him tell it.

Pivotal Scenes

- The players' characters unearth some of Marlowe's personal journals and letters to his patron, Thomas Walsingham. All of these documents are heavily encoded, but when decrypted, the documents describe incidents where Marlowe encountered members of Kindred society without understanding what he saw. One of the early letters describes him spying on his former employer, Francis Walsingham, conversing with a "deathly pale beauty" that could be the Ieldra herself. Another letter from 1590 describes an ailing Francis on his deathbed, with Francis' perfectly healthy-looking doppelganger standing over him and speaking with a different voice. If Felix discovers the existence of Marlowe's personal letters, he may seek to remove any evidence of their existence, including the players' characters.

- Much to his personal shame, Felix has lost track of his agent, Nicholas Skeres, who, according to the official inquest, was present for Marlowe's death. Skeres was involved in a money-lending scam with Ingram Frizer, the business agent for Thomas Walsingham (cousin to Francis) who stabbed Marlowe to death. The third witness, Robert Poley, was one of the most capable government agents in his day. The three of them are professional liars, and at least two carry state secrets; any of them may be aware of the existence of vampires, either through associations with Felix or through Marlowe's discoveries. Finding and securing the trust (or silence) of any of these three men could help keep the Masquerade secure.

- Shortly after Marlowe's death, a member of the Invictus enters the Ieldra's court in a rage. His access to the Privy Council depended heavily on leveraging an advantageous marriage for Arabella Stuart in order to cement her as the royal heir. Now his access has been quite suddenly and severely cut off, and he directly declares that "damned poet Morley" is to blame. Is this "Morley" Christopher Marlowe? Did Francis Walsingham (or Felix as Walsingham) direct Marlowe to distract Arabella with poetry and notions of romance? Did Marlowe discover and reveal the Invictus' machinations to the Privy Council?

The Faerie Queene

An ancient pact is invoked, involving a treasure of great value to those who struck the bargain. However, with no vampires around with intimate knowledge of the bargain, the court of London must rediscover it and decide whether or not to fulfill it.

The Script

A contingent of creatures calling themselves Fae comes to the court of Ieldra Æthelgifu. Their leader, who styles herself a queen, requests the return of a treasure, which she calls the Trophy. According to her, the Trophy was put into the care of the vampire queen of Lundenwic until such time as it was safe for the Fae to reclaim it. If the bargain is not met, all the Kindred of London will die.

Opening Act

Once upon a time, when the Saxons invaded England, a Woods-Witch made a deal with a powerful creature to sway the incoming armies. In return, the creature gave her a great treasure for safekeeping, binding her to never use it for her own gain and to return it at a given time. Shortly afterward, she rose to rule not only the Weihan Cynn, but all the Kindred of London. She told no one of her promise, thinking she would live long enough to return the Trophy to its rightful owner, but she was not so fortunate. The creature with whom the Woods-Witch struck the bargain does not bother to hide her disdain for the current Kindred court, calling the Ieldra a "mere girl" and the other vampires "helpless babies." The loyal retainer who tries to defend Æthelgifu crumbles to a pile of ash with a single gesture from the Fae queen. She threatens the same fate to all the vampires in London if they do not comply. Feeling generous, the Fae queen allows the court until the next new moon to fulfill the bargain.

Pivotal Scenes

- No Kindred in the current court have any idea what the Trophy is or exactly where to find it. Æthelgifu



remembers hearing of how the Trophy came into the Weihan Cynn's hands, but even among the Woods-Witches, the Trophy is just a legend. While the Woods-Witch who made the initial deal told no one of the Trophy's existence, others discovered it and frequently came to early and messy ends shortly afterward. Some tried to harness the Trophy's power, while others simply tried to move it to prevent others from finding it and abusing it. The story goes that those who know how to control it can direct the fate of legions at their whim — which, given the display at court, leaves many Kindred questioning whether or not the Fae queen should have it. However, with the threat of annihilation, Kindred of all covenants are searching for the Trophy, even if they are not prepared to handle its power.

- John Norden, a cartographer and author of devotional works, has been doggedly chronicling the streets of London and Westminster in preparation for publication to the masses. By some twist, Norden always turns up where the players' characters go to look for the Trophy. Norden could easily be following the players' characters around. Alternatively, he could somehow have heard of the Trophy and be looking for it himself. In a stranger turn, simple fate or the resonant power of the Trophy could draw him into the path of the players' characters time and time again. While Norden's cartography garners him little patronage, his drive for accuracy in his maps could cause trouble later as well.

- Near Cripplegate, a legend exists of a "golden child," a luminous youngster dressed in rags who approaches people to beg for food. Those who acquiesce with kindness find themselves blessed with good fortune, while those who spurn the child suffer from bad luck. Particularly violent or disdainful rebukes have more dire consequences. Those who have seen the child tell tales of glowing skin and eternal youth, with old grandmothers claiming the child looks the same even after decades have passed. Some even claim they have seen the child slip into a house on the verge of collapse to seek shelter. Perhaps the "golden child" has some insight about the Trophy, or could even be the Trophy.

A Church Divided

Serpents in the ranks of the House and Spear are passionate in their devotion to their faith. When that passion diverts the faithful elsewhere, however, the work of the Sanctified in London could crumble to dust.

The Script

Simon Loveney, a neonate freshly Embraced into the Daeva and the Lancea et Sanctum, shows a great deal of promise. His energetic zeal is infectious, and when he truly believes what he preaches, he can stir an entire congregation to his side. However, his sermons have trended toward the belief that the Sanctified have not adapted their teachings enough to modern kine religion, calling for reforms that give even the most progressive Sanctified factions in London pause.

Opening Act

Simon Loveney's sire, a Daeva called Sister Fortune, found Simon reading Bible passages with a fervor that rivaled Cædmon the Lloegyrwys himself. She immediately compelled Simon to her side, only barely waiting until they were out of kine earshot to offer him the Choice that all prospective Sanctified receive: Accept the Embrace or die. Simon accepted, but immediately after his Embrace, he called several Sanctified beliefs into question.

Pivotal Scenes

- After his Embrace, Simon vehemently condemns the Creation Rite, where his sire took the lashings initially intended for him, per Lancea et Sanctum tradition. He describes the ritus as "unnecessary self-flagellation that no godly man would abide." Budding radical factions within the Anglican Church have been known to refer to themselves as "the godly." Is Simon tied to these extremist elements,

What is the Trophy, Anyway?

The exact nature and capabilities of the Trophy have been left intentionally vague. The Trophy could be anything the Storyteller needs to craft the story she wants to tell, or whatever will best capture the attention of the players' characters. If the "golden child" really is the Trophy, the effects of his (or her) powers could be entirely innocent, an extension of the child's opinion of those around him (or her). If the Trophy is a prized object, such as the head of a magical beast or a piece of enchanted jewelry, making a forgery and planting it within easy reach of one's competitors could throw others off the scent.

The powers it exhibits trend towards affecting an individual's fate, but if that doesn't work for the chronicle at hand, the Storyteller could easily change it. For example, a reliquary that appears small but holds and preserves oceans of blood for an indefinite amount of time could just as easily appeal to the Kindred of London. Customize the Trophy to be whatever it needs to be in the individual chronicle, even if that's the Maltese Falcon.

derisively called "puritans" in mainstream religious circles? If so, how? And how will Simon react to other traditions of the Chapel and Spear? Will the Sanctified bother to attempt to reconcile the pomp and circumstance of their rites to their newest initiate?

- Simon is not the only neonate Sanctified in town. The religious zeal of the age, no matter how divided the kine have become, draws out many more like Simon; and even devout fervor cannot fully supplant the will to survive when presented with the choice of death or Damnation. However, these neonates gravitate to Simon; they can relate to his objections and struggle to relate to Longinian scripture and ceremony. This only widens the generation gap in the Lancea et Sanctum.

- Despite his opinions, Sanctified sects within London are actively trying to recruit Simon in order to direct his passionate energy to their own ends. To the surprise of many, the First Temptation seems to have the majority Simon's attention, and he has actively snubbed the Keepers of the Flame, who seem to be an ideal fit based on Simon's temperament. What are Simon's true intentions with the First Temptation?

The Chronicles of Darkness

London's spiritual landscape is still scarred by the turbulence of the last few centuries, with all sorts of unpleasant spirits having grown fat on war, crime, and purges. The **Forsaken** have long been distracted by the war against the Pure, but after a number of major victories in the countryside and a consolidation of London's remaining werewolves under three large packs, they're beginning to tend to matters at home. The Tower of London remains an open wound, but its heavy human security makes tending to it difficult. Moreover, Wolf-Blooded have recently been going through the First Change with much greater frequency than usual, creating a distraction as the major packs try to absorb the new werewolves.

Elizabeth's reign is a difficult period for the **Awakened**. While interest in magic among the mortal population is high and provides some cover for mages of the right background, the resources of many Diamond cabals remain entangled with the Catholic Church. As potential enemies of the state, they must watch constantly over their shoulders as they work to establish new contacts and support networks.

Few **Prometheans** live within London's limits, for an unusually territorial throng makes its home here. Having found an area of Cheapside where the Wasteland apparently refuses to take hold, they viciously defend their little scrap of almost-paradise. But anyone who could explain or replicate the condition would be well loved indeed.

There's no shortage of work for **hunters** in London's smoky nights. The earliest ancestors of the Long Night are beginning to gather here; in years to come they will travel to the New World and take root in earnest. Meanwhile, dozens of strange terrors nest in London's dark corners, and the huddled masses look for people who can provide security against them.

Much as London has its twisted spirits, it also has its restless ghosts...but not so many as one might expect. Something is devouring the city's ghosts faster than they can be appeased or put to rest, something known only by the name "Mother Gentle." The city's **Sin-Eaters** are, thus far, baffled.

Few **Arisen** lie entombed upon England's shores, but their cults have already arrived in force. Many are members of the emerging middle class, with their newfound prosperity paving the way for the arrival of their slumbering masters. Yet rumors spread among the cultists that they are not the first of their kind to take root here, but that a far-flung outpost of Irem was built on the site of London millennia ago.

The rapid building and rebuilding of London includes dozens of Infrastructure sites. The Machine is building increasingly large projects, apparently as part of an occult matrix which spans not only many towns in England, but parts of France. The **Unchained** of London work ceaselessly to locate and disrupt these projects, usually settling for small victories and slowing progress rather than complete destruction. Meanwhile, a demon who calls herself the Harbinger has arrived from the Americas. While some Unchained have fled for new lives in the colonies, thinking that by escaping Europe they will escape the Machine's influence, the Harbinger claims that It is already well entrenched there. She alleges there are hundreds of secret installations in the New World already centuries old...and that the recent upheavals as colonists invade has provided cover for the expansion of these projects on a possibly unheard-of scale.



Does he wish to join them or destroy the hedonists from the inside?

- Simon is already looking to Embrace a childe of his own, a known member of "the godly" by the name of Charles Emerson. Simon talks of Embracing a large brood of childer to help spread the Word of God, and aside from Emerson, his prospective childer are bawdy actors, irreverent artists, prostitutes, and independent businesswomen. For one so freshly Damned, what does he truly intend with this brood he wishes to bring to his bosom? And is it a coincidence that they all have red hair?

- Amidst the clamor surrounding Simon, his sire, Sister Fortune, goes missing. Has she simply taken the opportunity to step back from Kindred society? Did she know that Simon's Embrace would strike sparks among the Lancea et Sanctum and is thus simply standing back from the powder keg? Has she fallen to a more malicious force, such as a quiet punishment for Embracing Simon? Or has he diablerized his own sire for a quick hit of early power?

Inspiration

***The Time-Traveler's Guide to Elizabethan England,* by Ian Mortimer.** A principal source of research for this chapter, Mortimer's book covers virtually every aspect of late Tudor life. Quite to the advantage of a **Vampire** game, he's more interested in ordinary folk than the maneuvering of the great and the good...though he hardly neglects the nobles and landowners. You'd be hard-pressed to find a more lively and vibrant account of the world our monsters inhabit.

***Elizabeth* and *Elizabeth: The Golden Age,* directed by Shekhar Kapur.** On the other hand, if you want to look at English politics being run like a crime family, these visually gorgeous and rendingly dramatic films are your ticket. You can steal left and right from these two films when portraying the courts of the living and the dead alike.

***Shakespeare in Love,* directed by John Madden.** Aside from some of the snark, this romantic comedy and its profusion of literary gags aren't really **Vampire** material. But the film excels at a stylized portrayal of the look and feel of middle-class Elizabethan London. If you want to know what this chapter *looks like*, you could do worse than to watch this movie, then cake on the night and grime.

The Rose Courts of London

What Has Come Before

As long as people lived on the isles, there have been changelings. Before the Romans came, the legends say that the fae lived openly and used their powers to bless and curse as they saw fit. They were gods, witches, protectors, and healers. It was an age where the mythical freeholds of Avalon of the Apples and Tír na nÓg reigned — but the golden age faded into myth and legend, or perhaps it was nothing more than a dream to begin with.

Britain was always close to Arcadia, the Hedge only a narrow barrier between the mortal world and the realms of dream. Glamour ran deeply through the hills, moors, and glens. Christianity supplanted native beliefs in the 6th century, and the subsequent rejection of the rituals and superstitions that warded off the True Fae and their Huntsmen created a crisis of increased Fae influence in the nation. In several places Arcadia drew close enough to the mortal world to touch it.

Changelings who relied upon mortal protections against the Huntsmens' incursions found themselves fighting for their survival and freedom. They drew on the old legends. Courts and freeholds sprung up once again, and formed Bulwarks against the Gentry and defined Approaches to guard against their Huntsmen. They sought out Darkness and Light, and created the Seelie and the Unseelie Courts. They challenged the Seasons, and founded the seasonal Courts. Others sought power and protection in deeper shadows in order to survive, and found the Weihan Cynn, wizards, werewolves, and even stranger powers.

Font of Arcadia

The Glamour that floods the mortal world is less than it once was, but there are still pockets of it in the deep woods and wild moors known as fonts. The local mortals know where they are, as well as the rules that must be followed near them. They are the hills that you don't climb after dark, a faerie circle of mushrooms where the True Fae come to dance on moonless nights, or the ancient standing stones where blood might be spilled in offering and a wish will come true.

These places are where the Hedge is so thin as to be non-existent and the Gentry hold sway almost as absolutely as they do in Arcadia. Most changelings avoid these fonts, but occasionally some changelings will seek one out and attempt to drive the Fae back to Arcadia so they can claim the power for themselves.

In time, the new Courts began to prosper. The Seelie and Unseelie dominated the wilder, more sparsely populated areas of the isles, but the Seasonal Courts took root in the larger urban centers — including London. The succession of Monarchs each season was established early in the medieval period and was roughly as peaceful and orderly as the succession of English monarchs. Much of the time it truly was peaceful, but

occasionally the Wyrd would crown an unexpected individual to rule a season or a monarch would attempt to retain control when her season came to an end. Internecine feuds would break out into violence, and more than one monarch was assassinated to prevent his rise to power. However, even amid such enthusiastic politics, the Londontown Freehold stood firm and united.

The Mortal Wars: Hundred Years War and the Wars of the Roses

Taxes, violence, and crime increased in London as soldiers returned home from the Hundred Years' War in France, but by large the freehold remained unaffected. After the plague swept through the city in 1348–1350 and so many mortals perished, many courtiers moved up in the social circles of the world. They dabbled in trade and became invested in the affairs of the city, common people, and other great powers in the world even stranger than changelings.

In 1422, King Henry VI took the throne. He was only a child and the affairs of state were handled by a regency council. Even after he formally assumed rule, he was a weak king whose Court was dominated by bickering nobles. Several freeholders were in the thick of the social battlefield, serving mortal masters on both sides of the political conflicts as well as aiding contacts within the Weihan Cynn and other powers.

In August 1453, Henry VI suffered a mental breakdown that lasted for over a year until Christmas Day, 1454. One of the more prevalent rumors in the Londontown Freehold is that someone revealed his or her mien to the king and ensorcelled him. The king went mad, and his inability to cope with the wonders of the fae world gave his enemies the opportunity to seize control of the government.

The civil war between the Plantagenet houses of Lancaster and York shouldn't have affected the Londontown Freehold as deeply as it did. However, its members were too invested in mortal affairs and too visible to quietly slip out of sight until the war had passed. Courtiers who served the mortal nobility were outspoken about their causes in the freehold, while those who lived as common people were often swept up into the conflict whether they liked it or not. London was relatively untouched by the violence of the civil war; the city itself was too important for either side to risk.

The Lancastrian and Yorkish armies clashed far away from the capital, and the downfall of the Seasonal Courts began on the battlefields across England. In 1456, after losing the first battle of the war at St. Albans, Queen Margaret of Anjou introduced conscription for the first time in England to supplement the core of professional soldiers fighting for the crown. By large, Londoners were not affected by the order, but many changelings in the countryside entered into service on both sides of the conflict. The Courts of Blood and Snow began to emerge from the mortal conflict. The Blood Court held faith with King Henry and the Lancasterian's right to rule while the Snow Court threw its power behind the Yorkist claim — and from the shadows of their fight a third Court emerged. The Ash Court supported neither but instead wished to stay out of mortal affairs entirely, believing that it would only draw the attention of the True Fae and Huntsmen.

The war touched the people and the freehold in a different way in London. The economy was struggling as the nobility warred with one another instead of tending to the country, and many Londoners laid the blame at the King's feet. Riots began when King Henry took loans from the Italian wool merchants instead of his own people. In the freehold, a faction of the King's supporters led by Sir Philip Silver — a young firebrand of a Fairest and Summer Knight — took to the streets and rescued several Italian merchants from the mobs. They broke up much of the fighting and helped the King's men restore peace, but many others in the freehold took considerable exception to their involvement in the affair.

Civil war erupted in the freehold, and the Seasonal Courts fell as brother fought against brother. The Snow Court had the greatest numbers thanks to the largely pro-Yorkist sentiments in London. They seized power quickly, and swiftly executed young Silver for what they claimed were crimes against the freehold. The Blood Court was not to be deterred, however, and its courtiers began to plot to take the throne. When the Ash Court refused to aid their plans, they went outside the freehold, offering Ieldra Aethelgifu a simple bargain: blood for blood. For every member of the Snow Court she killed, they would kill someone of her choosing in return. In the next years as the war continued, over a dozen high ranking Snow courtiers were quietly murdered in the night, though the ancient Queen has not yet called on the Court to pay its considerable debt. The Snow Court allied with the Ash in response, but it was not enough to win the war. Even as the mortal struggle wound down, the war between the Lost was only beginning. Each Court desperately sought new allies, making bargains with all manner of powers and forging new Contracts. Blood and Snow accused one another of being compromised by loyalists.

Then there was the Man in Gray. He worked in secret, gathering information for the Blood Court one night, and sabotaging them at Snow's behest the next. He was a tall horseman with too-black eyes whose worn gray cloak matched the dappled horse he rode. Those who saw him had difficulty

Princes in the Tower

Theories abound about who murdered Edward IV's sons in the Tower of London in 1500. One legend says that long after King Henry VII had secured the throne, two young men fresh from the Thorns were discovered by the Ash Court. They claimed they were King Edward's sons and said they had been taken by a Man in Gray and sold to their Keeper.



The Man in Gray

There are many rumors about who — or what — the Man in Gray is. Whatever the truth is, it will likely require a great deal of luck, effort, and skill to uncover. Some claim he is a Huntsman, or even True Fae attempting to weaken and break the freehold. Others say he is the Black Queen's right hand and the leader of the Bootmen, working to keep the Courts of Blood and Snow at each others' throats. Among the Ash Court, they claim he's one of the Weihan Cynn.

remembering exactly what he wore or looked like well enough to describe him. His black eyes were the one thing that stood out.

Each Court was convinced he was their agent, and the information he brought them kept the Courts at each others' throats. In 1483 King Henry VII married Elizabeth of York and united the Houses of Lancaster and York. However, the mortal union did nothing to allay the paranoia and grudges fostered by the Man in Gray. The Londontown freehold had come firmly under the Blood Court's rule as Blood courtiers from around the country made their way to London after the mortal war ended, and the Ash Court had returned to its policy of neutrality. The only thing preventing all-out war was the threat of the Ash Court entering the conflict against whoever attacked first.

The Fae War: The Reformation

Paranoia reigned amongst the freehold when the Tudors came to power. Trust between the Courts continued to suffer as internal as well as external interests pulled them in all directions. Mortal political causes, the question of Protestantism versus Catholicism, booming Goblin Markets in the Hedge — for every side a changeling could take there were others in the freehold opposing her. However, while individuals were deeply partisan and feuds often ended in blood, the Courts deliberately refused to take sides in mortal affairs. Holdless and privateers became more numerous than ever during the time of the Reformation even while the Black Queen instituted a policy of actively seeking out newcomers and recruiting them into the Ash Court.

In spite of the difficulties, the freehold held together. Queen Mary inherited the mortal throne and restored Roman Catholicism as the law of the land, complete with brutal medieval heresy laws — 288 people were burned at the stake during the Marian Persecutions between 1555 and 1557. Many of these were members of the merchant class, as well as several of the Godsworn motley who tried to protect their Protestant allies.

In the shadow of the Reformation came a more difficult battle that struck at the heart of the freehold. Through the manipulation of the Huntsmen, the inquisitors sought out Protestant heretics and the mortal hunters among them turned their attention to the heresy of witchcraft. Loyalists accused freeholders of being heretics and witches, but freeholders turned on one another just as often. Hunters plagued the freehold until the end of Mary's reign, increasing the paranoia between the Courts. Many of the new arrivals in the freehold deliberately hid their mortal identities so they could not be betrayed. However, the freehold struck back. While the Courts themselves were often at odds, individuals and motleys reached out across Court lines and coordinated a counterattack. Though history labeled the violent outburst of the Fae War as just another brief rebellion against the Marian Persecutions, the freehold accomplished its aims of drawing out the Huntsmen and executing many of the hunters and loyalists who had been working for them.

Gloriana's London

Today London's Lost live in a thawing cold war between the Courts. In spite of the efforts of many, Elizabeth's reign has been profitable for all of the Courts and Glamour flows freely. Relative peace has somehow crept up on the courtiers of Londontown. The city itself is enormous and the Thames its lifeblood. Commerce thrives on the river's access to distant markets, and the city packs mortal souls closely together in narrow streets, cramped houses, and twisting alleys. But even amid the squalor and profoundly unsanitary conditions there is an incredibly amount of opportunity and riches for those willing to work for it — or seize it by force.

The Community

Returning to the mortal world and reestablishing a life outside the Thorns in renaissance London is a challenge. In such an enormous city with little formal record keeping outside the Church, it seems a simple matter to simply assume an identity and press forward in starting life anew. While some changelings are successful in so straightforward an endeavor, there are many pitfalls on that path.

Though London is large, it is not entirely anonymous. Individual neighborhoods are close-knit communities where everyone knows one another. Even if a changeling somehow has the finances to afford a business or home, she is sure to garner a great deal of attention if she simply appears within a community without having any prior connections to it. Each Court has its own methods for integrating new changelings into mortal society.

The Blood Court, never lacking in money or social connections, will most often arrange an apprenticeship or familial relationship to appear as necessary. Most courtiers have the finances to support a new member of the Court in their households until he has the social and financial resources to strike out on his own. The Snow Court expects more individual initiative from their members though Church and property records can always be forged to provide a secure background. Meanwhile, the Ash Court excels at lurking in the shadows of society. The less-reputable elements rarely ask for a proper family name or hometown. Ash courtiers prefer to provide more immediate aid in getting their newly sworn courtiers on their feet — a bowl of soup and a mentor who can show them where to safely sleep is more useful than a proper name.

Beyond rejoining the mortal world, changelings must also readjust to the restrictions of society. Class, gender, and even clothing is highly structured. After time in Arcadia, mortal laws such as sumptuary statutes that restrict what members of each social strata and gender can wear are often seen as irrelevant to a changeling's perspective. Silk and fur are not such precious materials when gowns can be spun of starlight and a lover's first kiss. Occasionally, a monarch of the Blood Court attempts to restrict hedgespun clothing, but they've never been able to do so successfully.

Gender roles are often a particularly troublesome restriction for the Lost. While durances vary widely, few men in the freehold would be willing to belittle the struggle and fortitude it requires for a changeling to escape from Arcadia. Even more difficult is the fact that women are legally dependent on their fathers or husbands for many of the basics of survival. An heiress can support herself respectably, but very few changelings can lay claim to independent wealth and property — and the rare few who can must first deal with their fetches to reclaim their mortal lives.

A woman living alone, especially one who has recently moved into the neighborhood, is particularly vulnerable to gossip. Any hint of behavior outside what's expected of her can give rise to rumors that destroy a woman's reputation or worse. In addition, whenever the unexplainable occurs, mortals go looking for a reason. Unexplained deaths, the plague, a bad harvest, harsh weather, and even arson can all bring accusations of witchcraft. When a changeling is accused of witchcraft, there is at least some truth to it.

The Courts

Though relations between the Courts slowly thawed and individuals crossed the boundaries between them, there is still tension, and any serious complication can throw them back into open warfare. The Blood Court is currently ruled by King Nicholas the Red, a Jeweleyes Ogre hewn of raw ruby. He's old and well respected within the Blood Court as a goldsmith, but he has only reigned as King for a year and few expect him to reign much longer. Few monarchs have kept the throne longer than a year lately, and some courtiers whisper that it is a flaw within the Blood Court. They have become too exclusive to accept many new courtiers into their ranks, and it has weakened them.

The Blood Court's identity, the Story of the House of Lancaster that they are founded upon, has become entwined with the concept of the divine right of kings and the surety that they are the Wyrd's chosen rulers of the Rose Courts. The possibility that the Courts of Snow or Ash might win the crown is unthinkable. Even the possibility being raised is excuse enough for hotheads in the Court to demand a duel. Within the Court, changelings are becoming nervous about the state of affairs; and though no one will admit it out loud, everyone knows that something is about to give.

Meanwhile the Snow Court is steadily gaining power. Lord Mayor Ambrose and his council of Aldermen direct the Court, gathering information from all walks of life. The network of contacts the Snow Court maintains stretches out amongst the merchants, clergy, and servants who work in many of the nobles' London houses. All gossip comes to



them eventually. Under Mayor Ambrose's supervision, such tale-telling has stretched through the entire freehold. Snow courtiers are expected to regularly report on other courtiers — ostensibly in order to defend against the loyalists who had infected the freehold in recent years. Though the current arrangement keeps the freehold at large under watchful eyes, many Blood and Ash courtiers distrust the Snow Court even when they speak plainly and pledge to tell the truth.

The power of the Snow Court is not to be ignored, however. Many of the younger courtiers who belong to the faction of Warders have their eyes on a prize larger than the seat of the Lord Mayor. They fully intend to seize the throne of the freehold out from under the Red King. If something doesn't change soon, they are likely to succeed even without the support of the Lord Mayor and his council. The only question holding them back is how best to sway the Wyrd into crowning one of their number as the freehold's monarch.

The Ash Court stands as the pillar that balances Blood and Snow amidst the paranoia and plotting. It overtly focuses its efforts on many of the practical aspects of life for the Lost community in London. Food, shelter, even clothing can be found for those in need. In contrast to the wealthy nobles and merchants, the vast majority of Londoners (Lost and mortal alike) live in abject poverty. Steady, honest work is difficult to find, and more people than ever arrive in London every day. The Ash Court does what it can: It seeks out changelings fresh from the Hedge and helps them get on their feet, but it's never quite enough.

Though many swear loyalty in gratitude (and with no other viable options), the Ash Court is restless. No one can fault the Black Queen's leadership. She's adored and respected by her courtiers, but the idea of leaving the Ash Court to form a fourth Court still persists. As matters stand, the Ash Court performs a subtle but essential duty in throwing its weight behind Blood and Snow as their power games shift the balance. If Ash Court does split, the careful balance they maintain could be shattered.

The Courtiers

Nicholas the Red

The Red King and Lord of the Rose Courts

The ruby Jeweleyes Ogre is a member of the Guild of Meisters, crafting intricate pieces of jewelry for mortal nobles and even Queen Elizabeth herself. He never aspired to the Freehold's throne, and he lacks the social acumen settle the concerns that plague the Blood Court. He strives to be strictly fair when dealing with the freehold. He is respected as a master of his craft and is wealthier than many of the nobles who purchase his work, but he knows that he isn't a strong leader. The fact that the Wyrd crowned him is a concern he has not dared to voice. In truth, though not a natural leader, the blunt-spoken Ogre has done well in keeping the freehold unified and at peace.

Diane Little

Lady Muse of the Blood Court

Lady Little is a Wizened Muse, a scholar, poet, and accomplished musician. She claims to have noble blood, which the quality of her education confirms, and is relatively new to the Blood Court. Her most formidable talent, however, is that people listen when she speaks. She firmly believes that the Blood Court's greatest days are still to come. When speaking to members of the other Courts, she somehow always manages to seem utterly reasonable and arguments against her are futile. She does not claim to have any ambition for the throne itself, but serves as an adviser to King Nicholas.

Ambrose White

Lord Mayor of the Snow Court

Lord Mayor Ambrose is a Darkling Razorhand. Titles mean little to him when all he desires is raw power. By all accounts he is ancient, well over a century old. He knows many secrets and craves to know more. He met the Man in Gray years ago, when he had just joined the freehold, and since then he has steadily gained influence. The paranoia cultivated among the Snow courtiers in the decade he has served as Lord Mayor is quite deliberate on his part. Lord Ambrose saw what happened when Courts and courtiers turned on each other, and he works hard to gather intelligence to prevent it from happening again.

The Black Queen

Monarch of the Ash Court

A Black Queen or King has reigned over the Ash Court from the very beginning. It is an office more than an individual, as mastery over illusions has given the Court the opportunity for the monarch to hide behind the images of others. The arrangement appeals to many who wear the Ash Crown. While performing her duties to the Court the Queen appears wearing the crown, no matter what face she chooses. However, once duty is done, she may put the crown aside and be treated as any other courtier. The current Black Queen is a Beast Render with the feathers of a hawk. She has served in the position for two years. Under her reign the efforts to aid the poor of the freehold have increased, but she's also not afraid to make the hard decisions and order loyalists or the mad to be executed.

The City

The Font of the Lodenstane

The Lodenstane is a large stone on Candlewick Street, standing upright there in the way of traffic. It has always been

there, bound with cold iron bars and strong enough that if a wagon struck it the wheels would be broken without a scratch to the Lodenstane. To mortals it is a place of authority, where official proclamations are read; and oaths sworn over it are bound to be kept. Others call the place uncanny and avoid it. No one remembers the stone's origins except the Lost, who can sense the true nature of the place. The Lodenstane is all that remains of an ancient font. It is bound in iron, closing off the connection to Arcadia. The door is locked, not destroyed; and power still seeps through, though none know what is on the other side. Glamour flows more strongly here and pledges spoken over the stone are Sealed. The Lost of London traditionally gather here to renew oaths with each other, and to ensure the iron bindings are intact. Fonts are dangerous, powerful places, and the last thing the freehold wants is for one to be opened in the center of London.

The Royal Exchange

The Royal Exchange is a grand marketplace that opened in 1571. It was built in classical style as a temple to commerce. The finest shops and most prestigious merchants in London are here, including milliners, wig makers, drapers, perfumers, jewelers, and sellers of luxury goods imported from around the world. It is also the site of the greatest Goblin Market in London. Gresham's Market rarely leaks into the mortal world, but gateways opened in the Royal Exchange lead directly into the Market. It is a permanent Market, though the vendors change regularly as caravans of hobs and their odd goods move in and out of the city. Since the Royal Exchange was built, the Market has grown. A few changelings even have stalls in the Market to sell hedgespun and dreamwoven goods. The rules of the market are simple, but strictly enforced: Violence is strictly forbidden, silver is banned, and shoppers must wear something blue.

The Cheapside House

The Courts and freehold have several safehouses and gathering places across the city, but the Cheapside House is the heart of the freehold where King Nicholas the Red holds court. The house stands over his goldsmith shop and freeholders are always welcome. Several Ash courtiers working as servants in the house keep it open and ready in case of emergencies, with a pot of stew kept warm on the hearth. Beyond the house in the mortal world is a Hollow as fine as Hampton Court. The Hollow itself was built by the Blood Court; it is protected by the Golden Knights and it serves as a final line of defense or sanctuary when danger threatens.

What is to Come

In the last years of Queen Elizabeth's reign the Rose Courts finally achieve peace and stability. Queen Diane Little takes the freehold's crown in 1592 for the Blood Court and creates a delicate balance of advisers from each of the Courts. That is not to say that her reign is without incident. There are continually challengers for the crown from within the Blood Court. In 1595 Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* premiers and the presentation of Titania is clearly intended as a mockery of Queen Diane. In spite of the opposition, the years of Queen Diane's reign see Edmund Spenser's *The Fairy Queene* published which, along with many other fantastical works of art, becomes part of the mortal subconscious.

While the Freehold prospers, the strict Calvinist belief in predestination inspires a new movement in the Ash Court. The Oracles believe that everything is predestined: the True Fae are puppet masters pulling the strings of the world and that all changelings were allowed to escape simply because that is what the story demands of the Fae. They read signs in everything around them, attempting to read the overarching tale that the Wyrd spins out as the story of their lives. Many accuse them of being loyalists or madmen — and some Oracles do go mad. In 1598, 17 Oracles break their oaths to the Ash Court and join the crew of a ship that is a member of the Company of Merchant Adventurers of London. There is very little fanfare or reason given for their departure, but gossip claims they are going to ensorcell the rest of the ship's crew and sail it into the Hedge. Others think that the constant motion and isolation of a sea voyage ensure that the Huntsmen and True Fae will never catch them, or even that they are going to start a new freehold at sea.

As trade expands across the globe, colonies are established in the New World and criminals are deported to foreign shores, the perception of the common people begins to rapidly expand. Scientific developments push the boundaries as well, and all of the rapid changes of the Renaissance begin to affect Arcadia and the Hedge. New kiths never seen in London before begin to appear at the turn of the century — playing out the stories and archetypes of the natives in the New World or the Ottoman Empire. Trods began to form through the Hedge as trade routes are established. These long routes are exceptionally dangerous, but allow adventurous changelings to quickly travel the entire world.

As the most populous Court in the freehold, Ash courtiers have given a great deal of thought and discussion to forming a fourth Court. When King James of Scotland is named as Queen Elizabeth's heir, many courtiers feel that his ascension would provide a proper foundation for the Thistle Court. After all, the rest of the freehold has a solid foundation in mortal politics. Founding a new Court is no simple feat, however, and forcing the rest of the Rose Courts to accept a new Court in the freehold could prove even more difficult.

The freehold further distances itself from mortal politics after Queen Elizabeth's death, even though some courtiers continue to maintain relationships with other powers in London. A rare few become completely subservient, working directly for the Gallows Post or other individuals. More continue in the tradition of the fae and carefully craft bargains or serve as witnesses for great events. Courtiers who are involved in such negotiations continue to find word whispered about the Man in Gray. Some even claim to have met him. It has been years since he secretly set the freehold against itself, but the years haven't changed him a whit. He still looks like a nondescript horseman with black eyes that see



too much. While some believe this is a different man taking advantage of the fame of the original Man in Gray, this time the man is carefully building connections and performing favors without asking for anything in return.

Further trouble comes in the form of the weather. While normally mild, some winters in the 17th century are bitterly cold — enough to freeze the Thames over completely. This brings the Frost Fair to London. The raucous traveling Goblin Market appears most frequently in the Netherlands but makes its way to London with the cold. It sets up shop on the frozen river in the mortal world, selling to mortals as well as fae. The hobs of the Frost Fair are slavers, and more than happy to capture as many mortals or changelings as they can. These cold snaps are generally brief, and most Fairs only last a few days before the weather turns and ice thaws. In December 1688 when the Market appears, several young Snow courtiers attack the Fair. Instead of leaving town after a few days, the weather turns brutally cold and the ice on the Thames grows 18 inches thick. The Frost Fair stubbornly remains in London for six long weeks until the freehold formally apologizes. After the incident, the hobs of the Frost Fair make it a deliberate point to capture as many mortals as possible during their sporadic visits.

As time passes and London continues to grow from the capital of a relatively small country to the heart of a global empire, the peace of Jacobean England proves only temporary. Listening to outside influences and offers of power continue to serve as dangerous catalysts. The Rose Courts have, through the force of history, heritage, and perseverance, made their freehold structure work for the Lost of London. As the freehold attempts to expand its' power throughout the empire, they frequently force monarchs of other freeholds around the world to swear allegiance to the Londontown Freehold and style their own monarch as an Emperor or Empress.

The Rose Courts: Londontown Freehold

Born in blood and civil war, the Lost of London have managed to establish a new freehold on the Story of the Houses of York and Lancaster. The civil war left an indelible mark on the mortals, and while the mortal world found peace through marriage, the Londontown freehold found stability in continuing the conflict.

The Bulwark: Pitched Battle

Open warfare between the Courts would quickly lead to the freehold's destruction, and so the conflict between them has become ritualized. At least once every season the Courts assemble and participate in pitched battle — a battle with the time, location, and terms determined in advance. To the victor goes the crown of the freehold, and the ritual serves as a Bulwark against the True Fae.

When the freehold was founded, these battles were fought with lethal intent. Though no less earnest in their desire for victory, the Courts now compete in less lethal ways — dueling champions, jousting tournaments, and even arcane battles.

The Court of Blood

The Red Lion, the Golden Court, the Court of Joy

The Blood Court has reigned victorious since Henry VII took the throne in 1485. It has won every battle for the freehold's throne. It has taken a rampant blood red lion as its primary symbol, and even courtiers who come from common origins create their own heraldic devices. The courtiers take fierce pride and joy in their accomplishments and Blood courtiers are, above all else, exceptionally accomplished at whatever they put their minds to. They are warriors, diplomats, socialites, and artists; and even the lowest of the Golden Court considers herself of higher rank than any Snow or Ash courtiers.

Joining the Court is not a simple matter. Many newly escaped Lost see the power and riches of the Court and try to join, but each prospective member must prove herself, either to the Court as a whole or to the Wyrd. The aspiring Lost must prove to be someone who will be an asset to the Court and those who are successful and wealthy manage to have an easier time being accepted into the ranks.

Once one of the Lost manages to join the Court there is a strict strata of ranking with complex rules of etiquette between courtiers. **The Nobility** are the ranking members of the Court who surround the throne. The Queen selects advisers from each faction of the Court. They are most often those who've proven themselves particularly skilled in their fields, members of prestigious Entitlements, or courtiers who are well attuned to the Court.

The **Guild of Meisters** are the wealthiest of the Court. They are tradesmen and artists in the mortal world as well as talented hedgespinners and dreamweavers. The Court carefully works to make sure that the Meisters are extremely successful. Monopolies, cronyism, price fixing, and judicious bribery are all frequent tactics used to maintain their dominance.

Perhaps most visible to the rest of the freehold are the **Golden Knights**. They are the military and tactical arm of the Blood Court, and each Knight is a force to be reckoned with no matter what her weapon of preference is. Their true strength, however, comes from training to work in concert and precisely execute complex tactical maneuvers.

Lastly, there are the **Joyeux**. These are musicians, poets, and playwrights as well as diplomats. They are well known as fierce negotiators, and each season a delegation from the Joyeux is sent to the Courts of Snow and Ash to choose the battlefield for the Bulwark ritual. Though the Golden Knights often receive the accolades for the Blood Court's victory, the Joyeux are every bit as essential to the Court's continued reign.

Blood	Mantle
•	A Blood courtier receives the Area of Expertise Merit for free.
••	Courtiers have a special connection to blood itself and gain the Goblin Vow (Blood) Merit.
•••	Courtiers excel when challenged to prove their worth and receive a +2 bonus to non-combat skills in a formal contest.
••••	The courtier embodies the Blood Court to such a degree that she gains an Approach related to how she fulfills the Court's ideals and Story.
•••••	The passion of a Blood courtier touches everyone around her. Gain the Inspiring Merit for free.

Contract of Inspiration (•–•••••)

The changeling imbues her words with inspiration, and those who hear them recited are touched by her passion and intent.

Cost: 2 Glamour

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Expression + Wyrd vs. Resolve +Wyrd

Action: Extended (1 turn per roll, target number 5 to 20)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The changeling fails to properly imbue Glamour into her words and the Wyrd lashes back on her mind, inflicting the Madness Condition.

Failure: The Contract fails, and her words are not endowed with any particular influence.

Success: The character crafts her words carefully, imbues them with inspiration, and chooses an appropriate Condition with the Storyteller's approval. For example, the St. Crispin's Day speech from Henry V might grant the Steadfast Condition, while a writing a sonnet declaring her love may inflict Swooning upon her audience. All listeners within 10 yards per dot in the Contract are affected.

The changeling may choose to imbue her words as she speaks them or prepare them in advance. If prepared in advance, anyone reciting them may convey the original intent of the author by rolling Manipulation + Expression vs. Resolve + Wyrd.

Exceptional Success: All who hear the words being recited are affected.

- **Wizened:** When writing a speech for another, the changeling achieves an exceptional success on three successes.

- **Fairest:** Fairest instinctively find the right words at the right time. She gains a +3 to her roll when imbuing her words during an impromptu performance instead of writing them in advance.

- **Beast:** Even the beasts of the land and fowls of the air are affected when a Beast speaks Inspiration-imbued words. A songbird may come to her hand, a warhorse charge more surely, or a wild falcon dive to strike out at an enemy on the field.

Catch: The changeling is imbuing her words in order to entertain her audience.

The Court of Snow

The Silver Cross, The White Rose, the Court of Resolve

The Snow Court prefers to take the long view. They have not managed to take the crown from the Blood Court once, but many of the younger courtiers loudly proclaim that it's simply because they haven't bothered to try. Whether that is true or not, they are resolved to bring the Lost into a better and more stable world. Their primary symbol is a simple, silver cross that reached the height of popularity during Bloody Queen Mary's persecutions. Snow courtiers are pragmatic and avoid attracting mortal attention. They are the common folk — the bakers, common soldiers, lady's maids, and impoverished sons of country gentlemen. They are tentatively allied with the Ash Court. Though many find it difficult to trust a Court filled with so many of the lowest class, the Ash courtiers are still Lost and many of those "lower" connections and skills they have are occasionally useful.

Joining the Snow Court is relatively easy. One of the Courtless simply has to apply to his Alderman and swear their loyalty as well as make a complete accounting of all oaths that he has sworn. A changeling who has been a member of another Court goes through a much more stringent process of questioning. Loyalties are examined, his history is picked apart, and biases determined. Once this process is complete the Court turns away none who are willing to abide by the laws of the Court and the rulings of the Council of Aldermen. The Council is the ruling body of the Court, headed by a Wyrd-appointed Lord Mayor. Each seeming elects an Alderman to join the Council and represent their interests to the Lord Mayor. Beneath the orderly surface the Snow Court finds itself in turmoil. They have influence and power, and yet they do not reign.

The Aldersmen are a secretive sect of the Court, answerable only to the Council and formally charged with maintaining the Court's security. In practice, this leads to carefully watching other members of the Court, as well as the courtiers of Blood and Ash. Some of the Aldersmen even attempt to infiltrate the other Courts to better obtain sensitive information. The Aldersmen are rumored to be gifted oneiromancers, using their craft to spy, though more than one of their enemies has simply never woken up.

The **Godsworn** is currently one of the largest factions of the Court. Its members have been connected to the Protestant cause since King Henry VIII broke from the Catholic Church. Under Queen Mary they worked to protect many clergymen from the flames. Today their long association is paying off. The Godsworn are often the first to hear word of dangers coming as gossip, and signs that warn of Huntsmen filter through the mortal population. Some courtiers have even gone so far as to enter the clergy themselves and have made names for themselves as good men. They are often the first ones mortals call upon for help when fears of witchcraft and demons are raised.

The **Warders** also have strong ties to the mortal community, serving as guardsmen for guilds, or as constables, or mercenaries. They are not Knights and make no qualms about chivalry when lives are on the line. Instead they focus on practical survival, mastering martial skills as well as the Hedge. They often ensorcell particularly skilled mortals to help them if the opportunity arises.

Snow	Mantle
•	Snow courtiers forge strong connections with others easily and receive a dot of the Allies Merit for free.
••	Courtiers have a special connection to snow itself and gain the Goblin Vow (Snow) Merit.
•••	The steely resolve of the Court guards the courtier's heart and mind. She receives the Indomitable Merit for free.
••••	The courtier embodies the Snow Court to such a degree that she gains an Approach related to how she fulfills the Court's ideals and Story.
•••••	Courtiers who fully embody the patient and sure approach of the Snow Court gain a permanent dot of Willpower.

Contract of Abjuration (•_•••••)

The changeling stands forward and twists Fate and the forces of the Wyrd to obey her and be gone.

Cost: 1 Glamour

Dice Pool: Resolve + Occult +Wyrd vs. Contract's activation successes

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The abjuration backfires and the changeling becomes unable to resist supernatural effects for the scene.

Failure: The changeling fails to banish her target's power.

Success: The changeling successfully banishes a Contract's effects.

A changeling may only abjure Contracts at the first dot. Each additional dot allows the changeling to choose one of the following enhancements:

Exorcism: The changeling may abjure an ephemeral entity (vs. Power + Resistance). All Conditions tagged by the entity within as many yards as successes rolled are resolved.

Suffer not a Witch: The changeling may abjure the effects of other creatures of the Chronicles of Darkness.

Shattered Illusions: The changeling may abjure all supernatural effects she is capable of countering within Wyrd x 10 yards. Each entity or power's resistance is rolled individually.

Fae Wards: The changeling may ward a single Wyrd x 10 yard area against any power she is capable of countering. The changeling and any who live in the warded location are exempt from the ward's effects. The abilities of other entities, or powers cast by anyone else, within or targeted at the area the ward protects, triggers its defenses with a Clash of Wills. The ward survives against as many attacks or days as successes rolled, whichever is fewer.

Exceptional Success: Allies who witness the abjuration are filled with a sense of clarity and resolve. They gain the Steadfast Condition.

- **Fairest:** The Fairest command the Wyrd with great authority. They achieve an exceptional success with three successes instead of five.
- **Ogre:** An Ogre's enemies who witness the abjuration are filled with dread, and gain the Spooked Condition.
- **Elemental:** An Elemental may manifest her primary element during the abjuration and gain a +3 as the natural elements reject the supernatural effect.

Catch: The changeling invokes a formal position of authority that is recognized by the one she is abjuring.

The Court of Ash

The Wooden Spear, The Black Rose, the Court of Hope

The Ash Court knows that it is not the nobility or the thin sliver of wealthy merchants who die or are dragged back to Arcadia when disaster strikes. It is the common people who are struggling to survive. Everyone likes to look for someone else to blame when things go wrong, and the Ash Court is often the scapegoat of choice. They are the fringe of society: Catholics, madmen, criminals, and beggars. The Courts of Blood and Snow mock and belittle them, yet there is hope and safety here as well as the power to shape the course of the entire freehold.

The Ash Court is the only Court in the freehold to actively recruit. Its members seek out the freshly escaped and bring them into the fold. While they cannot offer much in the way of material comforts or mortal power, they do offer all the benefits of a tight-knit community that looks out for its own. As such, the Ash Court is the largest in number. Ash courtiers are experts in the struggle to survive and stand united. Though few even within the Ash Court realize it, they have the power to change everything. They could put the Snow Court on the throne at will, or even seize it for themselves.

The Black Queen is secure on her throne over the Ash Court though the formal structure of the Court is quite fluid. Instead of grand titles and formal roles courtiers may aspire to, they earn duties and recognition by proving themselves capable. If the Queen finds the newest courtier has wise counsel, she takes it. If a man proves himself capable and willing to protect others, he may well find himself an Ashen Knight by acclaim. Still, there are several orders within the Court that serve their own goals. They began as motleys, but have grown beyond that original purpose.

The Court seeks allies wherever it can find them; those who find themselves treading the dangerous road of dealing with other powers are called the **Gray Wolves**. They've a long history of pledges with the Weihan Cynn, and some claim the bargains forged between them go back to ancient times. They seek out sorcerers, and protect mortal witches from the attention of those who would hunt them. Perhaps most controversially they even seek out fetches, turning them against the Huntsmen who so often try to recruit their target's mirror to their cause. The Wolves live dangerously but the power they can bring to bear is formidable — if they are willing to pay the price for it.

The **Sisterhood** was founded by five women, and it remains primarily a feminine order dedicated to studying history and regaining the ancient ways and power of the Lost. The Sisters seek out long forgotten Contracts and record the ones that are known. The original motley sought the mythical freehold of Avalon, and perhaps even found it. When the old Seasonal freehold fell, Lady Morgaine returned alone and swore herself to the Ash Court, bringing them the illusions of Air and Darkness that none in the Courts had seen before.

Finally there are the **Bootmen**, a particularly vicious faction. They are thieves, murderers, and criminals of all sorts, but they are the Ash Court's criminals. They enforce only two rules. No stealing from the Court and no snitching. Keep those two rules, and the gang will guard your back. Though the Bootmen don't require anyone to share the spoils of their illicit activities, no Ash courtier has ever starved or gone naked.

Ash	Mantle
•	Illusion comes naturally to the Ash Court and the mantle blends into the changelings' Mask, giving others a –1 penalty to identify them.
••	Courtiers have a special connection to ash itself and gain the Goblin Vow (Ashes) Merit.
•••	Courtiers are quick fingered and take 9-Again when rolling Larceny.
••••	The courtier embodies the Ash Court to such a degree that she gains an Approach related to how she fulfills the Court's ideals and story.
•••••	Ash courtiers are cunning and know how to blend into the background. They gain the Anonymity Merit at three dots for free.

Contract of Air and Darkness (•–•••••)

This Contract allows a changeling to create and manipulate illusions.

Cost: 2 Glamour

Dice Roll: Intelligence + Crafts + Wyrd (vs. Wits + Wyrd, if doubt is cast on whether the illusion is genuine)

Action: Instant

Duration: 1 Scene

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Only the changeling can see the illusion she was attempting to create, and she gains the False Memories Condition (**Vampire: The Requiem** p. 303). She believes the illusion was truly created no matter what others say.

Failure: The illusion is not created.

Success: The character successfully creates an illusion. While images of stationary objects up to size 5 are simple to create, with each dot purchased in this Contract the changeling may choose one of the following abilities to create increasingly complex illusions.

- The changeling can create illusions of animals and people that are realistic enough to be mistaken for their physical counterparts.
- The illusion can be made to move: a door swings open or a shadow passes outside the window, and the changeling can properly account for the fall of light and shadows in making the motion seem realistic.
- The changeling can layer illusions over a physical object of the same type. An old, unfashionable gown can appear as the finest velvet and silk, or a gray horse can be changed to white.
- The changeling may add his Wyrd to the size of illusion that he can control. The stories say that the sorceress Nimue created an entire castle of air in which she trapped Merlin.
- An illusion can extend to senses beyond sight, creating tastes, scents, sounds, and tactile sensations. However, a piece of illusionary bread offers no sustenance no matter how delicious it smells and tastes. When an illusion that is enhanced beyond sight ends, some telltale sign is left behind. A conjured coin leaves behind a small pile of rust, and the remains of the grand feast turns to ash and dust. In addition, even though an illusion may feel real to the touch, it is still just an illusion and cannot offer any mechanical benefit.

Exceptional Success: The illusion's duration is extended and it lasts until Sunrise.

- **Darklings**: Air and Darkness has always been particularly fond of Darklings. They gain a +3 bonus to creating illusions used to protect themselves and have access to a second catch — they pay no Glamour when using this Contract in the darkness.
- **Elementals:** An Elemental excels at creating an illusion of a non-living object. An exceptional success is achieved with 3 successes.
- **Ogres:** The changeling gains a +3 bonus to creating an illusion for the purpose of intimidating another.

Catch: The illusion is cast within the changeling's home.

Playing the Game

The Pale Horse

Terror grips London as the plague sweeps through the city. Changelings are usually resilient against mortal disease, but this time death has also come to the Hedge and is spreading through mortal dreams.

Opening Act

The bubonic plague arrives in London in the spring of 1593. Unsanitary conditions in the city makes this a fairly regular if terrifying occurrence. However, this time John Weaver is one of the first to die. As a Snow courtier, he was renowned for his oneiromantic talents. With a mixture of coercion and the offer of exceptionally high pay, the players' characters are sent to bury Mr. Weaver and seal his house and Hollow to stem the spread of the disease. While carrying out their duty they discover Mr. Weaver's notes, sightings of an incubus in the form of a pale, riderless horse in the Hedge that he had been investigating.

Pivotal Scenes

- Following the investigation Mr. Weaver had documented, the players' motley finds the remains of a carnival. It had been a bustling Goblin Market only weeks ago, and according to the notes the pale horse had been there. Now there are only burned tents and abandoned Market stalls. Deeper investigation finds a mass grave of hobgoblins among the roots of the Thorns.
- That night, the motley dreams of the pale horse. The incubus attacks, attempting to trample the characters before escaping back into the Hedge. If the incubus' attacks are successful, the changeling falls ill. The plague is being spread through dreams as well as the normal, physical vectors of the disease, thus making changelings and hobs susceptible to it.
- The motley is ill, possibly on the verge of death, but in order to stop the incubus from continuing to infect other dreamers, they cannot stop to rest. Tracking the pale horse through Hedge and Oneiros, they must do whatever it takes to destroy it before the outbreak becomes a complete pandemic. Still, even if they're successful in defeating the pale horse, an expedition to obtain a Hera Pear that can heal any disease may still be required.

Chasing Camelot

A young, Courtless knight arrives in the city declaring that he is Arthur returned and looking for the Courts of Blood, Snow, and Ash to unite and build Camelot anew.

Opening Act

Sir Arthur Caxton makes quite the impact on the Courts of the freehold when he arrives. He declares that he is The

Excalibur's Scabbard

The Scabbard is a subtle creation; it has no obvious magical properties and it appears to be well worn and water stained. It provides its bearer two benefits: Iron Stamina (• • •) as well as a single extra point of Health. This point is physically separate from the Health boxes of the bearer. It cannot be filled by damage done to the changeling, only damage done to the scabbard itself. As long as a character has the scabbard, he cannot die or be knocked unconscious.

Arthur and issues a challenge to the knights of the hold: Defeat him in single combat or join him in his quest to retake Excalibur from the Font at Gloucester. Sir Arthur carries a secret advantage — he holds Excalibur's Scabbard, which makes it exceptionally difficult for anyone to defeat him.

Pivotal Scenes

- Sir Arthur isn't the only one who would like to claim Excalibur. Each of the Courts has an interest in controlling it, since the myth declares that whoever owns it will be crowned by the Wyrd to rule the freehold.
- The quest becomes a four-way race through the Hedge, drawing the Hedge into the mimicking the legendary Arthurian quests such as the Questing Beast, the Fisher King, or the Siege of Tintagel. These challenges weed out the unworthy questers.
- Unfortunately, on arrival at the Gloucester Font it becomes apparent that Sir Arthur is a madman at best and a Loyalist at worst. The Excalibur and Avalon that he seeks exist only on the other side of the font — in Arcadia where the Lady of the Lake reigns. Sir Arthur attempts to summon her from Arcadia, and if he succeeds the Lady will attempt to take all of the changelings back with her. Preventing him from summoning her will require defeating him. Before he dies — or is about to be knocked unconscious and fears he will be killed — he begs that the scabbard be thrown into the lake. If the player characters comply, it is caught by a lady's arm before it can touch the water and the Lady then comes to take Sir Arthur's body back to Arcadia. Instead of attempting to take anyone else, she will offer a boon, possibly a token or the Faerie Favor Merit.

Seventh Sons' Sight

Though the Mask protects a changeling's true mien, some rare few have the ability to cut through the illusion. John St. Bartholomew, a seventh son of a seventh son, has arrived in London as a silversmith's apprentice. Finding the demons walking openly in the streets, he now looks to cleanse the city of the abominations.

Opening Act

In the center of the Royal Exchange, John St. Bartholomew is accompanying his master on business Unfortunately, the true miens of the players' characters catch his eye and the scene erupts into chaos as he quite publicly declares them demons and attempts to drive them away with holy symbols and prayer. A great deal of attention is garnered in the process. However, should the characters stay and defend themselves against the accusations, little heed is given to them and St. Bartholomew is treated as a madman by the other merchants. If the characters flee or have had suspicions of witchcraft cast on them in the past, it is seen as a sign of guilt and mortals will be much more likely to target them.

Pivotal Scenes

- Weeks pass, but St. Bartholomew has been busy. Freeholders notice they are being followed in the city with increasing regularity, and the specter of witchcraft is raised when rumors are spread about the characters. The rumors may be based on Contracts that were used in public, gateways opened into the Hedge, weaknesses in their backgrounds and identities, or even something as simple as the fact that they live alone.
- Though few pay much attention to the gossip, neighbors do begin to watch more carefully. The rumors can be traced back to St. Bartholomew. When he's found he is armed with a blessed, cold iron cross. Confronting the young man has the potential to devolve into violence, with several of his fellow apprentices and journeymen taking his side in the conflict.
- The affair begins to attract the attention of Huntsmen who wish to use St. Bartholomew to flush out their prey. The Church and mortal hunters also take notice of accusations of witchcraft and demons. Resolving the matter may mean sharing the truth of the existence of the Lost with St. Bartholomew, convincing the master silversmith and the clergy that he is mad and having him sent to Bethlehem Royal Hospital, or even murdering him — though such a drastic approach may well bring closer scrutiny and more hunters.





“That’s not good enough!” The painter paced. “The moment is lost, I am a fraud. Nobody will remember me. I’ll be laughed out of teahouse. Your beauty is slipping away before my eyes!”

Hanae looked at the ground, then back over her shoulder at him. “What’s different now, the light?”

He gritted his teeth. “Your kimono is in the way. Your skin is more perfect than the snowfall and I cannot see it!”

“I see.”

His student watched, sucking a candy between his teeth. A hot breeze pushed through the studio’s window. The breeze smelled of roasted fish.

“You should take it off! How else can I possible do justice to your skin?!”

Hanae looked out the window. “I cannot see the sea from this far in the city. Your window shows only another home. In this city, each window an eye with a cataract.”

The artist took the model’s kimono collar without reverence or care. It crumpled to the ground. She squinted at the far wall.

“Look at me.”

She thought about the sea, then turned and looked at him over her naked shoulder.

“You will be remembered forever. You’ll be famous!”

• • •

Hanae was neither the artist’s wife nor concubine. They shared no words of forever, or even tomorrow, and yet, as she watched him leave with another dancing girl, her heart broke into shards. The wounds burned. Her stomach felt full of blood.

“Observe him. Get close to him. Keep your heart to yourself: You’re young and he is beautiful, you must be on your guard.” The teahouse owner, her mother in all ways but by blood warned her, assigning her to study the artist and his habits.

She failed at preserving her heart, and thought its shards would kill her. But she would not fail to follow. With bare feet, she pursued the couple.

The artist, tall and beautiful with straight teeth and rare green eyes, dripped honeyed words over the girl. Words he dripped across her bare skin, her cheek, her breasts, just the night before. The couple slipped into an alley. Along the road, Hanae saw the ocean. If she followed them into the niche, sight of the ocean would be lost. Her stomach dropped and she felt sick.

She stepped into the niche nonetheless. The shards in her chest became like ice, numbing the pain. She’d live to see this through.

• • •

Last night, a storm crashed against the waves. Aoki and her seven sisters stood at the shore. Waves beat against their feet and legs; they were stripped to the waist, gripping spears. Three women bobbed up out of the deep, simming to anchored boats just off shore. Their high-pitched, short breaths that sounded a bit like hyperventilating. To Aoki, they were songs, perfect and beautiful.

“We sent out four,” the eldest of the Ama shouted to Aoki and her sisters. “I count only three!” The others counted aloud.

“I’m going in.” Aoki ran into the waves, took a full-chested breath, and dove.

Under the storm, the seas quaked. She tangled immediately with a floating body, and knew the cold flesh to be a sister.

Aoki dragged the body of her sister back to the shore. The storm ceased.

The women, the Ama, stood around their dead sister. A thick, rubbery, monstrous bladder was attached to her chest.

“What is it?” A younger girl asked.

“An egg sack,” Aoki said, cutting open the bladder and grasping a fist-sized, jelly-like egg, holding it up. “We’ll make something of this loss.” Her sisters agreed, eyes turned from the dead toward the burning lights of Edo.

• • •

“What are you doing here?” The artist pulled away from the girl; she collapsed to the ground, pale and on death’s door, black, circular marks along her arms where he had been touching her.

“I followed you,” Hanae whispered. She reached up with her free hand to wipe tears from her cheek. “To unmask and stop you.” She removed the egg from within her kimono, and he shrieked. His beautiful face peeled away, revealing the black beak and single eye that made up his real face.

“You slept with me! You seduced me!” it shrieked, backing away from the jelly-like egg.

“I did all these things. I also loved you. Now I will commit a great crime.”

The egg rolled from her hands, and she drew her sword, burying it in the artist’s chest.

“You don’t have to kill me.”

“That’s not my crime.” She dragged the sword through his belly, spilling black water and jelly to the ground. “The tragedy is that you didn’t finish my painting.”

The thing shriveled, twitching, and died. Hanae turned to help the wounded girl to her feet. “Will it be okay?” she asked, shaking.

“Of course,” Hanae said, feeling shards of ice turn into steel. “There are always more artists.”



Fallen Blossoms

Fallen blossoms do not return to branches.
–Japanese proverb

Fallen Blossoms deals with the mid-17th century in Japan, specifically the 1640s in the capital city Edo (now Tokyo). Tokugawa Iemitsu is shogun over the nation. This is not only a very dense time period, with many important events taking place in a short period of time, but it's coming just on the heels of another very important time period. This is true of many times, in many places. However, the intended reader isn't likely Japanese, or deeply familiar with Japanese culture and history. We can't hope to provide that kind of education in 20 or so pages, particularly when we're also talking about monster hunters. Instead of trying to do that, we're going to add some cultural and linguistic points that help to put the setting into better context. At the end of the day, the expectation isn't that you'll be playing period-perfect academic pieces. In fact, trying to do so would be an undertaking that'd be challenging in even a 500-page book dedicated to the topic, so a little flair and authenticity will go a long way. We'll sidebar and call out some of these points, which will help to make the experience better and give you some great jumping-off points for your own research and development.

In some places, we have to weigh modern concepts and words with classic ideas. For example, the term "bushido" is a modern invention, coined to encompass numerous period philosophical treatises. The people of the time likely did not use the term — or if they did, it was in passing, less than a formal, widely recognized noun. However, it's good shorthand for people in a different part of the world, playing an adventure game about monster hunters in the era.

It's worth just putting it out there: We're painting with broad brushstrokes here. We don't have much space to deal with the individuals, so instead we're focusing on common themes in period fiction and historical works.

Introduction

Beginnings are always toothsome events. Tokugawa Ieyasu's ascension to power was like the coming of the sun itself, a thing both glorious and terrible. Hundreds died, but only so that generations could live in radiance.

And such radiance it is. United at last, Nippon strengthens with each passing day. No longer do her daimyos squabble among themselves like starved wolves. Now, they move in simpatico with the new shogun's edicts, their armies yoked to his command, their voices married to his wisdom. Where once a vast darkness held dominion, light is taking hold. But spring has not entirely arrived. There is still much to do.

The hunters of Tokugawa wear as many skins as their prey. They are men and women, old and young, samurai and *hinin*. Those who can fight patrol the forests and the nightmare-haunted alleyways, those who cannot chase secrets across libraries and grimoires of human leather. Alone of Nippon's citizens, the hunters know that the myths of the *yokai* — the saw-toothed *kappa*, the blood drinker, the skin-stealing homunculi — are real. They know what happens to lost children, what seethes in disquiet graves, what monsters sometimes wander the markets of Edo. And they know these things must die for Nippon to thrive.

Growling Legends in the Bones of the Dead

Hunter: The Vigil is a game about human defiance, about breakable little mortals who've learned enough — been hurt enough — to snarl back at the monsters of the night. *Fallen Blossoms* explores what happens when that frenzied valor is stitched together with nationalism and the subsumption of the individual.

Like their modern-day counterparts, the hunters of the Edo period keep a lonely vigil. Many are paid well, but neither song nor history books will ever cradle their names, a decree passed down by the shogun himself. For to protect Japan, they must guard her innocence as well. The people can never learn about what the hunters face in the lightless places beneath the capital, the crawling things with nightmare laughs. Progress cannot happen while terror rules.

But that is of little consequence. These hunters were never meant for glory. They are merely weapons. Tools. Embers in the wildfire that will burn the cold, black winter to ash. Their stories will not survive them, but their legacy will outlive legend. Tokugawa will rise and Nippon will be the envy of the world. Their deaths, brief and red and always violent, will see to it, whether they like it or not.

NIPPON, NIHON, JAPAN

The nation most Westerners call Japan has gone by many names over the centuries. Japan is an exonym that morphed out of interpretations of Chinese and Malay words. Nihon is the common modern usage, but modern Japanese people use Japan interchangeably. This reflects a shift in pronunciation from the "p" to "h" sounds over the years. Technically, the Nippon pronunciation is still acceptable, but not frequently used. For our purposes, we're using Nippon for consistency. The name for Japan has a complicated and very interesting history, but it's way too complex to address here in suitable depth. Functionally, the name means "sunrise", since from China, the sun rises from Japan's direction. This is where we get the commonly known phrase, "Land of the Rising Sun."

Theme

The central theme in *Fallen Blossoms* is "the changing of the seasons," a transitional phase that is as much defined by endings as it is by beginnings. Spring, for example, is always beautiful. A time of growth. Rebirth. But the act of creation demands a gross expenditure of energy, which demands ravenous consumption. During spring, things eat. Carnivores gorge themselves on starved prey animals, even as the once-meek claw each other apart for space and food and the right to mate. What results from this orgiastic display of gluttony is invariably wondrous — a world teeming with life and vigor. But the process itself? Bloody to no end.

Similarly, *Fallen Blossoms* is a giddy, savage celebration of duty. The hunters who march under the mandate of the Tokugawa shogunate know that their responsibilities will have them ever dancing on the knife-edge of death, but it is all for the glory of something bigger than them and anything their bloodlines will ever be capable of. Some embrace this ideology eagerly, throwing themselves into fray with shrieking abandon, convinced their demise will count for something. Others merely pretend the same. In this time of rejuvenation and civic pride, doubt is problematic. Everyone is expected to put country first and his own life second. For the samurai, it is a question of honor. For everyone else, it is a quest for honor. On paper, the logic of self-sacrifice is inescapable. What is one person next to an empire that will last for eternity? Why would anyone reject such a divine task?

For love, some will whisper. For family, for hate, for the biological imperative to survive. For as many reasons as there are stars in the sky, they will declare, but never, ever too loudly.

HININ

The term *hinin* appears a few times throughout this piece. This is a term which refers to an "undesirable" class, including entertainers, cleaners, guardsmen, vagrants, and former convicts. They're not inherently criminal, or even distinctly segregated, but are seen as inferior people. They were the bottom of a hierarchy containing (in rough order) warriors, farmers, artisans, merchants, and "nonpersons."

Mood

Fistfuls of bacchanalian violence, a cup of righteous zealotry, internalized conflict, and class-based prejudice for taste — these are some of the emotions that flavor *Fallen Blossoms*. The most prevalent mood, however, is want. Desire. Hunger that transcends flesh and animal impulse. To be a hunter, one whose career persists past that first night of terror, the neonate must crave something so badly that it becomes embedded in her dreams and her sinews, until it is banging through her veins like a second pulse.

It doesn't even need to be a large thing. Some hunters yearn only for enough to sustain themselves through the next winter. Regardless of the source, this motivation must ultimately be strong enough to propel the hunter through the thickest of horrors.

Such volcanic hunger isn't without its pleasures. Fulfillment awaits at the opposite end of appetite, carnal and rich as a mouthful of warm stew. The victorious hunter

will have access to a smorgasbord of rewards, both tangible and not: riches, the shogun's favor, the merchants' jealous worship, or the awe of his peers. *Fallen Blossoms* is as much about the joy of the kill as it is about the hunt itself.

But this amount of wanting can be dangerous too. What happens when someone is kept from the object of his lust? What happens when it is submitted instead to someone of a higher ranking, someone of more noble birth? Will the victim grit his teeth and tolerate the affront, or will he seethe and plot vengeance? Even the tautest bonds of camaraderie will fray when contesting desires are put in opposition. Hunger can set even lovers on one another's flesh, after all.

How We Arrived Here

After the Sekigahara Campaign, Tokugawa Ieyasu became shogun over Nippon, claiming Edo as his base. Thus started the Tokugawa Shogunate, the last shogunate. This marked the beginning of the Edo Jidai. This is a time for isolationism, for art, and for the growth of Japanese culture. During this period, Nippon grew substantially in wealth and power.

As part of this effort, Tokugawa eradicated many *daimyo* houses across Nippon. Tokugawa claimed power over the emperor, the court, all the daimyo, and all religious orders. This included expelling Christianity and cutting out Western influence.

In *Fallen Blossoms*, the characters are hunters on the Vigil. Some work for the shogunate, as supernatural forces influence many of the daimyo houses. Some are independent, trying to rid Japan of threats. This is not a grim approach to **Hunter: The Vigil**; this is a new beginning and a glorious time to be on the hunt.

We're on the rise of the Tokugawa Shogunate. Welcome to the Edo Period. This story centers on Edo. But you can use this material to touch on all of the unified Nippon.

DAIMYO

The daimyo were feudal lords, which long controlled Nippon. With Tokugawa's ascension, he formally codified nearly 200 daimyo houses. These houses were formalized depending on rice production. If a house produced a certain amount (50,000 bushels, roughly), they became daimyo. In the Edo Jidai, there were three main classifications of daimyo: those *shinpan* who were related to the Tokugawa, the *fudai* who were allies with the Tokugawa during the unification, and *tozuma* who were not allied with the Tokugawa before unification.

The Veil of Tonight

In the 1640s, Nippon stands unified. Tokugawa Ieyasu's grandson, Iemitsu, held power. In 1630, he formally expelled almost all Europeans from the nation. He carried forward his grandfather's lockdown of the nation, and tightened immense restrictions on trade. Notably, he executed Europeans who came to convince him to open his borders. This focus on an internalized nation made for a time of aggressive change. With laws requiring samurai and daimyo to frequently travel to and from Edo, business and populations boomed to accommodate. As the samurai class lost its weight as a military class, the samurai had to find other things to pass their time and validate their existences. New cultural standards for behavior and living meant cultural scholars and teachers were in great demand.

It was a very busy time. Despite removing outside influences, everyone was learning, adapting, and opening up to new — and distinctly Japanese — possibilities. Entertainment became ever-present, and new art forms could quickly develop and spread wide. This level of diversion meant the monsters of the Edo Jidai had easy pickings; the people just weren't as concerned about the old superstitions. This was doubly so, thanks to the Tokugawa Shogunate's focus on secular, Neo-Confucian thinking. Rationalism tried to move past the spirits and monsters, rejecting the idea of a deeper world. Cultural attention was on the *ukiyo*, the middle class. Merchants and artisans, while at the bottom of the cultural hierarchy, were finding immense wealth, fame, and power in this period. Tokugawa's focus on the trappings of this new culture meant a demand for art, fashion, and lavish homes.

Customs and Culture

Edo was not only heavily populated, but with Tokugawa's rise to power, Edo's population was still growing rapidly, with no end in sight. While it would be nearly 80 years before it reached 1,000,000 citizens, the city had an immense, constant influx of new residents. For perspective on how quickly it grew, in 1600 CE, Edo had roughly 60,000 citizens. Within 120 years, it would reach 1,000,000. With this massive growth came massive cultural change and development.

To manage the blossoming population, Tokugawa enforced strict caste roles among the people. These roles subdivided the people, and while they coexisted to form a nation, each class evolved its own unique customs, entertainment, and economy. It was a time of growth, development, and new thinking in all strata of society.

Neo-Confucianism

Tokugawa's guiding philosophy was Neo-Confucianism, blended into the existing Buddhist and Shinto cultures. At its core, Tokugawa pushed Nippon's Buddhism and Shinto practices toward more secular activity, eschewing superstition and spiritualism, while holding on to local ritual. This was all a way to control through homogeneity and unification.

WAKASHUDO

Wakashudo — *shudo* for short — refers to a common practice amongst samurai and daimyo, wherein the noble would take on a young male lover. This was a very common practice; often *not* practicing *shudo* would be looked upon as strange, since it was thought to promote civility and polite culture. Tokugawa Iemitsu was well known to have practiced *shudo*. Commonly, the lover was but an adolescent during the relationship, and as the youth grew into adulthood, the relationship would become platonic. Unlike in some other cultures that promoted pederasty, the young man was expected to initiate the relationship. Most records suggest these relationships typically went from about age 13 to 18 for the younger partner. This by no means limited samurai from carrying on relationships and marrying women. However, in this period, *shudo* was on a slow decline as the samurai caste lost its past prominence.

While historically accurate, *shudo* could be a complex issue for some players. If it's likely to come up in your chronicle, discuss boundaries with your players, and find out what they're comfortable exploring.

Philosophically, Neo-Confucianism taught that all things could be understood with human reason. Harmony between the self and one's self's surroundings was a constant ideal. This flew in the face of Buddhist teachings, which posited that reality is an illusion and distraction. Buddhism taught that meditation, wisdom, and insight could help one achieve understanding, whereas logic and rational thinking was favored by Neo-Confucianism.

This went further, in both establishing and maintaining that logic and reason would have the individual submit with the utmost deference to parents, ancestors, and elders. Deference and respect flowed upward, with lower classes prostrating themselves to their superiors. This was more than law; it was considered of the utmost virtue. Since samurai were at the top of this social hierarchy, they were also its most ardent students and scholars.

Bushido — "the way of the warrior" — grew out of Neo-Confucian thinking. Many samurai attempted to codify a way of behavior, a way of philosophy, a way of honor, and a way of militarism for their warrior noble caste. The relative peace of the early Edo Jidai gave the samurai the time to consider their lot. Multiple samurai wrote extensively on the topic; there are literally numerous books on the concept. Since this was not a unified way of thinking, these works often disagree. This was not a class of people deciding to craft a holistic answer to their problems, this was a class of people with free time on their hands, each in their own rooms, penning similarly minded works. It's less important to define a single "bushido," than it is to acknowledge that in this period it was a popular topic on the minds of samurai. Also, this did not come from nowhere. Many of these writings pulled heavily from Sengoku Jidai philosophy; indeed, many Edo Jidai samurai claimed their works had great, ancient heritages.

Many of these writings favored certain, popular ideas:

- Samurai lived and died on honor and loyalty, detachment, calmness, politeness, justice, and martial arts mastery.
- Pure devotion was essential. To some, this meant to the shogunate. To some, this meant to the daimyo. To some, this meant to the Emperor.
- Recognizing divinity in Nippon, and its people.
- Action was essential and should be performed without hesitation, regardless of potential success or failure.
- If a samurai not could uphold his role, *seppuku* was the honorable alternative.
- A good death, in battle or by *seppuku*, was essential.
- A samurai must embrace temporal rewards and value; since his role is to fight and kill, he was denied a reward in any afterlife.

Again, these ideas were not part of a monolith, but were simply popular expressions in the time. Other samurai may have directly opposed these ideas in their philosophizing.

Those few monsters who forced or tricked their ways into influence with the daimyo managed to abuse the fidelity required of bushido. A clever fiend could force a samurai into suicidal service with relative ease, and with limited questioning. This abuse led to some samurai to stand up and take arms. They were quickly felled.

Chonindo, "the way of the townsperson," likewise grew out of this philosophy. It's not received as much attention, mostly because it was developed by working-class people, for working-class people. Samurai had wealth, and thus their words could be spread wider, and were better preserved. On the surface, the philosophy shared many values with bushido, such as self-sacrifice and utter fealty. However, it also highly favored craftsmanship and study, encouraging the farmers, artisans, and merchants to master their trades and become the absolute best they could be within their stated roles. This became important as Nippon urbanized; farmers produced more, and the working class became more and more able to practice and consider their work beyond immediate needs. This philosophy brought about a focus on fashion, trends, and attention to expertise. This emphasis bred a new attention to celebrity and name recognition among artisans and entertainers in the period.



SAKOKU: THE LOCKED NATION

In the past generation, the Tokugawa Shogunate forced out almost all outside trade. This law was called *sakoku,* "locked nation," and prohibited leaving or entering Nippon under pain of death. There existed few exceptions; the Dutch East India Company was one, allowed highly restricted trade by way of Dejima, an artificial island off the coast of Nagasaki. This limitation was largely for fear that the Dutch would attempt to spread their religion. Nippon traded silver and copper to the Dutch. Until 1639, the Portuguese were allowed trading through Dejima. After they were expelled, only Dutch and Chinese traders were granted the privilege.

Additionally, Tokugawa Iemitsu offered remarkable rewards to anyone able to root out and provide evidence of foreigners attempting to spread their religions. Even with the very few ships allowed access, *sakoku* required inspectors to meticulously search for evidence of Catholics aboard trade vessels.

The Highways and the Sankin-Kotai

To secure his power, Tokugawa commissioned five highways (the Gokaido) across the nation, centering on *Nipponbashi,* "the Japan Bridge," in order to facilitate his policy of *sankin-kotai*. *Sankin-kotai* required the daimyo to alternate residences in their homelands and in Edo. For one year, a daimyo kept a lavish home in Edo, under the shogunate. In alternating years, he would return home to rule, and his wife and heir would be kept hostage in Edo. Maintaining two elaborate estates crippled the daimyo economically, and gave the shogun leverage to keep the daimyo from waging war. Travel almost always occurred with an entourage, and with an elaborate procession. For all daimyo, this meant additional expense. For many, it meant arduous, long periods of travel.

Edo was not only populous, but significantly so. Nippon, and Edo specifically, was disproportionately urban compared to the rest of the world. The *sankin-kotai* all but demanded this, as roughly half the daimyo resided in Edo at any given time. This built great demand for food and services.

Yoshiwara: The Red Light District

Tokugawa formally established districts where sex work would be legal in Kyoto, Osaka, and Edo. The assumed idea was that the wealthy would be too busy to machinate if they were spending their money in these districts. For some time, this proved quite true. Edo's district, Yoshiwara, stood near Nipponbashi. This meant it was in a prime location for all those coming in or out on the Gokaido. Money from all over Nippon passed through Yoshiwara, and made it one of the most popular spots in Edo.

These districts, Yoshiwara in specific, were not exclusively sex work dens. They were all-encompassing entertainment centers, with kabuki shows, painters, comedians, tea shops, dancing, wrestling, gambling, and other outlets. Sex work was a primary draw thanks to its exclusivity. Even within the field of sex work, Yoshiwara offered extensive variety in services. Men and women of all ages would work for all manner of prices. Some, like the *oiran*, were primarily entertainers and arbiters of fashion; they set the styles for Edo, but also served as high-price sex workers.

This range also brought with it a range of willingness, empowerment, and living wages. Many Yoshiwara sex workers worked the district to pay off cumbersome, insurmountable debts. Some hoped for clients to pay off their debts and marry them or take them as concubines — both were accepted practices. Others were recognized as workers in a skilled trade, and were compensated accordingly. This variety spanned gender as well, as young men were commonplace in the Yoshiwara sex trade, and many women worked through a series of roles over their lifetimes.

While it's easy to look at Yoshiwara as a place of exploitation — and in many ways it was — it also offered strange and unique opportunities for equality. The caste system existed in Yoshiwara just as in the rest of Edo, but class took a supporting role to money. Poor samurai would be shown the door, whereas wealthy farmers could expect treatment worthy of the daimyo. Strict sumptuary law prevented commoners from displays of luxury and wealth. Yoshiwara allowed wealthy commoners to skirt those limitations. This was a place where a lower-class woman could sometimes attain recognition, fame, wealth, and power beyond her station. Additionally, samurai were expected to check their weapons; this was one major, equalizing factor.

Yoshiwara was not only popular, it was essential. Fashion and art trends came from Yoshiwara, and spread outward. While heavily regulated, Yoshiwara was a deeply influential part of Edo's

ON GENDER

Modern, western concepts of gender and sexuality don't fit nicely with Edo's culture. As noted before, male samurai abundantly found romantic relationships with their students. In kabuki, many male actors were popular as sex workers as well, catering to men and women. While the idea of familial duty was generally heteronormative, relationships that modern Westerners would call homosexual were commonplace and recognized as part of the culture. These relationships usually existed in addition to child-bearing relationships, but not always.

culture. It was a hotbed of what was called *ukiyo*, or "the floating world." This concept referred to urban life in the Edo Jidai.

For many obvious reasons, Yoshiwara was home to numerous monsters of all stripes. Per capita, it housed more demons, vampires, and *yokai* than anywhere else in Nippon by a significant margin. While this meant victimization was not uncommon, mostly it was a place where creatures of darkness could go unnoticed in the crowds and in the sheer variety. In Yoshiwara, not everyone dressed and acted the same, so it was okay to be a little odd. The Bijin dominated in this field; they managed the flood carefully, choosing their battles well and minimizing damages.

Caste System

With the beginning of the Edo Jidai in 1603, Tokugawa instated a formal caste system called the Four Divisions of Society (*shinokosho*). While the system recognized four formal castes, other classes existed as outsiders to that system, and were largely ostracized. As well, Buddhist and Shinto priests were excluded from this hierarchy. The daimyo held station above the samurai class, and the Tokugawa government and the emperor were above the daimyo. However, this caste system established order, gave social roles, and afforded privileges and responsibilities.

The *shinokosho* was truly a caste system, not a class system, since members inherited their roles. An artisan's child is an artisan. In some circumstances, a member of one caste could adopt a new caste. While uncommon, this was accepted, recognized practice. *Eta* were the one exception to this practice; *eta* could never leave their caste.

The castes each had regimented districts where they could live. While Nippon was possessed of many farmers, Edo specifically had a disproportionate population of artisans, in order to facilitate the lavish lifestyles of the government and the samurai class. Samurai made up nearly a tenth of Nippon, however Edo had a markedly high number — nearly half of all samurai at any given time — thanks to the *sankin-kotai*.

Below the samurai, the other castes were disallowed lavish displays of wealth and station. Much of the arts and culture around the lower classes grew around trying to skirt this limitation and establish forms of commoner adornment.

The monsters of the Edo Jidai largely clung to caste distinctions. Some monsters terrorized the samurai class, some the farmers, some artisans, and some merchants. This was partly due to the forced geographic separation, but also out of predilections and preferences. A vampire who prefers to feast in luxury would cling to the nobility, keeping her far away from the concerns of peasants. A drowned ghoul terrorizing the farmers would likely never run afoul of a samurai. To those on the Vigil, this meant glaring blind spots in some places. Hunters of the samurai-class primarily deal with monsters that assail their caste, and may be completely unaware of other monsters, outside *yokai* tales they hear in passing.

Samurai were the highest recognized class. Samurai were the only people of Edo allowed to carry weapons; swords were largely a symbol of station in the Edo Jidai, as the nation was no longer at war. Samurai were afforded great deference; all the lower castes were obligated to bow at a samurai's passing.

A member of the samurai class had the right to draw sword and strike a commoner who affronted her honor, so long as it was an immediate response, not a punishment for past grievance. This additionally only permitted a single, "defensive" strike, not further assault. However, this practice wasn't highly common, since legitimate abuse of the right resulted in the samurai's dishonorable death, disbanding and debasing his house and family's station. This particular law carried with it much complexity; for example, traveling samurai had to be careful not to abuse the law. Commoners knew this, so some overstepped and goaded samurai to act. The commoner would simply protect herself, then declare that the samurai abused his station.

While samurai would accompany a daimyo as guards to and from Edo in respect of the *sankin-kotai*, they were largely just a noble class in this period. Unified Nippon was not at war, so the traditional samurai role faded into obscurity. As noted, many samurai became *ronin* in this period. While tradition dictated a masterless samurai should commit *seppuku*, this was hardly a universal practice.

Samurai families did make up most of the "noble class", but samurai were not wealthy as a rule. Many were. However, many samurai were destitute. Prior to the Edo Jidai, the daimyo created wealth through war. Some were more fortunate than others. But once the Tokugawa Shogunate begun, the daimyo existed purely on tax revenue, which was more lucrative in some places than others. Unsuccessful daimyo meant underpaid samurai. Some samurai found their mounting expenses oppressively burdensome; the culture and decorum shifts required increasing lavishness to maintain public

WEAPONRY

As noted, samurai were the only people able to carry swords, and these katana became symbolic of their station. However, by this period, the Japanese were highly accustomed to firearm use. They had regularly used black powder weapons for centuries previous, and European-style firearms played an integral role both in Oda Nobunaga's instrumental campaign, and in Tokugawa's closing battles for unification. During the unification, guns were more common than in any other nation in the world. This trend is mostly echoed in those on the Vigil. However, for urban hunters, discretion is simply too important, so they favor simple, concealable weapons, such as the *tonto*. As well, after the *sakoku* laws passed, firearm manufacture and usage dwindled dramatically since demand simply was not there.



WOMEN OF EDO

In this period, lower-class women worked extensively. Many women would tend to home duties before working a full day in the fields. Lower-class women were rather empowered, and divorce was a relatively commonplace affair. Among the nobility, women mostly managed their massive and complex household affairs. However, if a head of household died, his wife would take up leadership of the family. Women could be samurai, but could only travel with men accompanying them. To account for differences in body masses, women fighters often used *naginata* — bladed polearms — instead of katana. They also often excelled as archers.

etiquette. For many samurai, these fashions and expectations exceeded their incomes. Tokugawa also prohibited samurai from shifting from one daimyo to another. All of this led to an increase in *ronin*, often working for hire to whoever could pay.

Samurai life also became rather boring in this period. Without war to keep them busy, samurai cultivated other skills, such as flower arrangement, poetry, and calligraphy.

The samurai mostly dealt with sorcerers, witches, and demons attempting to edge into nobility. Multiple daimyo had nefarious advisors who would depose all but the most ignorant and lazy samurai. Among the samurai, some actively took up the Vigil against these dark influences.

Farmers produced food, which was essential for the growing Edo. As the population boomed, food demand increased accordingly. In political terms, farmers produced rice, which was the metric for determining which houses were daimyo. Thus, farmers not only created essential food and tax revenue, but were directly responsible for nobility status.

Edo specifically had fewer farmers than the surrounding countryside. The city had a glut of artisans to support the massive abundance of visiting daimyo and samurai. However, farmers were still a significant portion of the population.

Unlike other parts of the world, farmers in the Edo Jidai typically owned their own land. They paid taxes to the daimyo, but owned their property. Their communities were largely autonomous and tight-knit, establishing tightly held customs. The peasantry would hold community-wide festivals, generally tied to the seasons. This strong sense of place and identity meant that even relatively successful peasants would remain peasants, because their families were strongly associated with their farmlands. But as farming advanced, some farmers began amassing wealth, as they made more than just enough to support their communities and their tax burdens. Wealth meant some farmers could lend money to the less fortunate, and this led to trends of farmers taking over ownership of others' land. Some farmers became essentially smaller, unofficial daimyo because of this.

Mostly due to their generally rural lives, werewolves were common problems for the farmer caste. Farmers also ran afoul of countless folk monsters, such as *kappa*, or the dreaded Gashadokuro. Most farmers who took up the Vigil remain disorganized, simply using folk wisdom to force back the darkness. A few such farmers make names for themselves, traveling from village to village, solving problems and making meager livings.

Artisans, like farmers, produced. This gave them value. However, they produced non-essential things, thus were below farmers in the social strata. Their work specifically benefited the daimyo and the samurai class. This built a cyclical relationship. The farmers provided taxes, which went to the daimyo, which in turn paid for the artisans.

Because of the *sakoku* law, Nippon drew inward in its culture. This offered a unique opportunity for the artisan caste, as they were the arbiters and deliverers of culture. They created the art. They mastered the tea ceremony. They crafted porcelain. Rinpa art out of Kyoto was a new and rapidly growing trend. Artisans provided silks, prints, lacquers, embroidery, and sculpture as well.

Artisans had influence and power in their own right, but what drew monsters was their access; artisans touched every aspect of life in Edo. Every monster wants something or someone, and an artisan is how to get there. From greedy vampires to monstrous fairies looking for just the right abductee, the artisan caste was a great place to start the hunt.

Merchants were considered lower than even the artisans. They were the lowest recognized class. While they were not *eta*, the truly undesirable, they had very few social advantages within the culture.

The *sakoku* law limited outside trade dramatically, but savvy merchants built efficient supply chains from Nagasaki to Edo in order to accommodate demand for fashion and outside luxuries. The nobility had a lucrative desire for Ming Dynasty art and literature. While the Dutch traders only had very limited access to trade, this area was highly profitable for the Dutch, and in this specific period profits were on the upswing. This, and the many expensive shifts in trends gave some merchants remarkable wealth and (while none in the nobility would ever admit it) power.

These trade routes enabled merchants to facilitate the spread of education and culture. *Rangaku*, "Dutch Studies," included the sciences, medicine, geography, art, and linguistics. These ideas spread through the people thanks to the traders.

As merchants became wealthier and wealthier, the artisan caste began catering to their needs, not just those of the daimyo and samurai. The *ukiyo-e* style of wood block prints and paintings was mostly marketed to the merchant caste. While *ukiyo-e* was a new and growing art (and not yet widely recognized as a cohesive form), in the next couple of decades, the style would take off and become a dominant, lasting entertainment form. The art existed at this point, but was largely informal. Later artists would garner wide-reaching celebrity status.

KEGARE

Kegare is a form of defilement, which is an important concept to Shinto practitioners. It's not a moral defilement, but a natural force, and it's a thing everyone experienced from time to time. It affects not only the person carrying the *kegare*, but her surroundings and community. It comes from contact with death, childbirth, menstruation, disease, and other "unclean" activities. For most, it can be removed with ritual cleansings or purification. However, the *eta* were considered irrevocably stained, and their families bore the taint.

As the merchant class rose, they even began lending money to the daimyo. In these cases, merchants gained immense de-facto power.

Eta were the lowest social class. While they were ethnically *Nipponjin* (Japanese), they were less than citizens, and received few to no rights within the social order. The *eta* were considered so low, samurai could kill them without repercussion. They were relegated to the squalor of *eta* settlements, and were disallowed from as much as touching non-*eta* citizens. If such contact occurred, the non-*eta* would need to undergo purification to shed the *kegare* passed between the two. *Eta* status mostly came from hereditary occupations; families with histories as leatherworkers and funeral workers would become *eta*. Likewise, executioners, butchers, and other "unclean" positions would lead to *eta* status.

Prior to the Edo Jidai, *eta* had some degree of recognized value. Leather was in demand during wartime. After the unification, that need fell to near nonexistence. With this, the *eta* fell in cultural worth.

Hinin were another outcast class, which mostly consisted of convicts and vagrants. They would often work as guards or street cleaners. They share a similar stigma with the *eta*.

Others included geisha and entertainers, who largely existed outside of the social order, or more appropriately, thrived on the social order, but not as part of it. Kabuki became a popular urban entertainment. In 1629, women were barred from kabuki performances because it was considered too erotic and a public disturbance. However, men took over all roles — crossdressing to portray women — and the form became a working-class staple. Despite all-male casts, kabuki performances remained erotic, and often became rowdy, resulting in rioting. The shogunate briefly (in the current time period) banned both crossdressing roles and young male roles (which were also seen as highly erotic). As a form, kabuki was still developing, and had yet to standardize many of its lasting tropes and story formats.

Amongst the entertainers, the Bijin prowled for monstrosities. They rooted out the deadly and the macabre, from their positions of high access but low attention. At times, performers saw every single citizen of Edo, so what better place to hold a Vigil over the city? The undesirable classes fell prey to both the lowest and the greatest of monsters, which they were used to in society at large. Vampiric rat kings feast on those easily forgotten, as do the demons amongst the nobility.

Priests and Monks stood similarly outside the four castes. Buddhism was strongly tied with the military power of Nippon prior to the unification. As with the samurai, this influence waned as the nation unified and came to peace. This was doubly so as Tokugawa's Neo-Confucian philosophy fought to diminish supernatural thinking, and focus instead on the rational and physical.

Buddhism and Shinto fused significantly during this era, which was a shift called *shinbutsu-shugo*. People revered both *kami* and Buddha, and the two became entrenched as cultural elements, even among the areligious. The two ideas were still separate, but practiced by the same people. Note that the two coexisted in various degrees for centuries past; the degree just shifted as their roles and prominence changed.

The Vigil

Prior to the unification, most hunters were disorganized, or no more organized than small, isolated cells. Around the time of Nobunaga's campaign, a scant few began coalescing into larger cells, which became compacts and conspiracies over the coming decades.

Some of the Western conspiracies featured in **Hunter: The Vigil** do have limited representation in Edo. Most of the compacts don't exist during this period, and if they do, they have no representation within Edo. The vast majority of organized hunters hail from one of Edo's own groups.

WESTERN CONTACT

Realistically, Japan had very limited contact with the rest of the world, even before trade routes forcibly closed. We give some attention to Western conspiracies here, less because we want to give them disproportionate representation, more to offer diverse options for players and there's only so much space to offer new options. To put it in perspective, the combined Western hunter population numbers maybe a dozen members, probably less. This is amidst a rapidly growing population — within a century, Edo would have one million inhabitants. Some of these groups, like the Aegis Kai Doru, have entrenched and mostly "gone native," primarily consisting of Japanese members. These groups boast more significant populations.



Independent Hunters

As with much of the world, most hunters are informally so; they're simply people who have chosen to make a better world, to not close their eyes, to take up the Vigil.

Compacts

The **Ama-san** come from a tradition of women pearl divers. They primarily fight off the monsters of the deep, preventing them from coming ashore and wreaking havoc, or devastating the fishing communities.

The **Azusa Miko**, women bow shamans, use ancient cleansing rituals and literal bows to hunt down and destroy monsters hiding among priests, shamans, and other religious practitioners. They consider themselves in service to the dead and to the living, not the Emperor or the gods. They live outside the caste system for good or for ill.

The **Bijin** come from the artisan caste, where they see the highest and lowest of monstrosity. They help shepherd the less fortunate away from those that would prey on them, and they police some of the terrifying things which try to seize control of the noble class. They're arguably the largest hunter group in Edo, but mostly because they have numerous "satellite members" who participate unknowingly in occasional hunts. They still have an impressive informed membership, because thanks to the density of monsters in the artisan districts, it's nigh impossible to avoid noticing them once you've seen evidence of their existence.

Conspiracies

The **Lucifuge** currently has two representatives in Nippon, specifically investigating the Otodo. While they don't avoid a hunt if it falls in their laps, their primary directive is to find out just what ties the two families share. The two have split up, and each joined with local cells. They maintain limited contact. They've yet to make formal contact with the Otodo, and are currently trying to remain inconspicuous in their agenda.

The **Aegis Kai Doru** are somewhat common in Edo, as a group from Portugal established themselves in the 1550s. With the exception of one mentor figure, the entire Aegis consists of locals converted to the cause. Japan has a long-standing history with powerful relics; many empowered items pepper the countryside.

Some members seek the Three Sacred Treasures. The organization spreads rumors that the items could bring an end to wicked sorceries in the right hands. Some believe the Aegis has a responsibility to both procure and protect the powerful relics, as they could bring a great darkness if in the wrong hands.

The **Ascending Ones** came to Nippon's southern islands in the early 15th century, by way of the Chinese admiral Zheng He. His influence didn't spread far in the mundane world, but some Ascending Ones spread their teachings, and those students share the teachings again. Tonight, Edo houses a small handful of the Muslim hunters who operate as secretive

mercenaries, selling their unique skills to other hunters, and buying trophies to craft their strange concoctions.

In a practical sense, local Ascending Ones work from gathered notes, collected from their mentors' past work. They have bits and pieces of Sunni Islam teaching, but have blended their practices with local Buddhist and Shinto traditions so as to not stand out.

The **Malleus Maleficarum** barely survives in Tokugawa's Nippon. A couple of members struggle to survive, as their faith is publicly outlawed. Three straggling members maintain a single cell in Dejima, under the auspices of the Dutch traders. They have to be very careful not to display any signs of their faith. While unknown to the public, they are well known to those on the Vigil; their existence remains controversial. The Otodo maintain a healthy suspicion of the remaining Malleus, as the conspiracy once declared the Otodo demonic, and deserving of destruction. Their numbers and secrecy guarantee their influence will be limited and temporary.

The **Hototogisu** come from the rapidly growing merchant caste. A few folk sorcerers created a mercantile network, and quickly ran afoul of more terrible things. They doubled down, and began using their newfound connections, wealth, and power to fight back that which would stand in the way of their wealth.

The **Otodo** are a bloodline descended from an unholy union of *oni* and human. Now, they wander the Gokaido, eliminating whatever threats they can. At least a dozen reside in and around Edo, mostly supporting other cells.

What is to Come

Nippon is blossoming, growing, bursting with opportunities. The air is practically choking with possibilities. But sometimes, the problem with so much incandescent wonder is that it blinds us to what we really need to see.

Despite propaganda, despite everything the shogunate would have its people believe, the darkness isn't gone. It slinks between silhouettes, sly as a cat. Monsters whisper through markets and conversations, chuckling and purring, gathering information, gathering bodies, gathering allies. Festering. Building. Like a disease creeping from lung to lung, these demons with human faces wait, watch, and grow.

Legend would have you believe that monsters require squalor to survive. That they are unintelligent. That they are just hunger incarnate. But that isn't true. While some of the abominations encountered may prefer the company of gnawed-on bones, others are perfectly content to luxuriate in finery.

Nippon is more dangerous than it has ever been before. Where before these supernatural threats might have kept to the countryside, they're now everywhere, drinking in the glory of Edo and the blood of her children.

UNIFICATION OF MONSTERS

Nippon just underwent unification. It became a single, solidified nation. In Edo right now, the myriad of supernatural beasts and creatures were undertaking a similar union. Some of the mages and vampires in the city reached out and made tenuous alliances with some of the other groups. As of the 1640s, there is no grand nation of monsters, but many have banded together under at least loose allegiances.

Their agreements typically require the various groups police their own, and maintain strict codes of secrecy. The monsters know that hunters are a real and credible threat that grows each night. They know that any given *yokai* could create a new hunter, who adds to everyone's risk level.

Where would this nation of monsters lead? Would it fall to infighting? Would it simply fall apart because of a lack of mutual self-interest? Would it become a greater threat as the decades go on?

Under Your Skin

Japanese mythology drips with stories about shapeshifters: nine-tailed fox spirits; shapeshifting racoons with scrotums as big as their torsos; necromantic *bakeneko*; sharp-beaked *tengu* who are sometimes benevolent, sometimes not. But these tales are only the skin of reality. Hunters in the Tokugawa Shogunate know of more bizarre myths. Courtesans with wooden skin and voices like the *shamisen*, wolves among the Ainu, plagues of insects that first burst the listener's eardrums before burrowing into their skulls.

And rats. So, so many rats. Squirming, eating, chewing through the paddy fields like locusts. Rats that sometimes walk on two legs, rats that sometimes talk like women.

You can't trust meat to be meat these days.

The Ainu

Few hunter cells in Nippon would refuse the opportunity to bring one of the Ainu into their ranks. Over the decades, the northerners have developed a reputation as phenomenal trackers and excellent warriors, invaluable traits in the war against the creatures of the Chronicles of Darkness. And with Tokugawa Ieyasu's ascension to power, they've become a progressively more common sight along the Gokaido, the five major routes of Nippon.

What's interesting is how readily the Ainu take to being called to the Vigil. Like moths to the flame, they seem to be drawn irresistibly to the hunt, and have been known to actively seek out compacts and conspiracies on their own.



Those who range further afield say that the Ainu have their own cells too, five-person teams that operate with utmost efficiency, taking down prey that others would even fear contemplating. Almost like wolves, some whisper.

Both their dedication and their martial prowess have been cause for suspicion. Who are these people? Why are they so intent on forging alliances when they seem perfectly competent at handling themselves? And what makes them so intent on protecting a country that has already taken so much from their people? The more paranoid believe that the Ainu's blood might be muddled with something unnatural, that the hirsute nature of their men might hint at bestial origins. Yet at the same time, as cooler minds often point out, the Ainu are also the ones who usually spearhead the hunts for the most dangerous wolf-things.

Whatever the case, hunter criticism of the Ainu is never very loud.

Coal-Eyed Birds

Hunting myths is not easy. Hunting truths is even harder. Folklore abounds with stories of the *tengu*, but none of them seem to be in agreement with any others. The earliest accounts describe them as Shinto gods, as demons, as the spirits of dead *yamabushi* (mountain ascetics, who some believe are endowed with supernatural powers). More recent tales portray them as fools, gullible animal spirits to be overcome by human ingenuity.

Similarly, eye witnesses seem universally divided on the subject. Some say that the *tengu* are horrors, nightmares granted feathers and laughing shrieks. That the *tengu* will worm into the eye sockets of the unsuspecting, and then have them build nests of bones. Others claim that the *tengu* are guardians, protectors who keep the dead from infesting the world of the living. That they prey on humanity's predators, subsiding entirely on the flesh of those would drink mortal blood.

The hunters of Tokugawa are no closer to an answer than the common folk. What do you believe when you've seen everything? The current consensus now is that the *tengu* aren't so much a unique species, but a blanket term for a broader population of birdlike spirits. Many of these spirits are rather benign; they may trick a wary traveler or even fell a questing warrior, but by and large they leave human settlements alone. The most troublesome of these bird spirits inhabit corpses. The creatures' predilection for nesting within human carcasses is the one fact that is known for certain. Why these *tengu* would roost in such foul places, or how a slow, shambling form could benefit its inhabitant, is something that remains a mystery.

More than a few cells work on learning more. Their primary objective is to determine if the *tengu* are indeed proficient at hunting vampires, and if so, are capable of being trained like falcons or hawks. So far, all attempts at capturing a live specimen appear to have ended in failure, or worse. But that hasn't stopped proponents of the idea from trying, a fact that is beginning to disconcert more than a few compacts, so much so that there is currently speculation that some cells may be dead and possessed by these monsters.

The Rest

Many hunters believe that there are as many shapeshifters as there are stars in the sky. Over the decades, attempts have been made to document these creatures' genealogy, as a way of preparing future hunters for the pursuit. But every spring inevitably brings new reports, new stories, new carcasses to examine. Thankfully, the scholars of the Vigil are making some headway into this Sisyphean task.

One of their most recent discoveries is, perhaps, one of the most crucial as well. Where before many believed that the skinchangers existed in binary state, being either human or not, the hunters have come to learn that there are often signs preceding a full transformation. Teeth that are slightly sharper than normal. Reflexes that are just a little bit faster. Eyes that clutch the moon's yellow light for a fraction longer than they should. Many eventually reveal themselves to be infested by a spirit of some variety, which can be anything from the ghosts of cats to stranger specimens yet — cockroach-swarms, demons of ink and bone, and manifestations of squalor.

The exorcism of such parasites has proven to be a complicated procedure riddled with casualties. As such, many hunters now default to simply euthanizing the victim, though not before providing him an opportunity to settle his last earthly affairs.

Either way, these cases tend to be outliers. A vast majority of what hunters encounter seem to lean towards the more aggressive end of the spectrum. Of particular note is the sudden proliferation of rats within the country. They're not shapechangers in the traditional sense of the word. Instead, they often manifest as a semi-sapient conglomeration of bodies squeezed into a human corpse, its insides hollowed out by vermin.

Worryingly, sightings of these abominations seem to be increasing in the pleasure quarters of the main cities. No one knows exactly why the rats have gravitated towards these locations, although many suspect it may be due to the abundance of food sources, and the relative security afforded by these places. Some even theorize that this may be related to reproduction concerns. Gruesome as the idea might be, it makes sense. The flesh trade provides ample opportunities for these strange creatures to find another host, and for them to infect said host without too many distractions.

The Restless Ones

For some, death is not an end. Those who perish unfulfilled, or fall to a traitorous knife in the dark, or die clutching a loved one's name, will sometimes continue to linger in this world, anchored by the weight of their final thoughts. Some of these apparitions are harmless, existing only as an unseasonal fragrance, a melancholy that clings to the air.

Others are not so kind.

Many a hunter has pontificated over what inspires a specter to murderous violence. The romantic attribute it to loneliness: a longing for what once was, a desire so intense that it splits the spirit's mind in half. The practical say that

it is simply what happens when a ghost chooses to remain in this world instead of migrating to the next, a corruption of substance as inevitable and unfortunate as the existence of evil itself.

But nothing in the Chronicles of Darkness is ever quite so black and white. There are no explanations for Kunekune, whose writhing brings madness to the observer. No answers for the skeletal Gashadokuro, 90-feet tall and perpetually ravenous, too vast to have ever been human (or comprised of numerous victims of starvation, depending on whom you ask). And every day, hunters return with stranger tales yet; stories of dolls that breathe and wraiths in the spine of Tokkaido road, of unholy worms that goad their hosts to feed and feed and feed, of houses that speak in voices like thunder.

Forbidden Love

Tokugawa Ieyasu introduced a multitude of new rules when he came into power, including a clear and inviolable demarcation between castes. Consequently, families grew careful about their associations, and marriages became a tool in the armaments of the socially conscious. But the human heart seldom concerns itself with ideas like class or wealth. Love strikes with the impunity of a blind swordsman.

Unfortunately, society can be unforgiving towards unconventional romances. The courtesan who would find love with a high-ranking samurai is more likely to unearth scorn instead, while the merchant who harbors fantasies of marrying a daimyo's daughter risks banishment or worse. Most take such restrictions in stride, marrying within the circumference of their station. But some star-crossed paramours are not so resilient. These desperate lovers will do anything to stay together, including surrender their lives for an opportunity at a better one.

Many hunters blame dramatists like Chikamatsu Monzaemon for the growing prevalence of double suicides. But what is especially disconcerting is the grisly practice that such works have spawned. According to reports from Osaka and Kyoto, a rising number of theater troupes have begun collecting souvenirs from these tragic deaths: knives, scraps of clothing, the ropes from which lovers hung themselves. Some have taken things a step further and are actively using these relics in their performances.

The consequences have been catastrophic, if not entirely unexpected. Mysterious deaths are beginning to trail the performances conducted by these troupes, many of which bear a resemblance to whatever tragedy was most recently staged. Mortal authorities have attributed these cases to impressionable minds and unfortunate circumstance, but the hunters know better. Revenants, especially those birthed of suicide, often operate in cycles.

But the concerns generated by these hauntings pale in comparison to others. There are rumors that certain individuals are actively collecting an armament of ghosts, though no one can say for sure who is involved or even why they might be pursuing something so ghastly. Similarly, gossip has begun to spread in regards to whether these deaths are truly the work of spirits, or whether they may have been murders instead. Whatever the case, lovers are dying wherever these troupes travel, and something must be done to stop it.

These Ravenous Bones

Of all the creatures that dwell in myth, the Gashadokuro is among the most bizarre. According to local legend, these monstrous apparitions originate from the bones of those who died hungry. Driven by their bottomless appetites, they continue to stalk the countryside where they perished, prowling for unsuspecting travelers to decapitate, drain dry of blood, and then add to their monumental skeletons.

Although cautious to avoid being caught out on the road alone, most mortals are quick to dismiss the Gashadokuro as a fantastical construct. How could a 90-foot skeleton wander the roads undetected, let alone be able to creep up on weary pilgrims? The hunters who patrol the Tokkaido road have no answer for that question. But they do know one thing: The Gashadokuro are both real and extremely dangerous.

Conflicting reports offer a murky image of the specter, however. Some claim that the Gashadokuro is less substantial than mythology implies — a hazy being made of teeth and grasping claws; a blood-drinker that has stolen the shell of this story as its own. Others say that the Gashadokuro is exactly as lore portrays: enormous and powerful, a refugee (or, perhaps, several refugees) from a shadowy province in the land of the dead. Still more believe that it Gashadokuro isn't, in fact, a ghost but a manifestation of hatred — the congealed fury of a thousand dead souls, forgotten and lost in the pilgrimage to Edo. Which is, as most hunters can attest, worse than anything the hells can disgorge.

The Ones Who Died Below the Sea

Ask any Ama pearl diver about the spirits of the drowned and chances are they will whisper a story or ten. Given the nature of Nippon's landmass, nautical tragedies are far from a rare occurrence. Over the course of the centuries, numerous ships have dashed themselves against the shore, even as pirates and ocean storms took their tribute in blood.

The Funay□rei, or boat spirits, are the children of these bloody events. They are the vengeful ghosts of those who are lost at sea. Torn from their families and the funeral rites that would have been otherwise breathed over their corpses, these apparitions are driven by a murderous loneliness, a blind desire to be loved again. To have their salt-eaten bones clutched tight. To be warm once more. Unfortunately, such wants often contradict the needs of the living. These aquatic wraiths are notorious for both sinking ships and for keeping vessels adrift for so long that the crew members are driven to cannibalism.

The problem with the Funay□rei, however, is not their numbers, but their inaccessibility. Even armed with Tokugawa's favor, most hunters lack the means to take on

extended ocean voyages, let alone the knowledge necessary to make such ventures worthwhile. But that hasn't stopped many from trying. More often than not, however, these foolhardy endeavours end at the bottom of the ocean. It's become so much of a problem lately that the Ama have taken to openly contesting any hunts on Funay□rei. Their objections have not gone over well with some of the other compacts, particularly those who see the Ama as overstepping the boundaries of their gender.

The Machinations of the Onmyodo

It is difficult to say what exactly catapulted Tokugawa Ieyasu to power. His daimyos ascribe his victories to his martial expertise and his talent for strategy. The common folk attribute his success to the competence of his men and the ferocity of his generals. But there are some who wonder if there may have been eldritch assistance, if the *onmy□ji* lurking in the shogun's shadow might be more than the keepers of ritual, but magicians who can indeed bend reality. Of course, no one is willing to wonder too loudly. If such a thing is true, then a new question needs to be asked: Why has Tokugawa ordered the culling of the supernatural when he trucks with them himself?

The Ansho

Though risk defines the bones of the Vigil, most hunters remain wary of the Awakened, who are rumored to possess powers comparable to the *kami* themselves. But not even the gods themselves are entirely immune to harm. Everything that has ever lived can be killed.

When confronting one of the Awakened, wise hunters use the Ansho — magical "dead areas" — that speckle the landscape of Nippon to their advantage. Not only do these locations *prevent* spells from being cast, they seem capable of draining the energies that empower the *onmy□d□*, leaving them completely vulnerable to assault. Unfortunately, the Ansho remain rare occurrences, predominantly manifesting in urban landscapes, or wherever humanity collects in thick pockets.

A number of hunters are attempting to change this or, at least, are endeavoring to determine how the Ansho come to be. In particular, some of the Bijin have developed an active interest in the phenomenon. Clandestine meetings are, after all, more easily conducted when the specter of supernatural assault is not looming over your head. So far, nothing has come of their investigations. At least, that's what the hunters involved have been telling others in the community. The more paranoid are certain that the Bijin know more than they let on. Certainly, it would make sense given the rumors that the compact will sometimes enter into deals with the supernatural, trading ignorance for judicious use of teeth and lightning. In that context, it would make no sense for the Bijin to allow other hunters to murder their collaborators, especially when they can keep such possibilities as a looming threat.

ANSHO IN PLAY

Ansho are small areas, from the size of a small room, upwards to very rare circles the size of large houses. Inside these areas, magic simply ceases to work. Magic, in this case, means any spell cast by a mage or witch. Additionally, this extends to any active powers used by supernatural creatures which require Willpower points to use. This does not cancel powers already active when the monster enters, but prevents further activations.

Ansho appear in a fashion that seems random; they disappear at half the rate that new Ansho are formed. In this period, they're quite rare; there exist no more than 30 or 40 across the region. The region, in this case, goes south to about Mount Fuyi, north to Nikko, and ends somewhere off the coast of the Pacific.

Unfortunately for some hunters, Ansho can stop the abilities granted by their Endowments. This includes any Endowment coming from an internal, magical source such as the Otodo's birthright abilities, and the rare Malleus Maleficarum's Benedictions. The Hototogisu seem unaffected by the Ansho.

Wolves in the Palace

Ever since their return from exile, the hunters of Edo have scrutinized the Tsuchimikado clan. For centuries now, the family has been known for its *onmyodos*, and for its service in the Imperial Court. Until Toyotomi Hideyoshi banished them to Odawa, of course. Why such a thing was done remains a mystery. The official explanation is that Toyotomi took offense at the Tsuchimikado's association with his nephew, Hidetsugu. Unofficially, there are rumblings that Toyotomi had wanted them to do more than read the stars, but reach out to the beings that sit cradled within their hearts. Some stories say that the Tsuchimikado were successful at fulfilling this bizarre request, and that their discovery was instrumental in causing Toyotomi's eventual madness. Others say that the Tsuchimikado refused and were thusly banished for the insult.

Whatever the case, the Tsuchimikado have returned to power thanks to the new shogun, and are once again performing their traditional function in the Imperial Court. Although no longer as affluent as they once were, it's clear that they remain favored; Tokugawa openly wears one of the Tsuchimikado's *migatame* — a blessing of strength — on his hands and chest. There are even rumblings that all of the courtiers and the soldiers within Tokugawa's inner circle carry the same *migatame*.

Their family's close ties with Tokugawa is one of the reasons they're viewed with so much distrust. All attempts to investigate the Tsuchimikado clan have been met with opposition and, in one notable case, open hostility. Not even the castle servants, who are notoriously easy to bribe into sharing gossip, can be baited into disclosing anything incriminating about the *onmyodos*. As far as anyone is concerned, the Tsuchimikado are simply the keepers of ritual, as harmless and as vital as the priests who guard the temples in the countryside, and no more threatening than infants.

But few in the Vigil believe this. Certainly, there have been too many coincidences, too many strokes of luck that required supernatural intervention to be possible. Gossip abounds with them: stories about noblemen found dead from their own poisons, about malfunctioning traps, about ambushes neatly dismantled by a series of fortuitous circumstances. A thousand strange accidents, all of which seem to take place within sight of a Tsuchimikado.

Even more worrying still is the clan's rampant growth. Unaffiliated *onmyodos* across Nippon are being courted for membership and, if anecdotes are accurate, sometimes even bullied into joining the Tsuchimikado's growing mass.

Blood-Drinking Yokai

From the bizarre *kasa-obake*, cyclopean umbrella ghosts, to the grotesque *kekkai*, murderous lumps of flesh birthed by unsuspecting human women, the *yokai* inhabit every corner of the Japanese imagination and every cautionary tale bantered in the dark. Intermingled in this menagerie of monstrosities are creatures who subsist on, among other things, human blood. Here, the consumption of blood is never the most salient feature about a *yokai*. Instead, it is simply another facet of the beast.

This lack of demarcation has caused problems for many a hunter, unfortunately. A "*kappa*" attack, for example, could potentially be instigated by an aquatic fae, a vampiric entity, or something more sinister still. Similarly, hunters have found "*oni*" to mean everything from mortal brigands to shapeshifting beastmen. Worse yet are the rumors that this confusion is actively being cultivated by the country's vampiric population, that these blood-drinkers are attempting to seed the population with so many conflicting legends that it is impossible for anyone to discern where the truth nests.

And if that is true, as some hunters will point out, then a bigger question needs to be posed: How much influence do these things actually have?

The Kappa

The *kappa* are one of the best known *yokai* in Japanese mythology. Stories depict these fabled beings as child-sized humanoids who dwell in the rivers and lakes throughout Nippon. Tricksters and ravenous monsters in turn, all *kappa* share a number of traits: amphibious features, a beak, and a plate at the top of their skulls that must always be wet. No one has been able to agree on anything else.

Several decades ago, Fumiya Yamato, a hunter from Osaka, presented an unorthodox theory as to why. The *kappa*, he claimed, wasn't an actual entity, but a disguise worn by something else. Certainly, that explained why eyewitness accounts differed so dramatically, and how the *kappa* could possibly be capable of some of the more outrageous legends. This hypothesis went down better than Fumiya's next suggestion: that the *kappa*'s plate was a metaphor rather than an analogy representing the creature's desire for blood. Unable to present evidence supporting the second idea (every *kappa* Fumiya captured reportedly dissolved to nothing in the morning), the hunter found himself summarily dismissed by others who kept the Vigil.

Since then, however, numerous people have sought to both refute and substantiate Fumiya's speculations. While no one has been able to put together a concrete case, more light has since been shed on the conundrum. Most hunters now acknowledge that most *kappa* don an illusionary appearance, a guise powerful enough to circumvent even the most potent artifacts. Under scrutiny, it shifts and alters, squirming between variations. More interesting yet is the latest discovery, which was spearheaded by Fumiya's granddaughter, Fumiya Aika: The *kappa*, contrary to popular mythos, weren't so much inhabitants of clean bodies of water, but residents of sewage systems. How this discrepancy came to be is something she, along with a coterie of like-minded cohorts, is continuing to investigate.

Shuten-Doji

Immortalized in legend as one of the strongest *oni*, Shuten-Doji is a subject of incredible fascination for many hunters. One of the most popular stories say that Shuten-Doji resided in Mt. Ooe, and would routinely sweep down on Kyoto in pursuit of women whom he would later capture and devour. His predations were eventually brought to an end by Minamoto no Yorimitsu, who fed Shuten-Doji poisoned alcohol before decapitating the *oni*. However, that wasn't enough to kill the creature who — even as a severed head — continued to snap at Minamoto.

The tales lose their cohesion in regards to what came after. A handful believe that Shuten-Doji's head was buried away from the capital city, while others say that the *oni* was buried at Mt. Ooe itself. Curiously, there have also been stories claiming that Shuten-Doji regretted his life of evil and was subsequently deified as a god of wisdom.

Those are the legends bantered among humans.

The hunters know a different refrain.

Like the common folk, the hunters say that Shuten-Doji, along with his gang, terrorized Mt. Ooe, kidnapping women and crushing them to drink their blood. They also say that there's a reason as to why a transformative element is universal among the stories about Shuten-Doji: because something did come for the child that would later become the *oni*, a starving thing of nightmares that would pass on a terrible benediction. Terrified of the changes that had taken

place, Shuten-Doji then did what anyone else would do. He created a community.

There are very few who believe that Shuten-Doji continues to live today. His progeny, however, are a different question entirely. Mt. Ooe remains a hotly contested bastion of supernatural activity, and has been since the emergence of the first Shuten-Doji tale. Its inhabitants are described as unnaturally strong and capable of astonishing speed, attributes commonly tied to the *oni* or, according to the Western hunters who once travelled the countryside, the Daeva.

The Rokurokubi

During the day, the *rokurokubi* are allegedly indistinguishable from any other woman. At night, however, their morphological nature alters. Almost exclusively female, these *yokai* come in two varieties: those whose necks can stretch extravagantly, and those capable of detaching their heads from their throats. Neither version is traditionally described as evil, although there are bountiful accounts of the *rokurokubi* attacking and draining blood from unsuspecting humans.

Popular lore suggests that there is an entire village of *rokurokubi* somewhere within the depths of Mount Yoshino. Many hunters are in agreement. Numerous people have corroborated twilight sightings of young women with scarves around their necks. Those who have seen them without the accouterments claim that the women's throats are circled by a thin line, which reportedly signifies their hidden nature.

Surprisingly, this has proven true to some extent. Hunters who have investigated Mount Yoshino say that there are indeed women with strange marks on their necks, although not in the way legend would have listeners believe. Instead, these damsels are frequently said to carry teeth marks on their throats and their wrists. More interestingly, reports state that these women are often found armed and never in the company of men. What's even more bizarre is the stories about the village itself. Not only does it seem to change location from week to week, it also lacks things like wells or agriculture — things that a normal village would require to survive.

New Compacts and Conspiracies

The following compacts and conspiracies were the most common hunters in the Edo Jidai.

Note that some do not contain proper factions like those in **Hunter: The Vigil**. This is because they're more disparate than modern organizations, or too new to have formalized such groups.



Ama-San

The Sea Whistle

The Ama, or traditional pearl diver, is one of the oldest respected professions for women in Japan. Strictly speaking, most Ama do not hunt monsters. A majority of the women who practice this matriarchal profession do only what you would expect. They hunt pearls, or catch anemones, seaweed, octopus, and other bottom-dwelling sea-creatures that fisherman simply can't easily access. Many of the Ama can hold their breath for up to two minutes; when they surface they naturally emit a high-pitched wheezing, crying, but musical noise as they draw in their first few breaths after being submerged so deep for so long. The Ama call this the *isobue*, the sea whistle. It keeps them from blacking out when they resurface, but it has other qualities as well.



The Enemy

From the first Ama woman who dove to the ocean bottom to gather the treasures there, the Ama learned what all hardened fisherman know: the sea is a bountiful place, but it is not a place where humans dominate. Lithe, mostly bare women armed only with a single knife, the Ama realized quickly that you cannot fight a sea monster of any size in its territory. There's a delicate balance in the sea, and destroying everything that seems fearsome or dominant under the waves will destroy that balance.

However, just as humanity is prone to grow dangerous to its environment, these beasts under the waves occasionally go out of control. They might surface and swallow fishing boats, or cause unseasonable tsunami or earthquakes. On those occasions, rare as they might be, only the Ama have the history, training, and special tricks to pull in these monsters and end them.

The *isobue* can, when performed correctly, call up the monsters of the deep. Once they surface, the Ama work as a team to destroy the monster.

On occasion, they will trade their skill to fisherman who can afford it to take down specific sea-beasts, but it doesn't come cheap.

Hunters

You're 63, today, and not the oldest Ama in the water by 30 years. Still, the older ladies have stopped hunting, and you've watched as the fire has left their eyes. Not you. You have a few good hunts left in you, and you dream of leaving this world as your mother did, dragged back off into the dark by a monster-lover to die or maybe, be with it forever.

You're 18, and you've been diving since you were about six, though not into the deeps until you'd developed the lungs for it. Two years ago, you had your first brush with a thing below the waves. A *ningyo* with mouths, many human mouths that could speak into your mind. Since then, you've been training. You still hear its strange words in your head, though you don't understand them, and sometimes, only the sound of the *isobue* drowns out the thoughts. Your mother says when you're ready, they'll call in the monster and destroy it, and the words will stop.

You are rare among the Ama, a boy raised by women, who can keep up with the others. The safety and community you feel among the Ama is nothing like the harsh world of your father, and you have fought and fought to stay with the Ama rather than join the fishermen and the harsh reality of their lives. Your mother and her elders were resistant, until they realized that



you too could call monsters, that your *isobue* was as beautiful as cobalt glass and soothing as silver-threaded silk. You're a boy Ama, and you've got a lot to prove; but these women will not abandon their own, even if the relationship is strained at times.

Duties

Deep Divers: All Ama dive, but these woman dive deep. Able to hold their breath to the limits of human capacity (so far as anyone knows), you're able to reach the abalone and largest pearls. Deep divers are also the strongest swimmers, and so they must often act as both scouts and bait, observing potential threats in their domain, and drawing them close enough to hear the *isobue* when it's performed.

Callers: After the deep divers surface, they produce the sea whistle, of course, but only the first chorus of it. At that point, skilled and practiced Callers dive, timing their arrivals at the surface with the first signs that the beast has followed the bait. They add their skillful whistles to the wind and waves, enraging or perhaps arousing the beasts to come to shore and answer the call. They are the last out of the water, assuming the deep divers have time to escape ahead of them.

Okaa-San: The final act in a sea monster hunt belongs to the *okaa-san*. Meaning simply "mother," this is an honorific title given to the most fit and physically capable of the clan. Their job is to "catch" the beast, driving harpoons and spears into it, catching it with nets and dragging it further ashore. *Okaa-san* do the actual killing, if killing is possible, and perhaps most importantly, they handle the butchering and processing of the beasts' meat for sale later. *Okaa-san* who survive for long become experts in making the meat they bring in from the beasts they kill...marketable. Further, they need to know what parts of the animal priests and priestesses can use in their occult work, and how to sell them.

Status

Status in the Ama means how deeply a part of the tight-knit community of women you are. But more than that, Status with the Ama reflects how much of their secret arts you have learned. Even a low status member of the Ama can expect protection and succor from the community inside the community. Secrets of the monster-hunt, however, are another matter.

- At this level of influence, you have learned from your grandmothers and mothers how to operate as a team. You naturally inspire a sort of group cohesion when situations are at their most tense and dangerous. As a result, you gain the Small Unit Tactics Merit (see **The God-Machine Chronicle**, p. 170). When subject to the benefits of the Small Unit Tactics Merit from another character, you gain +4 and 9-Again instead of the normal +3.

••• With three dots, you have learned how to use the sea whistle to draw sea monsters from the deep. First, you must know some specific details about the creature: What it looks like, its name, if it is part spirit, or what its favorite meal is. Each detail known bestows a +1 die bonus to a Presence + Occult action. Success calls the monster at some point in the same scene, but the calling character doesn't know when or where. Exceptional success means the caller knows exactly when it'll arrive, and from where. This gives any traps or ambushes an additional +3 dice.

••••• At five dots, your character is among the most honored of her kind. Any time she's in danger, you may divide six dots between any number of Retainers who will arrive within three turns. When your character passes, every Ama who knows her gains the Inspired Condition.

Stereotypes

Azusa Miko: I once worked with one, who supported my hunt from afar. Never was there a more useful ally outside my sisters.

Bijin: They turn their noses up at us, as our skin is battered by the ocean salt. When the great thing from the depths threatens Tokyo, they'll know their folly.

The Hototogisu: Everything must return to the ocean. They pull from the ocean and hoard. Watch them.

The Otodo: They are strong, but they fear the water. Why?



Azusa Miko

Bow Shaman Women

Early Edo is a complicated time to be a Shinto priestess. As the Tokugawa Shogunate works to codify and organize the folk religions and temples of Japan, a sort of turf war rises up around who would claim control over the female shamans who have seemingly always practiced on the islands. The full flames of that war are still over the horizon, but it is as if the *miko* of Edo know that they will be pawns in a battle between houses, clans, and most of all, monsters.

Nearly a hundred types of *miko* reside all over the islands, with varying practices, rights, and responsibilities from Hokkaido to Okinawa. The Azusa are only one type, and many of them are not monster hunters, while it's possible that other shaman women are on the Vigil. Most certainly, some other shaman women are with the enemy.

The Enemy

It used to be that if a thing needed doing, the *miko* in the area would do it. If a god needed dealt with, an ancestor appeased, spiritual corruption cleansed, a shaman could handle it. But now, Japan is united, and men are busy arguing over who can do what and where. As the *miko* were forced to become specialized so that the shogunate could be strengthened, ancestor-appeasing specialists were driven from the temples, and the temple-bound *miko* focused more and more on appeasing the gods and spirits as they were discouraged from speaking to the dead. This imbalance left many young *miko* vulnerable not just to possession by the gods, but also by demons and monsters. As a result, there is a corruption inside many *miko* families. And as they travel from shrine to shrine, performing sacred dances and cleansings, the monsters that feed on them, literally or figuratively, are protected and empowered to cause all sorts of evil.

The Azusa Miko, the bow shamans, were forced away from the temples, and forbidden from publically practicing for the gods, leaving them to fortune tell and speak to the dead. Perhaps it was this separation that allowed the Azusa to spot the patterns of corruption and manipulation among their sister shamans. Now, Azusa devote themselves to hunting down and rooting out corruption and supernatural influence over their fellow *miko*, and other priests and practitioners, wherever they can get away with it. This is in addition, of course, to their primary role of appeasing the ancestors and exorcising malicious spirits.

Hunters

Actually, up until a year ago, you were a full-blown con artist. The family that had taken you in and trained you was notorious but successful, with not a single real medium in its midst. You ran afoul of rival *onmyo* practitioners and were driven from the collection of villages where you made your coin. When spying on them in the hopes of finding something to blackmail them with, you saw the truth for the first time. The practitioners were possessed by *kitsune yokai*, fox spirits, and it was all real. You were even more shocked to discover, by accident, that your rites to drive them back were also real. Shortly after, other Azusa contacted you. You're still a liar and a con, but at least you're on the right side of things now.

Technically, you are not an Azusa Miko, but you had been married to one, and your shamanistic traditions were similar enough that when she died protecting you from an angered *oni*, and you avenged her after six months of hunting and campaigning to unmask it, her sisters reached out to you. They welcomed you without hesitation.

Your mother and grandmother were deeply spiritual women, the sort of women that folk tales rise up around. You are not an eighth of the shaman they were. But that's okay, because you can put an arrow through a horse's neck at a hundred paces. While many of your sisters use the bow as a musical instrument to "bring down the spirits" in ritual, you act as their back up, remembering that the sacred bow was a weapon first.

Duties

Sayaniwa: When a *miko* enters into a ritual trance as a medium, the messages she utters may be incomprehensible. The Sayaniwa traditionally acts as a sort of interpreter. For the Asuka on the Vigil, Sayaniwa act as mood readers, trained to spot approval and disapproval; they have developed this talent to read strange behaviors commonly associated with monstrous intrusion.

Reibai: Literally "spirit go-between," Reibai are expected to keep one ear and one eye in the spirit world. Often, despondent ghosts are the first warning signs of supernatural manipulations — beloved ancestors do indeed watch over their families, and can see things mortals cannot. They hear rumors, too, and sometimes recall the ancient names and behaviors of all-too modern monsters. The Reibai keep attentive, and keep the dead happy so that they will keep protecting the living.

Geki: While not strictly *miko*, Geki, male shamans, often practice alongside their sisters, wives, and mothers in service of the spirit world. Their talents are equal to the *miko*, though different rituals require differently gendered practitioners; they're still a part of the compact. Besides, when a person is rampaging and violent due to a fox spirit possession, it's nice to have a man around.

Status

The Azusa Miko, who come from rural regions, live outside of the caste system of the samurai, artisans, merchants, and farmers. While temples, shrines, the Emperor's clerks, and greedy men try to control their activities, they survive in a liminal state, their income and protection coming from the people they serve for good or ill. Maybe it is this in-between existence that lets them open up, or be opened up by the spirit world. While they are sometimes seen as extortionists and phonies, it's easy to understand why the *miko* can do what distant Buddhist priests spouting Sanskrit and cleanliness-obsessed Shinto priests often cannot. They are connected to the people they serve, and that is why the *miko* can be limited, but not actually stopped.

- Azusa Miko can contact not just the dead, but are aware of other non-corporeal *yokai* and spirits. At one dot in Status, the *miko* gains the Medium Merit for free, covering both ghosts and spirits.

••• *Miko* with this level of recognition are recognized by the working class, and protected. When around farmers, artisans, merchants, and the undesirable classes, your character can pull favors for sanctuary or immediate needs. This functions as a dot of Allies, Contacts, Resources, or Retainer that adapts to immediate circumstances.

••••• The greatest Azusa Miko are not only recognized in the physical world, but in the spirit world. Rank 1 and 2 spirits and ghosts will flee her presence, or obey simple, non-dangerous commands. She gets +3 to any Social actions against higher-Ranked spirits and ghosts.

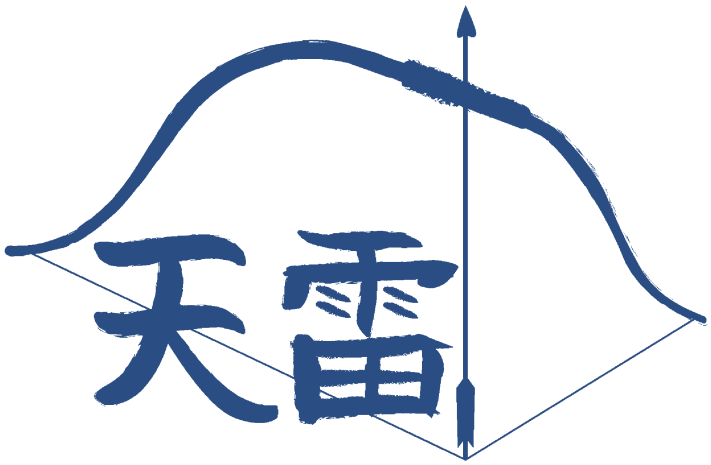
Stereotypes

Ama-San: Their devotion is inspiring. Their efficiency is educational. Surround yourself with them when possible.

Bijin: They do good work. But their work is full of distraction. They can never be as devoted as we.

The Hototogisu: They will be around far longer than will we. We do not approve of their methods or aims, but the world has less monsters for their being here.

The Otodo: We are told they are somehow exceptions, and should be spared our arrows. For now, we will obey.



Bijin

The Beautiful People

As Edo grew, the markets grew with it. While Tokugawa Iemitsu dictates that the merchant class is beneath all others, including artisans and performers, in practice, those with the wealth have the prestige, regardless of what the social order claims. And so, as the merchants have the power to pay the artists, the artists ultimately serve the merchants. This has produced room for popular art, from entertainment that can be sold to the average citizen of Edo as well as block-print art that is far more accessible to more people.

Access, you see, is what the Bijin desire above all else. Whether painting, dancing, singing, advising, or seducing, the Bijin hunt down the aesthetic ideal of *iki* and how it applies to the monstrous denizens of Edo. *Iki* is the innate and non-academic sophistication and directness of modern Edo. It's city-sexy-sophistication, at least, so far as it was expressed in the period, and the Bijin eat, breathe, and hunt monsters with it.

The Enemy

At first, the compact was simply a loose group of artists and performers who met at teahouses in the dull afternoons to talk shop. They compared stories, discussed popular culture, and of course, the very best ways to get their crafts noticed (and who is sleeping with whom). Over time, though, certain poorly kept public secrets came up, over and over again. Has anyone noticed that any of the dancing girls who work at this samurai's home end up sick for a week afterward? The bookbinder who's come around frequently is very hairy and always smells like meat. In comparing notes, patterns emerged, and after a while, those with an interest and superior observational skills came to one conclusion: Edo was full of monsters, and the Bijin were the only ones smart enough to discover it. Shouldn't it then be up to them to decide what to do about this fact?

The consensus then was this. Classify, analyze, and test these beasts in the night. Define, and destroy, those that were dangerous. Use the ones who were useful. A vampire is a blood-sucking unclean monster — but he can also make an orgy one for the history books.

Hunters

You were a simple student studying with one of the first recognized masters of the *ukiyo-e* art. While studying some of the Master's older works, almost 30 years old, you realized that you had painted a similar subject just last week. Not just similar, no; when you compared your work to hers, you realized that this was the same woman, and she hadn't aged in over 30 years. When you told some friends about it, the Bijin invited you into their numbers. So far, they've only asked you to paint some very specific targets "for their records" but you don't really understand why.

As a chaste dancing girl, you work adjacent to the professional women in the pleasure district, but you are not one yourself. Not everyone is completely respectful, and you've run into some pushy fools with too much liquor and too much money. This last one, though, he was more than insistent, he was animalistic. You, you were only defending yourself, but you killed him, and if anyone finds out you'll be ruined. Luckily, a friend in the Bijin was nearby, and the Bijin are willing to protect you, if you can help them in their work. Bait that can protect itself with the instinct to kill? You are a valuable commodity.

After your mother died under questionable circumstances, you took over ownership of the teahouse. You're a little young, but you learned your mother's savvy and fierce protective streak. The dancer women and geisha men who entertain here aren't just your stock, they're your responsibility. So, you've made some arrangements with the monsters you've caught stalking the place. They feed or eat only who you approve of — people who don't pay their debts, or are otherwise disgusting

— and you don't cause them any trouble. The Bijin meet in your business, use your contacts, and handle the monsters that can't abide your rules. Like anything else in your life, it's a business relationship.

Duties

Ninki: After all, none of this works unless there's a party. The Ninki are expected to eat, drink, and arrange the parties, orgies, and festivals expected of those who entertain. But more than that, the Ninki need to meet, greet, and make feel welcome the monsters and suspected monsters that the Bijin are observing.

Geisha: Those who make art — performers, illustrators, and novelists — act as information gatherers as the Ninki host. Whatever information can be gathered is then recorded and stored. Often, this information is disguised as fiction and preserved in novels, poetry, or collections of short stories, though certain code words are present to alert any Bijin that they are reading research rather than fantasy.

Aware (*A-wa-re*): The bittersweet moment of realization that a moment of beauty is fleeting, no matter how powerful that beauty was, is Aware. This subgroup of the Bijin are rarely called on, as most of the supernatural denizens of Edo police their own. However, realistically, there are times when something beautiful must be destroyed, and that is when the Aware are called in. In general, they use trickery and traps rather than overt violence. They are cunning blades and poison meant to cull quietly.

Status

Status in the Bijin does not inherently bestow anyone with wealth and fame. Quite the contrary; more than a few high-status members of the Bijin can't manage to keep coins in their pockets for more than a day. Instead, status confers an enhanced ability, through training and gossip, to be in the right place at the right time, and around the right people at the most opportune moment. Being Bijin means being seen and being there, and they train their own to do just that.

- At this level of influence, your character has big ears and big eyes. She knows where the gossip happens, though she is not yet expert at deciding which pieces of information are useful and which aren't. Once per game session, you can ask your Storyteller, "What has my character heard about this specific topic"? The Storyteller will tell you two rumors that are mostly true, and one that is a lie. The Storyteller should not identify which is which, of course. These rumors can be on any subject, including the supernatural world. The Storyteller should look at this as an opportunity to plant plot seeds.

••• With three dots, you have an ear for gossip, and can distinguish between what is just talk and what is useful information. Once per game session, you can ask the Storyteller "What has my character heard?" just as above. Instead of telling you two truths and a lie, the Storyteller must tell you two truths and a lie, but identify one of the two truths as true. The other two should remain ambiguous.

••••• Artistic Immortality. Whatever your craft is beyond the Vigil, you will be remembered. You may have been immortalized in a woodcarving that will go down in history, or your novel has been translated into Dutch; you enjoy Fame 3. Further, you are at least vaguely aware of your long historical reach. Use it wisely.

Stereotypes

Ama-San: Their aroma is not for the city's consumption.

Azusa Miko: We understand being tossed aside by the nobility, yet used when it suits their fancy.

The Hototogisu: They're highly competent. I only question their eagerness; none should be so eager for murder.

The Otodo: They know the devils better than we will ever.



Hototogisu

Merchants Who Steal from the Otherworldy

When Tokugawa laid down his four-tiered hierarchy of castes, merchants settled at the bottom. Over the past 50 years, the merchant class has proven itself anything but the bottom of the social hierarchy. Artisans above them needed distribution. The merchants obliged. Farmers needed to sell their excess harvest. The merchants obliged. The samurai class needed more and more as Tokugawa laid down greater and greater demands on the nobility. The merchants obliged.

One such group of merchants dealt largely in folk remedies, but possessed a few truly mystical tricks handed down from generation to generation. The group goes back at least two centuries, but for most of that span they were largely inconsequential. But, they found growing success in the Edo Jidai. Their business grew, and they rapidly became a significant economic power within Edo. Some 20 years ago, multiple members of this mercantile network simultaneously began noticing supernatural influences everywhere they dealt. They found barriers to growth, in the form of vampires, demons, and stranger things. The merchants had no trouble competing with human challengers, but monsters did not play fair. Backing down was not an option; the group was now addicted to success, and had the tools to fight. So the group researched, trying to find a good way to compete.

A merchant named Inoue developed a signature skill for the network, a trick, a tool they could use to equalize the field, and to remove the major advantages the monsters possessed. His trick literally stole supernatural powers from the monsters that stood in their way. He quickly taught many merchants the trick, with an agreement that he'd receive a cut of their future earnings. Some quibbled, but most jumped at the opportunity to steal the preternatural gifts of monsters. He called his students, and his new mercantile network, the Hototogisu.



The Enemy

The Hototogisu don't fight monsters, so much as they overcome hurdles. Any sorcerer, vampire, or *yokai* impeding business becomes a hurdle. They assess the threat, and the cost of removal. If the cost of removal is lower than the business lost by the monster's existence, they overcome the hurdle. Otherwise, they work together, and endeavor to steal enough of the monster's power that the monster has no choice but to work for the network, instead of against it. This "acquisition" technique has only been used successfully a handful of times, but when it works, it works very well. The Hototogisu now has these monsters effectively in its employ. Members abuse these relationships to learn more. The more they learn, the better they can steal from similar beasts.

Hunters

You're a merchant. Your father was a merchant. His father, and his father before him were merchants. You're not deeply invested in stealing the dark gifts of the *yokai*, but you're very pragmatic, and realize that you'll never honor your family if those *yokai* leech off your business. So you've taken it upon yourself to secure the highway from Edo to Kyoto, and woe be to any monster or bandit who dares try to stop a trader en route.

You're not very interested in being a merchant, but selling silks is a means to an end for you. When you were young, a vampire seduced your father away from your mother. You found the vampire captivating, and swore that one day, you'd have that power over men. Within the Hototogisu, you have access to vampires, and you're learning to rob them of that power.

You were a samurai in Kyoto. You abused your privilege, and you were disgraced. Instead of facing *seppuku*, you fled, and took up a new life, a new identity. You became a merchant's bodyguard. You ate, and had a roof. But what you wanted more than anything was to regain that power. You know your chances of becoming a samurai again are slim — it'd take forever, and you'd likely be found out. But stealing the power of monsters? That's a quick path to greatness.

Factions

Organizers don't buy or sell directly; they facilitate trade. They find niches and needs, and dispatch Hototogisu merchants to fill this need. Further, they investigate the districts, finding specific monsters. As merchants express desire for certain monster abilities, organizers act as matchmakers. This comprises the "leadership" of the conspiracy.

Merchants are workers, selling wares out in the field and trading in their stolen dark arts. Merchants tend to be more interested in immediate payouts, in profit margins, and in temporal successes. Supernatural power is simply a way to more power, and more money.

Diplomats deal directly with monsters whenever possible. For a small cut, they'll act in a merchant's stead, brokering deals and establishing connections. They move from district to district, offering consultation to local Hototogisu members. Diplomats also move from city to city, attempting to bring new Hototogisu franchises into the fold.

Status

Status in the Hototogisu affords the following advantages:

- Members may learn the Setto Endowment (see below).

••• At this level, the conspiracy begins to pay dividends on the member's work. This grants four dots, divided however you wish between Contacts, Resources, and Retainers.

••••• The highest leaders of the Hototogisu answer to Inoue. He personally blesses them with a five-dot (or less) Dread Power relevant to their rolse, in addition to any Dread Powers they may already know from Setto.

Stereotypes

Aegis Kai Doru: These strange ones hunt for very valuable objects. We'd be well suited to align with them, so as to pick apart the scraps when they inevitably die off.

Ama-San: They fight the horrors of the deep. Except in rare cases, we have no need for those monsters' gifts.

Azusa Miko: They believe our stolen gifts are the worst *kegare*. They'll work with us, but never touch us unless it's to kill us.

Bijin: They master great crafts, but take only a pittance for them. They could be wealthy. Wealth could serve their hunt. They're ineffective.

Otodo: Their gifts are watered-down demon gifts. Not worth stealing. But, working with them puts us in the position to experience great gifts worthy of theft.



Otodo

The Oni-Blooded

The Otodo were born of tainted, inhuman blood. Many years down the line, the people of a small fishing village did the unthinkable; they laid down with monsters. The people of this long-lost village loved and mated with *oni*. To these people, *oni* were not the red and blue ogres many think of. They were spirits of plague and devastation. The stories tell that the people of this village lusted for the powers these spirits brought, and welcomed them into their homes.

The children of these ill-fated unions were half monsters themselves. Many remained home. Many went off into the countryside. Some of those were met with scorn, disdain, and death. Some were likewise embraced into communities, birthing children of their own. Over the centuries, this blood diluted, and filtered out across the islands. Those few who still carry the blood, they are the Otodo.

The Enemy

During the Tokugawa Shogunate, the Otodo have taken on an insurmountable task; they use their demon blood to reset their ancestors' karmic debt. They fight fire with fire, often literally. Their heritage affords them many gifts, and while these gifts were never designed to fight off evil, they do the job. To the Otodo, evil is more than other *oni*. They use their blood to fight corruption, to frighten harmful *yokai*, and to otherwise make the world a better place. After all, their obligation runs deep. Most importantly of all, the Otodo do battle with their most corrupt cousins, others of *oni* blood unwilling to take a stand for the sake of goodness. To the Otodo, these betrayers are the worst of the worst, because they've been given a perfect opportunity to make the world better, but they eschew it in favor of the darkness. The *oni*, the Otodo argue, are simply dark by nature. They must be destroyed, but that's a regrettable truth. Their lost cousins, however, step willingly into depravity.

Additionally, they hunt changelings. Theirs is a complicated relationship. The Otodo believe changelings are born of the same *yokai* blood they are, but of other branches of the same tree. Thus, they force the same philosophical role upon changelings they place upon themselves; fight off the darkness, or fall first. Most changelings have their own problems to deal with, so they're not interested in taking up arms against monsters. This puts most at odds with the Otodo, which typically ends in bloodshed. Some have learned to humor the Otodo. Some have even banded with the Otodo.



Sometimes, the Otodo run across a truly legendary monster. These great dragons, *kirin*, and phoenixes look like men, but their souls quake with primordial terror. The Otodo respect these beasts, but believe they came into existence flawed, broken. By their very natures, these monsters attract would-be hunters, heroes out to slay them. While noble in purpose, these hunters lay waste to innocent people in their path. These hunters are a symptom, the monsters are the disease. Kill the monster, cure the symptom.

Hunters

You were raised in a house full of the Otodo. You're a legacy hunter. You knew your purpose before you knew how to read. While other children in your village listened to folk stories of spirits and monsters with awe and wonder, you were learning weak spots and just what metals to use to kill those spirits and monsters. It's lucrative work; the working people of Edo pay well when faced with certain doom, and your specialty is averting certain doom.

You were an orphan, moving from home to home, never knowing your heritage. That was, until one day a traveling vegetable hawker came to your orphanage and adopted you. He put you to



THEIR NAME

"Otodo" is just one reading of a rather peculiar kanji. It's among the most complex kanji, requiring 84 strokes. It appears to be of Japanese origin, combining six Chinese characters. The rough translation is "the appearance of a dragon in flight." While it appears in some Japanese dictionaries, its source is heavily debated. Our Otodo simply adopted it for its iconography. In the real world, it's almost never used in practice.

IRON CLUBS

The signature weapon of the Otodo is an iron *kanabo*, a sort of vicious, knobbed truncheon about the size of a baseball bat. Most every Otodo owns one, even if she doesn't prefer to use it in battle. Functionally, it's a 2 Damage, 9-Again, Size 3 weapon, that gives –2 Initiative, and requires 3 Strength. It requires two hands to use. It also has the Stun special effect. Because of its pure iron manufacture, it causes aggravated wounds to changelings.

work selling root vegetables, and telling you ghost stories. He would leave for days at a time, leaving you to manage the business. It was a hard life, but better than the orphanage. After a year, he told you why he adopted you; his cousin was your mother, and he couldn't find you after she passed away. He said you've inherited a great responsibility, one greater than root vegetables.

You were one of the family. You followed the path. You walked the Vigil. You still hunt on occasion. But mostly, you seek out the answers to *why* you hunt. You investigate, research, and work to uncover the truth behind your condition. You seek out experts, soothsayers, and ancient spirits in order to piece together this ancient puzzle.

The Lonesome Road

The Otodo only rarely settle. Most travel, because their natures can't stay hidden forever. Despite honorable intentions, their dark powers unsettle average people. As hybrid blood spread across the islands, it also thinned. Now, the family is smaller even than when it was constrained to a small fishing village. So, they travel. They spread out. They do whatever's in their power to sustain the line. They have sexual liaisons wherever they roam, and they keep meticulous track of offspring. When the Otodo meet at a crossroads, they share these notes, building an organic genealogy for the family. During these meetings, they sit and integrate their massive family trees. This means every active member of the family is expected to keep records. Some travel with these records, another might maintain a base of operations somewhere along her path where she can compile and archive her notes.

Not all family members have direct, active blood ties. Some cousins, and those brought in by adoption or marriage, don't carry the fire within. These family members tend to be brought in for support, often with record-keeping, but sometimes with the hunt. An Otodo who tries to hide her heritage from her family sets herself up for heartbreak, and puts her family in danger.

Most Otodo work alone, or with other hunters. Otodo-exclusive cells exist, but are rare in Edo. Otodo members typically adhere firmly to philosophical and religious doctrine as a way to maintain their Integrity, as Integrity is essential to control their dark gifts.

Otodo Status

Status in the Otodo affords family members the following benefits:

- Accepting one's responsibility in the Otodo affords the ability to learn Seitokuken gifts. Additionally, they gain Unseen Sense: *Oni*, as they can sense their own blood. They can expect to live approximately 150 years, if not killed.

••• At this level of familial recognition, Otodo gain a dot each of Resources and Contacts, as their cousins give information and monetary favors at crossroads. These Otodo live 250 years or more, if left to their devices.

••••• The greatest of the Otodo have achieved a balance between their heritage and their human flesh. They gain the Unseen Sense Merit, but not restrained to a specific creature type. The greatest Otodo know everything inhuman upon seeing it. Master Otodo can live 500 years or more; rumor has it that one of the first of the village still lives to this day.

Once Otodo hit adulthood, they begin aging slowly. This is commensurate with their Status dots.

Stereotypes

Ama-San: They work in their isolated places, doing great things for their communities. We'll always give them aid where possible.

Azusa Miko: They remain wary of our blood. But, in all honesty, I am wary of our blood.

Bijin: Their lot is a challenging one. That they devote themselves to both grace and bringing balance is admirable.

The Hototogisu: Ruthlessly efficient. We'd have notes to share and lessons to learn from each other, if they didn't wish to steal our birthright from under us.

Malleus Maleficarum: They may have the best of intentions, but their methods do not work here. They embolden sleeping dragons, and make our work harder.

New Endowments

The following Endowments are available to characters of their respective conspiracies.

Setto

The Hototogisu take their name from a breed of cuckoo. They chose this, because their gift allows them to steal the mystical abilities of their marks. They call this Setto, which is literally "theft" or "larceny." The Endowment is relatively new, as the conspiracy only recently formalized.

Setto is a one- to five-dot Merit. Each dot allows the Hototogisu a "slot" for a stolen Dread Power (or at Storyteller discretion, a Discipline, Gift, spell, Contract, or other activated monster ability if you're using other game lines). She cannot have a Dread Power above her total dots (so, with three dots, she can only steal a three-dot Dread Power), and every dot rating allows exactly one Dread Power at that level or lower. So, for example, a character with four dots in Setto might have at most one four-dot power, one at three dots, one at two dots, and one at one dot. She could never have two four-dot abilities. She can fill a slot with a lower-level Dread Power, however.

Stealing an ability requires the Hototogisu to con her mark. It also requires the thieving character to be aware of the ability she wishes to steal. She may have seen it in action, or heard detailed accountings of its use. As cutthroat merchants, the con usually takes the part of a business transaction with a great deal of fast-talking, seduction, or blackmail. This is occurs during a normal Social maneuvering action; once the victim is down his final Door, you may attempt the theft with Setto (in addition to the normal effects of the successful Social maneuvering action). Spend a point of Willpower. Roll Intelligence + Larceny, penalized by the dot rating of the Dread Power in question. If successful, the Hototogisu steals the Dread Power. So long as the Hototogisu lives, and keeps the power, the monster is denied the ability completely. A Hototogisu can shed a power stolen with Setto at any time; the monster immediately regains the ability.

To activate a stolen Dread Power, the Hototogisu must spend the normal Willpower cost for the Dread Power, and make the same roll. Work with the Storyteller to determine how certain more complex Dread Powers interact with the hunter.

Seitokuken

The Otodo's gifts stem from their ancestors' unholy liaisons. Seitokuken, their birthright, reflects those gifts. Seitokuken is an Endowment rated from one to five dots. Each dot offers an additional gift of your choice. At any time, the Otodo can meditate for six hours to replace a gift with any other. However, this causes her two lethal damage per exchanged gift as fire burns within her veins. Over time, many Otodo develop intricate burn scars along their vein patterns thanks to this phenomenon.

Some Seitokuken gifts would likely constitute Integrity breaking points. For this reason, most Otodo build impressive Resolve and Composure ratings.

Otodo characters may choose from the following gifts:

Hannya

Your character intuits the flow of souls and spirits. She sees immaterial spirits and demons as if they were materialized. Whenever a character she can perceive suffers a breaking point, your character sees a flash across his aura. When she perceives a character without Integrity (usually meaning a supernatural creature) for the first time, the Storyteller should roll your character's Seitokuken dots in secrecy. Success means your character knows the character is not natural. If successful, the player may ask any number of yes/no questions about the subject's aura over the course of the scene. The Storyteller must truthfully answer a number equal to the successes rolled. The Storyteller does not let the player know when the successes have "run out."

If the monster has a way of hiding his nature or appearance supernaturally, both players must make a roll. For the monster, the roll is based on his Dread Power's dots, plus his Supernatural Tolerance trait (or use Clash of Wills mechanics if you're using a monster from another game line). For the Otodo, the roll is equal to her Integrity plus her Seitokuken dots. The Otodo must achieve more successes than the monster to pierce the illusion.

Jabaku

This gift enables the Otodo to control the weak of will, as well as demons. It costs one Willpower point, and can be used on any demon or spirit the Otodo can see or knows by name. Also, it works on human characters suffering the Thrall Condition. It requires that the two characters perceive one another. Roll Integrity and make a command. The victim can contest this with Resolve + Supernatural Tolerance. If the Otodo succeeds, the command must be carried out. The command lasts no longer than a scene. If the command violates the victim's Aspirations or would cause harm to himself, he may spend a point of Willpower to ignore the command. Nothing stops the Otodo from attempting the command again.

Kaibutsu

Your character can let loose her demonic heritage, and let it shape her form. She grows in size, and becomes an utter monstrosity with blue or red skin, massive muscles, fangs, and horns. Spend a point of Willpower; the transformation requires an instant action. Divide out your character's Seitokuken dots to her Physical Attributes, however you wish. This can take her above five dots, but no higher than eight in a given Attribute. She gains 2/1 armor, but loses any worn armor as the growth shreds anything she's wearing. She gains



+2 Size, which increases her Health. Her massive horns and fangs can be used as damage rating 2 lethal weapons. While transformed, you may spend Willpower to reflexively heal one point of lethal damage or two points of bashing damage.

Additionally, human onlookers must roll Resolve + Composure to avoid running in fear, requiring successes equal to your character's Seitokuken dots. Characters who run will only barely remember the scene, rationalizing it as an animal attack or human brutality. Even characters who manage to remain on the scene have spotty, muddled memories and cannot connect the Otodo with the monster they saw without extensive evidence afterwards.

The change lasts for a scene, or until you choose to reverse it.

Kenshi

This gift allows your Otodo to craft a ban for a demon or spirit. Your character must see the monster, know its name, or



otherwise have a scrap of its form to use Kenshi. It requires an extended action, rolling Integrity and requiring successes equal to the victim's Willpower dots. These rolls may be made every turn if you spend a Willpower point. Without Willpower, the rolls take a half an hour each. Generally, the Otodo craft bans related to specific talismans and symbols they create.

Your character's Seitokuken dots act as the monster's spirit Rank for the purpose of determining the ban level. Left alone, this will last for one week.

Your character may use this gift against human characters with the Soulless or Thrall Conditions.

Kigo

With this gift, your character marks a victim with a burning emblem. Most Otodo have a signature kanji they use for this gift. The emblem sears into the victim. Even once the damage is healed, any Otodo or character able to see auras will see the mark. Spend a Willpower point and touch the victim (or pass through an ephemeral victim); this touch can be part of a physical attack. Roll Integrity, contested by the victim's Resolve + Supernatural Tolerance. This causes one point of lethal damage (or adds +1 damage to the attack). Against vampires and other undead monsters, it causes aggravated damage instead. When coupled with an unarmed attack, the rest of the damage is upgraded, as if the Kigo were a weapon.

Even a blinded Otodo clearly sees these marks like a burning white beacon. This means your character never suffers penalties for obscured vision or blindness when engaging a marked enemy, and can see it from upwards of a mile away. This adds your character's Seitokuken dots as a bonus to any rolls to find or pursue the victim.

The mark lasts indefinitely until removed. A victim can self-inflict aggravated damage equal to your character's Seitokuken in order to remove the brand. A victim may only be subject to a single Kigo mark from a single Otodo at a time.

Shinigami Buki

With this gift, the Otodo can literally devour souls. This is typically used to exorcise possessing spirits, or to destroy demons. However, it can be used against human targets to devastating effect. The Otodo must touch her victim throughout the process; against a human this usually means restraining him, but against a demon, it generally means trapping it with the Kenshi gift or relying on allies. Spend a Willpower point as a reflexive action. For up to a number of turns equal to your Seitokuken dots — so long as the contact remains — your character removes one Willpower point per turn from the victim. Against spirits, demons, and other otherworldly creatures, this also causes a point of lethal damage per turn. A mortal losing half his total Willpower to this power gains the Soulless Condition. If he loses all Willpower, he gains the Thrall Condition.

Shonetsu Jigoku

This gift allows the Otodo to bring forth the hell within her veins, and wield it as a weapon. It oozes out of her pores like lava, and catches fire upon contact with the air around her. She can safely let her body burn with lambent flame, coat a weapon with her fiery blood, or splash the flames across her enemies. Spend a point of Willpower, and roll Integrity. Each success allows for one attack with the Shonetsu Jigoku fires. The fire acts as a weapon with a damage rating of one less than your character's Seitokuken dots. Used on a weapon, it replaces the weapon's damage rating. It can be thrown at a range of 5/10/15 yards with a Dexterity + Athletics roll.



Storytelling in the Edo Jidai

Storytelling in this setting is much like any other; use the same techniques you'd use elsewhere. Here are a few tricks, tips, and ideas to help make your game succeed.

Find Anchor Points

Most of the audience for this book lives in Western nations, and can't be expected to know the ins and outs of Japanese culture. Instead of trying for a detailed, perfect emulation of 17th century Japanese life (except, you know, with monsters), it's easier to find a few cultural anchor points, touchstones to adhere to and emulate.

You'll quickly find that good source media is difficult to come by, and only rarely that focused on accurate portrayal of history. This is for two big reasons. First off, media that makes it out of Japan has to court a non-Japanese audience. So pedantic, well-researched, accurate works just aren't a priority. Secondly, most popular media is focused on story, and history is just there for style and set dressing. Even renowned period directors like Akira Kurosawa took creative liberties to tell better stories. There's nothing wrong with this; just know that's what you want going in. Just make sure everyone at the table is on the same page. Then again, if you want a deeply accurate historical setting, you'll need to do a lot of legwork. Before going that far, and investing all that time, consider how much potential value it could add to your chronicle.

Media

One easy choice is to find media to work from, to inspire, and to help with cultural points. However, note that we're working with a very specific time. Popular movies tend to favor samurai romanticism, which isn't particularly prominent in this particular time. This doesn't mean you can't use them for inspiration, just that if you want a grasp of the specific culture, you're going to have to do some legwork. Imagine a movie set in the 1920s: What would it be like to use that as source material for your 1950s chronicle? You could find value, but it's going to be a different experience. Then again, most films for entertainment take numerous creative liberties anyway.

Anime and manga are both excellent and terrible sources for inspiration, depending on your particular wants and needs. Historical accuracy is hard to find in manga and anime. For example, Ninja Scroll takes numerous creative liberties with history, but tells a damned good story. Some works span larger periods, but touch on important issues in the time. For example, Samurai Champloo draws inspiration from all over the Edo Jidai, but doesn't even attempt historical accuracy.

A few choice films to start with include *Samurai: Miyamoto Musashi* (a three-part 1954 biopic about a highly influential period samurai), *The Hidden Fortress* (set before our period, but it's a really great romp that has a fun **Hunter: The Vigil** vibe; also the inspiration for Star Wars), *Hanzo the Razor*, *Lone Wolf and Cub*, *Ugetsu* (set right before the Edo Jidai, but it's a wonderful ghost story and great **Hunter** fodder), *Onibaba* (set well before the Edo Jidai, but again, interesting horror story), *The 47 Ronin* (set after our period, but it deals well with bushido as a concept).

Aspirations

To cut down on research and pedantry, you can just reward players for attempts at cultural expression at the table. If you choose to go this route, give everyone an additional Aspiration slot. This is a "Cultural Aspiration," and should be filled with a behavior, philosophy, or attitude related to the period. So long as the players exhibit that Aspiration during the play session, they get a Beat, or Willpower in a one-shot game. They can keep the same Aspiration in the next session, or swap it out for a different aspect of period culture.

Be generous here; it doesn't have to be something obscure and specific. It could be as simple as removing one's shoes before entering a home, or bowing in deference as a samurai passes by. This is meant to build an authentic feel, not to necessitate extensive, elaborate research.

Using the Future

One of the best things about playing in historical periods is you already know what happens. You can do a little research, and find significant events that can help plot the course of your chronicle.

The Meireki Fire

The Meireki Fire is a perfect example of such a historical event. It occurs in 1657, and destroys upwards of 70% of Edo, killing roughly 100,000 people. This sort of cataclysmic event can change the course of your chronicle, and shift dynamics drastically. Monsters aren't just going to stop being hungry when there are fewer humans to devour.

If you look further, there are stories of how the fire started when a priest burned a cursed kimono. If you want to use this event in your chronicle, you can seed that very kimono as a relic or other plot element earlier on.

Tokugawa Ietsuna

In 1651, the 10-year-old Tokugawa Ietsuna had to take the shogun's seat when Tokugawa Iemitsu died. Five regents made major decisions instead of the 10-year-old boy, and the shogunate was particularly vulnerable due to these and other factors. The vulnerable shogunate had to deal with many major issues from Iemitsu's rule. For example, some *ronin* planned a devastating coup, which would destroy Edo (called the Keian Uprising). This period would be a perfect opportunity for the monsters encroaching on the shogunate.

THE CHRONICLES OF DARKNESS

Fallen Blossoms is about the monster hunters in the Edo Jidai. But what about the other monsters?

Vampires in Edo are like microcosmic daimyo; individuals or families lord over districts reserved for human castes. This functionally builds a caste system within the vampires. For example, excepting more recognized entertainers who deal with the courts, Nosferatu vampires have a near monopoly over the undesirable non-castes. Ironically, this gives them disproportionate power thanks to the sheer numbers they claim. Edo stands as one of the single most powerful Kindred cities; vampires disproportionately populate the growing city, and this trend does not appear to be changing any time soon.

Werewolves are relatively uncommon in Edo. It seems the curse only flows through those with Ainu blood. Since the Ainu are considered outside the social hierarchy, when werewolf blood turns up in prominent families, this can cause great disgrace. One daimyo house fell because of such a scandal; the shogun covered the story and claimed it was because of a coup attempt.

Mages deal fluidly within all echelons of Edo society. As they are mostly mortal, they blend well unless they make particularly egregious mistakes. The mages rally around a Hierarch called Nakatomi. She demands they maintain harmonious existences, and foster humanity's creativity. She currently resides in the Yoshiwara district, maintaining a kabuki theater as her personal domain.

Prometheans exist within Edo; a handful of Ulgan wander the isles, moving from place to place to avoid causing great disturbance. At any given time, between one and four reside in Edo's bounds. Pandorans, however, are highly common. A great many can be found in ceramic soldiers that can be found in some ancient temples.

Changelings are rather abundant in Edo. They organize in a court dedicated to Orihime, Amaterasu's weaver. They cling tightly to her principles of matchmaking, and for this reason have become fast friends with certain Hototogisu, and some of the Azusa Miko.

Demons find way to Edo, as they do anywhere. Mostly, they keep to their own agendas, attempting to dismantle or avoid the Machine. As Edo rapidly urbanizes, this can be quite the daunting task. Some demons have sought out the Otodo for insight and wisdom about their condition and agenda.

Beasts are somewhat common in the recent decades. As the city grows and changes, its nightmares grow and change with it. Tokugawa's confidence bleeds throughout the people, and the Firstborn know that without fear, the empire will devour itself in time. Unsurprisingly, Makara are the most common Beasts in the region; they often clash with the Ama-San divers.

Sin-Eaters deal with Azusa Miko frequently. Their lots overlap significantly, and in many cases, the two have been known to work together. Some Azusa Miko see the Sin-Eaters as valuable problem solvers, and sources of direct, highly relevant wisdom. The Sin-Eaters see Azusa Miko as highly informed, fully living help. This gives them greater ability to serve whatever purposes they need.



"Here we are," said Phillippe. He dismounted the horse in a single, elegant movement and extended his hand up to her. Even though they had been riding all day and all night, he still looked as regal as ever in his royal blue silks embroidered in silver. Her thoughts strayed to her own tattered dress and how ridiculous she must look next to him. Do not let him make you feel small, she reminded herself. Never let anyone do that you to ever again.

"You are a murderer," Perrette wanted to say. She said, "Thank you," instead. Perrette hated her voice. At the best of times, it was soft and squeaky. It wasn't musical and sweet like a little girl's voice, but dry and withered like an old woman's. Today, her voice was raw from sobbing, and she was still choking back tears.

Perrette took his hand. Phillippe put his other hand around her waist, and gently pulled her down from the saddle. "I'll take you to the King in the morning," he said.

"Your King destroyed my village," she wanted to say. Instead she was silent. Hot tears welled up in her eyes. She bit her lip and looked away. She wouldn't give him the satisfaction of seeing her cry.

"Oh, Perrette," he said. He pulled her body close to his. He stroked her hair and embraced her tightly. Enveloped in the chill of Winter's mantle and pressed against his warm body, she felt his Glamour wend its way into her mind. It soothed her anger, told her to surrender to him, told her that she had lost, and that she must yield to sorrow.

This must be what freezing to death feels like, she thought numbly. An easy death. A gentle death.

Then she felt the handle of his rapier press into her hip, and she remembered the faces of her parents. Dead now: their bodies left out in the open to rot. She realized that she could pull the knife from her belt and jam it between Phillippe's ribs before he could step back to draw his sword, for she was small and quick.

No. Not now. Later, she thought. I will ruin him and his King first. She felt the power of Summer wash over her, and the Wyrd whispered that she could burn this whole city down.

"We can help," Phillippe whispered, twisting a lock of her hair around his fingers.

Perette nodded. "Thank you," she said, sniffling.

Phillippe's death would not be easy or gentle.

Lily, Sabre and Thorn

A rogue does not laugh in the same way that an honest man does; a hypocrite does not shed the tears of a man of good faith. All falsehood is a mask; and however well made the mask may be, with a little attention we may always succeed in distinguishing it from the true face.

–Alexandre Dumas, The Three Musketeers

In the year 1648, the Thirty Years' War comes to an end, marking the beginning of a new era for France. Louis XIV, the self-styled "Sun King," leads his country into an age of political and social dominance, reconciling the old hereditary nobility of the Middle Ages and the rising bureaucratic class under his iron rule. The Sun King's court is the envy of all Europe, but there are food riots in the capital, and the countryside is racked with warfare and famine. It is the Age of Reason, and the age of the witch hunts. It is an age of unprecedented excess and of wretched poverty. The common man enjoys greater class mobility than ever before, but the trans-Atlantic slave trade is booming.

This is the setting of *Lily, Sabre, and Thorn*, but it is not the soul of the game. The soul of the game is that of swashbuckler fiction. It's a world where the heroes are loveable scoundrels who fight for love, honor, and freedom. It's a world of deadly intrigues, opulent feasts, and improbable swordfights. It's a world where revenge can bring a city to its knees, and true love conquers all.

Like fairy tales, swashbuckler fiction is upbeat in the popular imagination. The heroes and villains are easily distinguishable from one another, and in the end, good triumphs over evil. But **Changeling** players know that there is a darkness behind even the most innocent-seeming stories. Modern versions of *The Count of Monte Cristo* may cut out the infanticide, revenge, and decidedly unchivalrous poisonings, but anyone who has read the book knows how the story really goes. And though the grandeur of the Sun King is unparalleled in Europe, his rule is ruthless, and his courtiers scramble to get his favor lest their heads end up on the chopping block.

It is a world where appearances are everything, and no one is what he appears to be. The beautiful and unattainable queen twists a loyal soldier around her finger in the name of courtly love, then executes him after he's served his purpose. A roguish duelist and dandy is a sociopathic sadist (Tim Roth provides an excellent example of this in the 1995 film *Rob Roy*). The loyal serving-man fawns over his master, but his obsequious smile hides his deep resentment. The webs of intrigue run deep in *Lily, Sabre, and Thorn*, and an aspiring courtier may find that courage and honor are not enough to protect him from the machinations of his rivals.

It is a decadent, dirty world ruled by passion, greed, and hunger, where the gilded halls of Versailles are as dangerous as the back streets of Paris.

Why Swashbucklers?

The swashbuckler is caught between two worlds. He is not a true member of the aristocracy, though he can charm his way into any fête. He's not a commoner, though he always has a rose for the *grisettes* and a loaf of bread for the urchins of the *cour des miracles*. He loves his country, though it has left him crippled and penniless after the war's end. He loves his lady, though their love can never be. He loves his companions in arms, but they are as lost as he is.

He is, in other words, not so different from the changeling.

How to Use This Chapter

Lily, Sabre, and Thorn provides general guidelines and setting material for running a game of **Changeling: The Lost** in *le Grand Siècle*. Particular focus is given to the rule of Louis XIV. This is not to glorify or lionize the Sun King. Many considered

him an egomaniacal tyrant whose decadent lifestyle was a travesty in the face of the misery of his subjects. Regardless, his style of absolute monarchy gave rise to the modern nation-state that we know today. More importantly for our purposes, the court of the Sun King would influence the Seasonal Courts and shape the lives of the Lost for generations to come.

This chapter is not intended to provide a comprehensive history or anthropology of early modern France. Setting material is presented in broad strokes. Thematic unity and genre are of primary importance with historical accuracy as a distant second. Historical research will enrich your game, but historical elements should serve the purposes of your stories, not the other way around.

A list of works that inspired *Lily, Sabre, and Thorn* or that might be useful to players and storytellers looking to capture the essence of the game are given at the end of this chapter.

Themes

The traditional themes of swashbuckler fiction are present in *Lily, Sabre, and Thorn*, albeit in a dark, twisted form. While the splendors of courtly life and fae magic are sublime, there is always a hidden edge to them. The lives of the Lost are bittersweet at best, but they are never far from wonder and beauty.

Decadence and Romance

It was a rare enough occurrence for a child to be born to one of the Lost, but for two changelings to conceive a child was utterly unheard of. When the Spring Queen and her consort announced the christening of their newborn son, it was a remarkable occasion, and it demanded an exceptional fête. The Spring Court did not disappoint. The tables groaned under a massive feast: trays of candied quinces and frozen custards; suckling pig stuffed with braised cockatrice coxcomb; roast amaranthine stuffed with hobtruffles; tiny marzipan nymphs and satyrs cavorting in miniature palaces of spun sugar; chocolates from the New World nestled next to stuffed dates from Palestine. The courtiers were splendidly attired. The Royal Consort wore hunter green hose and a doublet of pale sage. His amber eyes blazed with pride. The Queen wore gauzy silks that shifted in color and patterns just as her wings did – hypnotic spirals of green, blue, and purple. Her hair and her feathery antennae glittered with silver dust. The babe was beautiful and sweet-natured – as if the son of the Spring Queen and her consort would be anything but. Even a few among the Winter Court could not help but smile when they looked upon him. Though his looks did not betray his fey heritage – he had neither his mother's wings nor his father's antlers – his eyes sparkled a clear emerald green, even at a week's age.





The entire freehold was in attendance. Even the Winter King was present, though he remained in his chair, clad in his black funerary shroud as always, and spoke only through his seneschal. There were many in the freehold who thought such an extravagant gathering was inauspicious and certain to attract the Gentry, but the Spring Queen would not be refused on the eve of the vernal equinox.

The naysayers' fears were unfounded. The evening was joyous. All feasted to until bursting. Even Paul Ninefingers refused a third helping of lamprey pie. There was dancing, and toasts, and poetry. More than a few of the attendees snuck off to dark corners of the hall to celebrate in a more private fashion – and if there were no more children born to the freehold in nine months' time, it would not be for a lack of trying.

There was only one moment that evening where a hint of sorrow could be sensed. But if a sensitive Onyx Courtier were looking in the right direction at the right time, he would have seen this: At the height of the evening, as Bishop Tannhauser took the babe from the Queen's arms for the baptism, the Vernal Queen met eyes with Thrice-Damned Jacques, standing in the back. He would have sensed the tiniest whisper of sorrow amidst the roar of joy and desire as Jacques' emerald green eyes gazed into his Queen's eyes – just for a moment – before he turned, left the ballroom and disappeared into the night.

Love and romance are key themes in swashbuckler fiction, and the Lost are nothing if not creatures of intense passion and intensity. The trust of a changeling is not easily won, and those who can bring themselves to devote themselves utterly to another person are either utterly foolish or very brave. The love of a changeling can bring a kingdom to its knees; the passion of the Lost burns brighter than the sun, and the warped love of the Gentry can shatter souls.

Most changelings choose to hide their romantic feelings. They may engage in distant, courtly affection for an unattainable lover as a way to avoid true intimacy, or they may have clandestine affairs with their beloved. And yet, there are some loves that simply cannot be. As in the mortal world, many marriages among politically-active Lost are used to cement ties between quarrelling changeling factions.

Honor and Glory

The duel was surely a formality, thought Reynault. He had offered no great slight – were the women of the Summer Court not known for their liberality? – and he had made due apologies. Still, Princess Carpillon made a great show of taking offense, and demanded satisfaction on the battlefield. Pistols at dawn, then. Easy enough; both parties would deliberately miss, and both could walk away from the field without dishonor.

When he heard the signal, Reynault drew his pistol, aimed it straight at the ground, and fired. He looked up at the Princess.

Her pistol was still pointed directly at him. Reynault couldn't tell which was emitting more smoke: the barrel of Carpillon's gun or the mantle of the Princess herself.

A changeling's word is his life. His basic sustenance in Arcadia depended on his contracts with the elemental forces of that twisted realm, and it is no stretch to say that his survival in this world is almost as dependent on his reputation. His magics rely upon the contracts that he has forged with the elemental forces of the world. It is only by honoring these ancient pacts that he can wield fae magic at all. While a mortal man who was dishonored may find himself snubbed at parties and laughed at behind his back, a changeling shorn of his honor may find himself friendless and powerless against his enemies — or against the Gentry. Even when not sworn to a pledge, a Lost's reputation is her shield, and being perceived as unreliable or dishonorable can be a matter of life and death.

Like honor, glory carries considerable weight in a reputation-based economy. But glory is not about strength of character: It is about power. Guilded Aspirants trade tales of their prowess in rhyming couplets at court; a Knight of the Summer Court presents her king with the heads of his enemies; the Autumn King presents an elaborate and costly feast and nearly bankrupts himself in the process. Conspicuous displays of power are necessary to attract followers and to intimidate one's enemies. Glory means standing up for lost causes even when you're against impossible odds. The glory-seeker sees a larger purpose to her life and to her death — whether she fights for her sovereign, for her freehold, or for her freedom. She may die young, it is true, but she will be sung about for generations to come.

Vengeance and Betrayal

Every one of the Lost has been wronged. They have been kidnapped, abused, tortured, destroyed, and remade as a shadow of their former selves. Each bears the scars of their Durance as an indelible reminder of what was forced upon them. Even the most resigned Winter courtier once entertained thoughts of vengeance, or so they say.

The fetch is another object of revenge. If you return home to discover that your husband has been sleeping with your fetch every night for the last seven years, can you forgive your fetch? Can you forgive your husband? And what of the faithful wife who, unaware that she is a fetch, finds her husband growing more and more distant until the day she catches him *in flagrante delicto* with a shapeshifting monster who is impersonating her? Should fetch and changeling settle their differences on the dueling field, or is death too good for them?

The structure of Lost society is rife with intrigue. The Lost are creatures of deception and disguises, and trust is a rare thing. Even the most steadfast and honest retainer might find that she needs to betray her sovereign if he is corrupt or mad.

Revenge is a strong theme of swashbuckler fiction and of **Changeling: the Lost**. What lengths will you go to for your revenge? Whom are you willing to hurt in the process? When you are done, will you be satisfied? Will you even remember who you are?

Identity and Redemption

"Ah, my angel has come for me again," said Mathieux.

"Don't get up," said White-Thorn, putting her basket of wine, bread, and herbs on a small table.

"What sort of man would I be if I didn't get out of my chair when a beautiful lady came into my home?" He stood to his full height, then tried to speak again, but was interrupted by a coughing fit.

White-Thorn scowled at him in mock anger. "You should be in bed, Monsieur Mathieux," she said, and led him over to the small rope bed.

"Your henpecking shall be the death of me!" he said, smiling as he slowly eased his way onto the bed. He looked up at White-Thorn. "It's times like this that you really do remind me of my wife. Did I ever tell you about her?"

White-Thorn turned back to the basket and busied herself with its contents, trying to hide her face from Mathieux. "You didn't," she lied. White-Thorn tried not to remember the last time she'd seen her fetch, face down in the river, with her straw hair floating away from her rapidly dissolving head of thatch and birds' nests.

"Ah," he said. "It's funny, you remind me of her sometimes. You know, I had a dream about her again last night." He coughed again – longer and wetter this time. "Do you think it's really her?" he asked softly. "Do you think it's some trick of the Devil?"

"I think you just miss her, that's all," said White-Thorn as she walked back to the bedside. "Drink this," she said, handing him a medicinal tincture in a small glass.

Mathieux drank it down without complaint. The two sat together in silence for a long while.

"Will you grant an old man's foolish request?" said Mathieux.

White-Thorn nodded.

"Stay at my side," he said. "At least until I fall asleep."

She did. That night, Mathieux dreamed of his wife again, and he was at peace.

The world has left the swashbuckler behind. The world is no longer as glamorous as it once was. The honor and glory of his summer years are hollow. The king he risked his life to protect has died and left his throne to an ungrateful brat. He has nothing left but empty hedonism and a pauper's grave.

The Lost, too, cannot recapture what they once had. They cannot simply resume their mortal lives, nor can they recapture the terrible glories of Arcadia. Some succumb to despair, ending their lives or returning to their Keepers after seeing that the world has left them behind. They must rebuild themselves and create new lives for themselves out of the shambles of their old ones.

While this may be tragic, the rootless nature of the Lost often leads them to lives of great adventure. They are free to roam as they please. They might live as simple con-men roaming from village to village, or they might become artists and artisans who create works of otherworldly beauty. They might reinvent themselves as mysterious nobles from a country you've never heard of, and spend their evenings wining, dining, and bedding the elites in Versailles. They might become the saviors of the common people, who right wrongs and defend the people from depravity of the Others and their fellow man.

They might be heroes.

Mood: Baroque Heroism

The world of *Lily, Sabre, and Thorn* is rendered in vibrant colors and bold textures. Your lover is the most handsome man in all of France; your Queen is wise and noble as Athena; your rival has a heart blacker and colder than the frozen seas of hell. But the soaring passions of the game of courtly intrigue are kept in place by byzantine rules spoken and unspoken, and there is always a price for breaking them. The looming spirit of the Enlightenment posits an orderly world where everything and everyone has her place. The trick is to bend the rules to your favor — or to be too clever or too charming to be caught.

It's a world of deep intrigues and labyrinthine alliances, where a stolen glance at a masque or a flower placed in a corsage *just so* could carry secrets that could bring a kingdom down. The excess could drive a man mad — but it is a beautiful madness.

France in Le Grande Siecle

The Court of the Sun King

The 17th century belongs to France. France is the largest country in the West, and Louis XIV has brought it thoroughly under his thumb. Louis XIV shrewdly took advantage of mid-century civil unrest and firmly established absolute power for the French monarchy. He was ruthless and effective; the nobles who served under him found that they were no longer powerful vassals in their own right, but courtiers whose lives depended upon staying in the good graces of their king. His strongly centralized government would lay the foundation for the nation-state as we know it.

The Seasonal Courts would take notice. In this century, the Seasonal Courts consolidate their power. In previous centuries, they existed in the world of legend and myth. A changeling escaped the Hedge and heard the tales of a distant freehold where others of his kind live and are ruled by the sons and daughters of Maman Suzanne and Jean de la Niege. If he were brave enough, he might have undertaken a long and dangerous journey to find his fellow Lost.

But the rise of the freehold brings its own challenges. The Lost of the 17th century are fiercely independent and, having escaped the tyranny of the Others, will not bend the knee to a new master so easily — especially if they've lived on their own terms for decades.

The Robe and the Sword

Throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, France had been ruled by minor nobles — called the *noblesse d'épée*, or the nobles of the sword — who laid hereditary claim to small territories, each commanding their own private armies. In the wake of the Fronde, an uprising of many of the minor nobility during Louis XIV's childhood, the Sun King created



a national army that answered directly to him. Under his rule, a new class of nobility emerges — one whose claims rest not on land ownership or a hereditary title. These "nobles of the robe" were commoners — judges or administrators who typically purchased their posts from the crown for exorbitant bribes. The Sun King expertly plays these groups off of each other to keep himself firmly in control of his country.

A similar challenge faces many changeling sovereigns. As more Lost gather together, each brings her own ideas and agendas to the freehold. Intrigues and plotting abound, and any sovereign must choose her advisors carefully.

Life at Versailles

The Sun King did not rule his country from its capital. He detested Paris, and found a great advantage in placing his center of power in a place that was removed from the center of his populace.

Formerly a rustic hunting lodge, the Château de Versailles was renovated into a sprawling baroque palace. The Sun King was fond of using displays of conspicuous consumption to demonstrate his power; the Château de Versailles is perhaps the ultimate expression of this.

Under the formal bureaucracy established by the King and his predecessors, virtually nothing could be accomplished without his official approval. This meant that attendance at court in Versailles was mandatory for any aristocrat who wanted to govern effectively or even maintain his power. This led to Duc de Saint-Simon referring to Versailles as a "gilded cage" for the nobility.

As the planets orbit the Sun, so did life at Versailles revolve around the Sun King. His day began at the same time each morning; his attendants dressed him and bathed him according to a strict timeline. After exiting his chambers, he walked down the hallway to his dining room. All courtiers were expected to be in attendance to witness this procession and to watch him at his royal breakfast. No one was permitted to eat before he breakfasted. He would then announce his schedule for the day, and all of the court could make their plans accordingly. Anyone who wished to address him throughout the day was expected to obey elaborate rules of etiquette. Courtiers had to be sure to know the correct form of address, the correct hour at which to approach the king, or even how to knock on his door correctly (scratch lightly with the pinky finger of the left hand; some courtiers let that nail grow long especially for this purpose). In the Royal Chapel, the King's pew alone faced the altar; the other pews faced him.

While all of these rituals may seem like the idiosyncrasies of a megalomaniac (and they were, to some extent), there was a larger purpose behind them. Louis XIV worked tirelessly to promote France as a unitary entity that was not just controlled by him, but embodied by him. He was not the ruler of the state — he *was* the state. Versailles was a crucial part of this. Louis could control almost every aspect of life at Versailles. Paris, on the other hand, would not be so easily controlled.

Paris

Paris in the 17th century has spilled beyond its medieval walls to become a metropolis of nearly 500,000 at the start of Louis XIV's reign. The city is densely packed with rich and poor crammed together cheek by jowl. To keep order, Louis XIV's chief minister created a royal police force in Paris — the first of its kind. The Lieutenant-General had broad authority to prosecute and bring charges against nearly anyone, though the bulk of the force's efforts was focused on clearing out the slums and maintaining civic order. Any undesirables — beggars, prostitutes, malcontents, madmen — could be rounded up and placed in *l'Hôpital général*, a facility that more closely resembled a prison or a workhouse than a hospital in the modern sense. More than one low-Clarity changeling has found himself there, trapped in iron manacles and unable to escape.

There is beauty to be found in the madness, of course: Notre-Dame, Sainte-Chapelle, the Pont Neuf. The rulers of the *ancien régime* devoted considerable resources to the beautification of Paris. The Palais-Royal, L'Hôtel national des Invalides, the Palais du Luxembourg, and the promenade on the outskirts of town called Jardin des Tuileries (better known these days as the Champs-Elysees) were all new sights in the city.

Even in the 1600s, Paris is a city of the world. Senegalese sailors, Persian poets, and Algonquin traders can be found in its streets. The Lost of the city are similarly diverse. Madame Zhou is a Ming dynasty refugee and one of the most skilled oneiromancers of the age. In keeping with the hedgehog spines that cover her scalp, she is of a gloomy and irascible temperament, but anyone who can win her over will have an ally for life.

Diversity in the Kingdom of France

The France that we know today was not the France of the 17th century, nor the France of the 17th century the same as it had been in the 16th century. Centuries of warfare resulted in territories that switched between kings constantly. Most people only paid attention to who their immediate superiors were — typically, a minor noble who laid hereditary claim to a small parcel of land. Accordingly, most citizens are likely to think of themselves by a regional or ethnic identity rather than by their nationality. It is likely that many characters will have a language other than French — such as *langue d'oc*, Breton, or Catalan — or an unusual dialect thereof as their mother tongue. A sense of regional identity and pride still runs strong in France to this day. It also played a strong role in courtly life and a thematic role in the swashbuckling genre. *The Three Musketeers* would not be the same novel if D'Artagnan were a Parisian guttersnipe instead of a daring Gascon farm boy, after all.

The Kingdom of France contains several indigenous languages and cultures within its borders, and the Sun King made many efforts to stamp them out in place of a national, homogenous French identity. He gave wide state support

to the Catholic Church not out of any sense of apparent religiosity, but rather because he recognized how powerful the Church could be in controlling the populace. (His philosophy of Gallicianism reinforced this; no Bishops could be appointed in France without his approval, and they could not leave the country without his permission.) Though de facto persecution was increasing in the 1680s, when poorly-disciplined soldiers known as *dragonnes* harassed Protestant citizens, the anti-Protestant sentiment came to a head in 1685. Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes and introduced the Edict of Fontainebleau, effectively legalizing the persecution of Protestants. Their homes and churches were burned, their businesses were seized, and Protestant public officials were given two weeks to convert under pain of death. As a result, nearly half a million Protestants fled the country.

Jews in this period fared slightly better than they did under Louis XIII. The Sun King revoked the edict that declared it illegal under pain of death for Christians to converse with or shelter Jews. The reasons for this revocation were more utilitarian than humanitarian; there were many Jews in the newly-annexed Alsace-Lorraine, but there were too few to cause a dangerous uprising, and they were ripe targets for profitable extortion by government officials.

The Lost are masters of dissembling, and they can hide in places that are all but invisible to mortal eyes. Some Lost might aid their mortal counterparts fleeing persecution — either out of a sense of solidarity with the oppressed or for a handsome profit.

The Arts and Education

Literacy was on the rise in this era, though perhaps only twenty percent of the population could read and write. The newly-invented newspaper was gaining ground rapidly as a source of information. Students gathered at coffee shops and wine bars to read the papers and argue about philosophy. Middle- and upper-class ladies gathered in *salons* and did the same. *The Princess of Cleves,* the first psychological novel of Europe, is written during this time by Madame de Lafayette.

The most celebrated *salon* of Lost circles is Heloise de Claire's Columbarium. The Columbarium is a marble-fronted townhouse in the Marais district of Paris where the fashionable Lost of Paris meet to trade ideas, news, and gossip. De Claire is a gracious but reserved Shadowsoul with an enviable art collection. She typically invites artists, philosophers, and any new changelings to the Columbarium at least once. The Columbarium is named for the courtyard behind the house (which is actually a Hollow) that contains a fine greenhouse of various goblin fruits and several pairs of snow-white doves. There are rumors that Heloise often entertains ghosts and other supernatural creatures in her salon. She never outright denies these rumors, but instead says that she does her utmost to be a gracious hostess to whoever enters her home in good faith.

The venerable guild of bards and memory-smiths, the Guild of the Sacred Journey (**Lords of Summer**, p. 134), is in a period of transition. The Guild had previously chosen its members for practical reasons such as fleet footedness, reliability, discretion, and the ability to memorize and recite often lengthy messages unerringly. Now that literacy is more common than ever and travel is safer and faster than in previous centuries, the Guild is finding itself increasingly less patronized by the Lost of France. In order to remain

Eclipse

In August of 1654, a complete solar eclipse is visible for thousands of miles all over Europe. The event is marked by chaos and hysteria — especially where the Diurnal Courts make their home. In some places, the streets run red with blood as the Moon and Sun Courts openly wage war until both Sun and Moon have gone over the horizon. Near a small village in Poland, the Moon Court takes the opportunity to wreak havoc upon an invading Russian army, and the local Sun Court joins in the slaughter. In some areas, the opposite is rumored to have happened. The Sun and Moon Courts called a momentary truce, and walked together under the shadow of the eclipse.

In Paris, where the Diurnal Courts are not so powerful, events are quieter. Still, the *de facto* leader of the Moon Court, a Manikin con-man known as Blackeye the Turk, would hate to see an opportunity to stir up trouble go by. His chief target is likely to be Madame Hadjia of the Sun Court, a noble duelist and poet who is as renowned for her eloquence and kind heart as she is for her martial skill. Because there are comparatively few fellow Moon Courtiers in Paris, he might enlist the help of other Lost for assistance. Of course, Madame Hadjia might also reward anyone who tipped her off to Blackeye's schemes, or she might just be planning a few pranks for Blackeye herself.

The rapid growth of the city has not been without problems. Many of the rural people who came to the city to seek their fortunes ended up in the gutter. The various slum districts of the city are known as *cours des miracles*. A powerful Autumn courtier known only as the Grande Thaumaturge keeps an eye on the comings and goings in the slums. His knowledge of the criminal underworld in Paris is almost as extensive as his knowledge of the occult. The Lost who wish to seek him out would do better to find his chief lieutenant, a Larcenist (**Night Horrors: Grim Fears**, p. 63) and small-time actor called Flimflam who trades small favors and fences goods for mortals and fellow changelings alike.

fashionable and relevant, the Guild is making a radical change: They're now recruiting only the loveliest of the Fairest to serve under their banner.

Many of the old guard of the Sacred Couriers are finding themselves pushed out of the Guild. These disgruntled former couriers might be willing to share some of the messages that they've been entrusted with over the years for the right price. They have perfect memories, after all.

Town and Country

The early modern era sees an explosion in urban populations. Increased freedom of movement and the rise of the middle class mean that Lost are able to congregate in cities instead of remaining in isolated rural areas. This leads to increased organization, the rise of the freehold, and more powerful Courts.

In the medieval era, fewer of the Lost organized themselves into freeholds. While the mortal population of the era is more likely to believe that their loved ones had been kidnapped by the Fair Folk and replaced by a fetch, not all of the Lost were able to integrate seamlessly back into society. A changeling cannot disappear into the anonymity of the crowd in a small village — particularly if he once lived there as a mortal. Many of the medieval Lost lived marginal and often nomadic existences as outlaws, witches, and cunning-men, stealing their sustenance or bargaining with mortals to stay alive. With the improved transportation and increasing freedom of movement afforded to the common man in the early modern period, the Lost are now able to gather together under the protection and order of a freehold more readily than before.

Still, many remain in isolation. The more powerful among independent rural changelings are called Hedge Witches or Hedge Barons by their urban counterparts. They're a tough, independent breed, and they're as varied and beautiful as their less-rugged urban counterparts. Those who live long enough and become powerful enough may heed the call of The Lost Pantheon (**Lords of Summer**, p. 151) and live as gods, but those are rare indeed. Many villages (particularly those in isolated villages areas like Briançon in the Alps) have long been under communal rule. The mortals in these areas do not take well to Louis XIV's attempts to bring them under central governance, and the changelings who have resisted both the onslaught of the Fae and the calumniations of the Seasonal Courts for generations will not give up their independence lightly.

Some Lost, however, are simply alone, and see no other fae save for the occasional passing hobgoblin peddler. They may have no idea that there are others of their kind. Some have simply gone mad, or attack other changelings on sight, fearing the worst. Others style themselves as gods, cultivating small mortal cults. Few of them hold allegiance to the seasonal courts in any political sense, but enterprising urban courtier might find his country cousins to be valuable allies if he can bring them into the fold.

Anachronisms

The 17th century was a time of rapid scientific, technological, and philosophical changes. Even a worldly, bourgeois changeling abducted by the True Fae at the beginning of the century would likely not recognize a simple dinner fork, which was all but unknown in France until it was popularized by Catherine di Medici. However, not everyone would see these advancements at the same rate. A rural Lost might be astonished to see his likeness in a polished Venetian mirror, even if he suffered little temporal displacement in his Durance.

Other Places

Though the Sun King might be reluctant to admit it himself, there are other places of consequence outside of France during his reign. This is by no means a comprehensive who's who of important people and places in Europe (that would be outside of the scope of this book), but international and intercultural events can make for excellent storytelling opportunities.

The High Seas

Blackburne of the Minch and the crew of *Le Tenasse* are the scourge of ships in the English Channel. Most of the ships he raids are mundane English or Dutch vessels, though he sometimes steers his ship into the watery parts of the Hedge to raid hobgoblin settlements. The bulk of his riches go to the monarch of Rossignol, the freehold of Saint-Malo, rather than to the coffers of the Sun King (though he has a well-forged letter of marque). Blackburne is cold-blooded and has nerves of steel, and has been known to take *Le Tenasse* into the dangerous Hedge to evade pursuit. He is known to ask for no quarter and give none in return, but he will always call out to a ship in verse before boarding. If the skipper responds in kind, he will be forced to leave the ship be, or so they say.

Nick Nye, a Telluric Welsh sailor, has come to the Court of Versailles to ask for patronage. The English courts are in no position to entertain his offers, so he is extending an offer to his wealthier French counterparts. Nye claims to have been abandoned by his crew on an expedition in Canada. He wandered the Hedge for years, and in doing so, he found something incredible — a passage to the Far East through the Hedge. He would need a proper ship and an ensorcelled crew, but Nye promises that if he reaches the Orient, his investors will have hundredfold returns.

The Holy Roman Empire: Fall and Rise

The Habsburg-controlled Holy Roman Empire is a confederation of largely independent states, spanning from the Spanish Netherlands in the northwest to the Austrian Archduchy bordering on Ottoman Hungary in the southeast. At the beginning of Louis XIV's reign, the Empire had lost the Thirty Years War and seen its hopes of a Pan-European Empire extinguished. The war was largely fought on Imperial soil; the Empire's population was nearly halved by the end



of the war, though the Empire would see a great influx of Protestants from France after Louis XIV revokes the Treaty of Nantes.

The second half of the century is largely a rebuilding period, punctuated by wars with both the Bourbons and the Ottomans. The Empire was not the origin of many cultural innovations of this period, though it produced many fine musicians. The turn of the 18th century and the War of Spanish Succession would see the rise of Frederick II and set the stage for Germany's Brandenburg-Prussia rise in the years to come.

The Lost of the Holy Roman Empire are a diverse and independent lot. They tend towards pragmatism and egalitarianism, particularly in rural areas. The Free Assembly of the city of Worms is a proud freehold of scholarly Lost. They are known for both their mortal learning and their oracular foresight. The freehold is structured after the fashion of a university. Their auguries and advice are sought out by Lost all over Europe. The chair of the assembly is the venerable Herr Sokol. Sokol is the foremost astrologer and historian in all of Western Europe. He's wise as an owl, but he's not known for brevity or topicality. It's said that he was a dashing swordsman in his youth, and it's easy to get on his good side if you will listen to his stories of his exploits.

In 1689 during the Nine Years' War, Louis XIV briefly captures the city of Worms. During the chaos of the occupation, disaster strikes the freehold. In the aftermath, the collections of the Free Assembly are missing or destroyed. All but a handful of Worms' Lost are missing, and those who survived have been driven utterly mad. The leader of the survivors, Sokol's young apprentice Herr Nix, claims that a "great wyrm" emerged from the earth and devoured everyone in his path, including Herr Sokol. They claim that the dragon is portent of things to come, and that the Lost should go to ground while they still can. Nix and his followers flee into the Hedge soon after. Some dismiss Nix and his followers as madmen, but *something* must have happened to the Free Assembly, and there's nothing to say it won't happen again.

Great Britain: Glory, Genocide, and Miracles

The 17th century is a turbulent era for the British. Though the Anglophone world typically views England as being a crucial player in European politics, Britain is largely absent from the major conflict of the continent — that of the Hapsburg dynasty versus the Bourbons. Henry VIII's break with the Catholic Church in the 16th century made Britain a destination of choice for many continental Protestants who were fleeing persecution in their homelands. Britain is largely embroiled in civil wars during the reign of the Sun King in France, starting with the regicide of Catholic sympathizer Charles I in 1649. He was succeeded by a de facto military dictatorship led by radical Puritan Oliver Cromwell. Cromwell led a bloody invasion of Scotland and waged a genocidal war against the Irish during Interregnum years. In 1660, the monarchy was restored with the return of Charles II, who had sought refuge in the court of Louis XIV. Cromwell's iron-fisted Puritan rule had proved unpopular, and some accounts considered the Restoration of the monarchy an act of divine providence.



New Lyonnais

A group of young and adventurous Lost have established New Lyonnais, a small town on the coasts of Acadia in New France. Though the Lost number only a dozen, New Lyonnais is home to only 55 souls of French and Mi'kmaq origin, many of whom are ensorcelled. In the summer, they are ruled by Armand the Rhymer, a Moonborn (**Winter Masques**, p. 71) with a strong utopian bent. A charismatic man and occasional political agitator in the Old World, he founded New Lyonnais in hopes of creating a society where Lost and mortals could live side-by-side, without fear. In the winter, the dreamy Madame Tomah leads the freehold. She too has visions of a paradise, but she fears that Armand takes too many risks.

The group is actively seeking settlers in France. All are welcome, though those with the practical skills to survive the harsh winters of the New World are doubly so.

Several events made the 1660s a notable decade in Britain. Plague struck London in 1664, and did not disappear until the spring of 1666. One Londoner in five died in that time. Those who could afford it fled to the countryside. Later that year, the Great Fire of London struck, nearly burning the city to the ground. It was the same year that Isaac Newton split a ray of light with a prism, leading many to dub 1666 the "Year of Miracles."

The English Lost are, in general, more conservative and serious than their French counterparts. The Courts of Winter and Autumn are powerful in the cities. In some rural areas, it is common for many changelings to live openly among mortals, refusing to hide their true fae identities. The Spring Court is under special scrutiny in this era, as popular attitudes among the Lost view them as increasingly immoral, pagan, or decadent. A few English Lost take refuge in Paris, fleeing the chaos of their homeland.

Spain: Empire in Decline

The first half of the 17th century had seen a sharp decline for the Habsburg-controlled Spanish Empire. The expulsion of the *moriscos* (Muslim converts to Catholicism) and the independence of Portugal devastated the Spanish economy. In the latter half of the century, the Spanish Empire continues its downward spiral.

The poor management of Charles II led to an empire of kleptocracy and corruption where the nobility were largely above the law and paid next to nothing in taxes. To make matters worse, a series of disastrous decisions led to rapid currency deflation. Though he has the largest empire in the world, Charles II neglects the army. Matters get worse in the second half of the century, when some of the wealthiest and most stable provinces are wracked with plague.

The Lost community in Spain is small and secretive, and for good reason. The Inquisition has been murdering changelings for over 200 years. The most infamous incident occurred in Logroño, in 1610, where the entire freehold of Sorginzulo was all but exterminated. Unsurprisingly, the courts of Fear and Sorrow are strong in Spain, but the court of Desire still maintains its strength in Catalonia. Still, many Lost have escaped to North Africa, the Middle East, or the New World for survival's sake.

A disturbing rumor has reached the freeholds of France. There reports that some Lost claim that Charles II is actually a fetch — a twisted simulacrum of the king, made of unfired enamel and mismatched mosaic tiles. What's more, a Drudge in Seville claims to be Charles, returned from the Hedge. The veracity of his claim is questionable as his Durance has twisted him beyond recognition, and replacing the fetch of a king might be nigh-impossible. However, the temptation to have one of their own as a mortal monarch is irresistible to many Lost.

The New World

The Ashen Courtiers marveled at the bounty of the harvest. Goblin fruits of all shapes and sizes covered the table: fragrant Dream-a-Drupe, waxy Amarathine, decadent cocorange, bundles of coupnettle, and even a few hidefruit glistened like precious gems among the spread.

There was one fruit that puzzled them all.

Mathilde was the first to pick it up. She turned it over in her palms, and shook her head. "It is a beautiful color," she said a bit lamely, and handed it over to Courtaud.

He sniffed it and frowned. "I don't trust it," he said. "It smells of madness and death."

"Wait," said Printanière, grabbing the fruit from the Beast's hands. "I think I've heard of this." She placed the fruit on the table again. "It appears to be a tomatl. They're from Mexica in New Spain."

The courtiers nodded and murmured in assent. After a moment, Courtaud asked, "What's it for?"

Printanière frowned and squinted at the fruit. "Hard to say," she said.

The colonization of the New World presents new opportunities for the Lost of Europe. The New World welcomes misfits, criminals, and heretics of all stripes as long as they can pay for their passage or are willing to serve as indentured servants upon their arrival.

The notion of abandoning one's homeland for a new world appeals to many Lost. Many of them are heartbroken and unable to bear being surrounded by the wreckage of their old lives. Others might want to put as much distance between them and their former Keepers as they can. Some might just want to make the journey for the same reasons any mortal might — for fame, freedom, or adventure.

While the exploration of the New World by Europeans gives some Lost hope for a new beginning, others see the colonial era differently. A Huron woman emerges from the Hedge, her

body and soul torn to tatters by the Thorns, only to find that everyone she has ever known and loved lies dead from smallpox. A man flees bondage in Arcadia only to find himself in a strange foreign land where his wife, children, and his fetch are slaves on a Caribbean sugar plantation. Some of the European Lost might take a stand against the slave trade and the brutal extermination of the Native Americans, but too many will find reasons to ignore the atrocities. Their own existence is precarious enough, they say. Why complicate matters by worrying about the fate of mortals who are half a world away?

Daily Life

Life for the Lost is markedly different from that of their 21st-century counterparts. For one thing, mundane travel is much more difficult and dangerous. Hedge travel is more common — though it is no less dangerous than it is in modern times. The Seasonal Courts are rapidly evolving, still en route to the entrenched traditions they become in later centuries.

The Contracts of the Lost are valued differently in this era. Contracts that grant swift travel, such as Dreamsteps and Tread of the Swift Hooves, are much more vital. Contracts of the Wild and Eternal Court Contracts can provide invaluable help or hindrance in an era when man lives at the mercy of the elements. Contracts of Artifice gain new utility in a world where replacement goods can't be purchased at the nearest superstore, and the healing powers of the Spring Court are near-miraculous in a world where medicine is poorly understood.

Unfortunately for the Lost, unalloyed iron is quite commonly used in this era. A workshop or a kitchen might pose dangers to them that they would not encounter in a modern context.

Bridge-Burners

We are at the dawn of a new era. The age of superstition and ignorance is over. The Earth is entering a new age. We will not be ruled by the spectres and phantoms of the past. We will not jump at shadows or toss salt over our shoulders. We will sever the ties between our world and the world of illusions and nonsense, and move forward into a golden age of reason.

The early modern era is an age of optimism. Though the first utopian novel, Thomas More's *Utopia*, was published nearly a century before, Bacon's posthumously-published *New Atlantis* and Campanella's *City of the Sun* are both recent examples of utopian thought. The world is changing quickly, and the Lost have taken notice.

A group of young Bridgemasons (see **Lords of Summer**, p. 109) influenced by Sir Christopher Wren have taken to turning their own cities into walled utopias, freed from Hedge incursions. With proper civic planning and well-maintained public order, they claim, the Gentry have less and less power. It is their belief that as skepticism, rationalism, and disbelief in the supernatural continue to grow in the mortal population, the Gentry will have fewer places to enter the world. Designing a city after mathematical principles will naturally repel the True Fae and keep both mortals and the Lost safe.

Masques

Though reckoned somewhat old-fashioned by the mortals of this era, masques remain popular with the Lost of early modern France. Masques are a form of theatre similar to plays, but they are typically performed by masked partygoers in elaborate costume rather than by actors. It is not dissimilar to a heavily-scripted live-action roleplaying game. Many masques are idle entertainment; some are heavy with occult symbolism or ritual significance.

Naturally, others of the Lost find this view hopelessly naive and even dangerous. Many in the Autumn Court object to this view in particular. They argue that fear is essential to protecting the mortal populace. Many of the Bridge-burners sneer at this and suggest that the Autumn Court is more interested in controlling the Lost than protecting the mortal populace. But it's undeniable that the Gentry have no difficulty abducting a skeptic, no matter the strength of the skeptic's rationalism.

The Gentry

The Gentry are fiercely territorial and possessive creatures. Everything that lives in their domain is their property. While this state of affairs may seem alien and bizarre to a modern perspective, it is not so foreign to changelings of an earlier era. Imagine a world where a starving man could be hanged for stealing an apple from an orchard, or where even the game birds are the property of the lord and poaching was punishable by death, or where a subsistence rancher suddenly found herself deprived of her meager livelihood by the Enclosure Acts. Imagine a world where some people — by simple dint of their family lineage — were reckoned as near-gods and entitled to nearly anything they could ask for, and where the common folk are regularly regarded as resources for the nobility at best and sub-human commodities at worst. It is a world perhaps not so far removed from the cruelties of Arcadia. Consequently, the Lost who shake the reins of the Others are not only fighting the mind-bending powers of Fae magics, but also the dominant discourse of their society as well.

It is unsurprising, then, that the Lost of this era refer to the Gentry differently from changelings in modern times. What would be referred to as a privateer in a modern context is typically referred to as an *écorcheur* — a flayer of skin — in early modern France. (Naturally, they refer to themselves as "vassals" or by a flamboyant noble title.) The Gentry and their agents roam the countryside more freely, scouring the land for the contumacious Lost, and even the mortals of these lands blow out their candles and hide in their cellars when the Fair Folk are riding.



The Seasonal Courts

With communication and travel easier than ever, the power of the Seasonal Courts is waxing. Centralized governance among the Lost is easier than ever, and the Lost are able to organize and resist the Others more easily than before. Specially-tasked courtiers scour the streets and the countryside, hoping to find newly free changelings before goblin slavers or écorcheurs do.

The Courts are, of course, neither as uniform nor as ubiquitous as their modern counterparts. This is true not only of the Seasonal Courts, but of the Diurnal Courts as well — communication and centralization are simply not as easily achieved in this era. The Chinese branches of the Directional Courts are an exception to this, having been better-organized for centuries before the Seasonal Courts were founded.

Before the era of modern farming, central heat, and air conditioning, the seasons were more powerful in the lives of Lost and mortals alike. Though a snowy winter or a wet summer might mean an inconvenience for a modern changeling, it could spell the death of millions for those in this era. Even a Courtless changeling fears and respects the turn of the seasons.

Veneration for the seasons is expressed via adulation of the Seasonal Sovereigns and by various rituals and festivals that take place throughout the year. The most splendid seasonal festivals are the equinox and solstice celebrations, when transitions of power take place. Some of the more modern Lost dismiss these celebrations as ostentatious displays of wealth designed to stroke the egos of the monarchs, but others insist that they are of deeper significance. They are a part of the old bargains, they say, and executing them properly is vital to the safety and prosperity of the freehold. Participation or attendance is mandatory for most of these rituals, though those who must be excused for duties pertaining to the safety or prosperity of the freehold are typically excused. In southern freeholds, a suitable sacrificial offering is recommended in lieu of attendance.

While the specifics of the masques and the elaborateness of the celebrations may vary from freehold to freehold, there are common themes that occur in many of the rituals. The timing of the seasons also varies depending on the location of the freehold. In urban areas and those heavily influenced by the Court of the North Star (see below), a strict astronomical progression is followed: Spring begins on the vernal equinox, summer at the solstice, and so forth. This is agreeable to most urban seasonal courtiers, who believe in the equitable distribution of power and to whom the turn of the seasons is a largely academic or political matter. Their lives are not as directly impacted by the elements as their rural counterparts. Other areas are more likely to follow weather patterns that may vary from year to year. This sometimes leads to strife in the freehold as courtiers disagree on what constitutes a "true" seasonal shift from a "false" one.

Spring: Reverie

Desire runs deep through the world of *Lily, Sabre, and Thorn*. Stolen glances at a banquet, hidden behind a fan. The quiet yearning behind games of *les précieuses* in a lady's *salon*. Desperate, forbidden embraces behind the curtains at the masquerade.

But behind the glamour and elegance, there are darker desires for the Emerald Court to feast upon. The decadence of courtly life is built on the desperation of the poor. Whether a farmer who can hardly feed his family after paying his taxes, a starving Parisian orphan staring at an apple cart, or a servant looking through the curtains at a world of luxury and comfort that she will never know, hunger and desperation are a fact of life. It is a world of conspicuous consumption, where having enough is never enough, and very few people have enough to even survive. The Spring Court is particularly powerful in Versailles, where the Antler Court mingles amongst the mortal aristocracy and feeds on their heady ambitions and desires.

In the north, spring begins on the first day of February. Freeholds in areas with a more Germanic influence (such as those in Rhône country or Alsace) generally cast some form of divination on the second day of February to see if it is truly spring; divination via marmots or other small rodents is particularly common. In the south, the rituals often involve a masque called the Return of the Flowering Child. The Flowering Child is played by a beautiful young person of the Spring Court, who has been ritually "abducted" by the Winter Court on the first day of winter. (If the harvest has been particularly sparse that year, the abduction may be more literal than symbolic, and the Flowering Child might not be a willing participant.)

Most rituals are themed around birth, though in urban areas these "births" tend to be more highly stylized. The Vernal Sovereign or one of her representatives may lead a dance that involves leaping through a ring of flame. In the country, the incoming sovereign may present the freehold with an effigy of a newborn child. Each member comes by to give their blessing and a small gift to the babe. At the end of the ritual, the babe is set upon an elaborate raft and sent down river, never to be seen again. Some urban changelings say that the savage Hedge Witches of the countryside changelings will abduct a real human baby for this ritual.

Summer: La Gloire et les Emeutes

A young duelist recounts the glorious battle where she bested her rival to crowd of admiring tavern-goers. Her audience is spellbound by her storytelling, but the duelist isn't thinking about her potential bed-mates for the evening; she's still animated by the contempt she feels for her hated enemy. The last defender of the freehold of Bayonne stands at the gate, all fire and fury and hate, cutting down the enemy as they make their unceasing attacks. She will not survive the night, but her King will, and she is not afraid to die.

The Seine runs slow and thick in the summer heat, stinking of the refuse of half a million souls. A young man with no prospects and no hope throws a cabbage gone rotten in the blistering heat at a patrolling policeman. The granaries are empty, and the people riot; the streets run red with blood.

Though it is a hundred years before the revolution, the discontent that would eventually spur it has already begun to show in France. The endless wars of Louis XIV led to oppressive tax burdens that left hundreds of thousands impoverished and starving. A Summer courtier might find sustenance in either the discontented mortals or by marching alongside the Sun King's armies.

Many courts celebrate the beginning of summer on the first of May. It's an occasion marked with great bonfires throughout the freeholds of France. In many rituals, the Summer Sovereign or a champion of her choice stands in the center of the freehold in the masque of the Green Man. The members of the freehold decorate him with flame-colored ribbons, bright flowers, and the like. When he is fully burdened, he is bidden to leap over the bonfire three times. The festival culminates with riotous celebrations. It's a time of licentiousness and transgression; a certain amount of marital infidelity and minor crime is tolerated if committed in the spirit of the season. Even in freeholds that don't transition to summer until the solstice, the first of May is generally still commemorated in some fashion. It's a time of year associated with sex and romance. It's fashionable in urban areas for young Lost to offer their sweethearts lilies-of-the-valley on this day.

In eastern freeholds (and those with a strong Summer presence, such as Gascony and Lyons), the evening typically takes a more violent bent: The festivities end with the frenzied Lost leading raids on hobgoblin settlements or on suspected Loyalists.

Autumn: Le Cauchemar

The wheat ripens, and the farmer prays that he will have enough grain to feed his family this year. The aristocrat looks out his windows at the rioting mobs, and wonders how long it will be before they come for him. A minister makes a humble request before the Sun King. He knows that if his proposal ends in disaster, he might pay the price with his head. The deserter hides in a barn, keeping as quiet as possible, knowing that he will be hanged if he is caught. Street urchins dare each other to venture into the Cimetière des Innocents at the stroke of midnight, each one egging the others on to go a little further than the last.

Navarre and other Basque-influenced regions are strongholds for the Leaden Mirror; London is another city largely dominated by the Autumn Court in the 17th century.

Paris may be the largest city in Europe, but the dead of the city far outnumber the living. The Autumn Court holds the secrets to the city's sprawling catacombs. They hold their meetings at midnight amid the crooked tombstones and treacherous grounds of the *Cimetière des Innocents*, where the hastily-buried and unmourned dead are so numerous that the rotten earth is known to crumble beneath the feet of those foolish enough to go wandering its grounds without a guide.

The House of Hellequin

The House of Hellequin is a motley of comedians. They travel all across Europe, performing their *Commedia dell'arte* acts for the delight of mortals and Lost alike. Though the mortals may not see Hellequin's bloodstained hands or crooked horns through the Mask, his pranks always have an air of menace to them that terrifies and delights his audience.

Lesser known is the House of Hellequin's other function in changeling society: that of the bounty hunter. They specialize in tormenting or terrorizing their quarry until they surrender, but they have been known to be fearsome hunters as well.

The beginning of Autumn is typically celebrated with the first wheat harvest, which is typically around the beginning of August. In wine-growing regions, it may be celebrated after the crush. It is a particularly auspicious time for swearing pledges of all kinds — particularly the Heart's Pledge. The bounty of the harvest generally is celebrated in autumnal festivities. This may be as simple as a table full of baked goods in a country freehold, or it may be a magnificent culinary competition for a wealthy urban freehold. The premier chef of a freehold may be designated *le Chevalier Gastronomique*, who will have the honor of serving the monarchs for a year. While this may seem like a dubious honor, the *Chevalier Gastronomique* can command a surprising amount of influence in a wealthy freehold, as she can demand extensive resources in the name of keeping up with the latest in Lost culinary fashions.

The rituals of this holiday often involve death or sacrifice. In some places, a portion of the harvest is arranged around an effigy of the Summer King. The incoming Autumn Sovereign, who wears a sinister mask and carries a scythe, sets both the offering and the effigy ablaze. In other places, the Summer Sovereign or a proxy in a horned mask is given an enormous quantity of food to eat. When he finishes the feast, he is carried to the top of a hill and ritually "slain" by the masked Autumn Sovereign.

Some rural pockets in Brittany and Provence (though it is brutally hot in the latter region at this time of year) practice their funeral games at this time of year. These are athletic competitions that celebrate the lives of those of the freehold who have died in the previous year.

Winter: Les Annees de Misere

The season of war is long gone, but her husband has still not come home. One day, her brother-in-law comes to her

door with a letter in his hand, his face gray as the sky. The children ask why she is crying. She looks at their painfully thin faces and wonders how they will survive the winter.

The chevalier kisses his lady's hand. She nods in acknowledgement but nothing more. Once, when they were young, they were in love. But she was promised to another, and he was a commoner besides. For a time, there was a chaste, courtly longing that inevitably gave way to nights of forbidden passion and lust. Then there was hate — a hatred for the rules that kept them apart, then a hatred for each other as each of them lacked the courage to move forward. And now? Now they look into each other's eyes and see nothing but broken promises and wasted lives. They feel nothing.

The rise of the metropolis has given the Lost of the Winter Court even better opportunities to hide in plain sight. The city gives refuge to those changelings who cannot reconcile themselves with their former lives.

The 16th and 17th centuries suffer from many unusually cold, long winters. Nearly 600,000 will die of starvation after *Le Grand Hiver* of 1709, and over a million will be claimed by conditions created by the cold, wet summer and long winter of 1693–1694. It is a rich time for sorrow. Many Winter monarchs refuse to relinquish their crowns to the spring, claiming that they have been granted extended sovereignty by God or nature in the wake of these unforgiving seasons.

The transition from autumn to winter is associated with the winter solstice in both rural and urban freeholds. The rituals surrounding this transition tend to be somber, candle-lit affairs. A typical procession involves the Lost of the freehold standing in a line, holding candles or torches. The heart of the affair involves burying a member of the freehold. The ceremony is performed in silence. Usually this is performed in effigy, but sometimes a courtier will climb into a specially-prepared box and be "buried" by placing the box into a deep hole in the ground and covering him with cloth. The candles are then extinguished, and a silent vigil is kept for a time. Urban areas tend to have the entire freehold keep the vigil for a short duration — until a taper is burned out. Rural freeholds tend to keep longer vigils. In the east, some freeholds keep a twelve-day vigil. Eventually, the effigy or the courtier is released, and there is a great celebration. Wassailing is common in the northern freeholds, while mischief prevails in the east: Younger Lost will typically dress in masks (the goat is a popular choice) and threaten their older counterparts with violence unless they receive a small gift in return.

In southern freeholds, the abduction of the Flowering Child replaces the ritual burial. Members of the Winter Court usually appear in a procession with the stolen Flower Child wrapped in a burial shroud at the head. They wear masks that appear as distorted, grief-stricken faces. They wail, sob, and rend their garments in a public display of grief.

Holidays and Festivals

Holidays and festivals are at the center of changeling social life. They offer the Lost opportunities to socialize, impress their neighbors, and embarrass their rivals (hopefully while the entire freehold is watching). Some festivals remained unchanged from their modern day celebrations in essence, but there are a few extra holidays that are worth mention.

In Defense of Le Fete des Fous, from the Memoirs of Reynard of Paris

The Gentry are, at their heart, honest creatures. (Just ask any of them; they will tell you this is so.) This is why they are so dangerous. If they were utterly unreliable, then no one would deal with them — who would make a contract with a monster who would break his word as soon as your back was turned? But if you have the faint hope that you're smarter than them — that you've finally understood their mad logic and you can beat them at their own game — then you might come out ahead. Oh, the Gentry will mislead you, to be certain. They are master sophists. They will equivocate. They will employ all forms of chicanery and illusions to trick their targets. But the notion of a bald-faced lie — to say one thing and then do another — is, for them, simply an impossibility.

This is where we hold an advantage. Le Fête des Fous is a celebration of our ability to lie, to be insincere, to joke. They cannot do this, no matter how much they wish they could. It is a celebration of absurdity and humility — notions that the Gentry cannot even begin to comprehend.

Tournament of Hollyhock

The Tournament of Hollyhock is a large-scale chess tournament held on the lawns of Brocéliande. Each freehold may sponsor a player. The "pieces" are courtiers chosen for their martial prowess; the pawns are typically hobgoblin mercenaries. The rules differ slightly from those of normal chess. When a move is made to capture another piece, the two pieces fight a duel. If the aggressor succeeds, he captures the piece. If the aggressor loses, his team forfeits its turn. Being chosen to represent one's freehold in the Hollyhock Tournament is a mark of great honor. More than one instance of foul play has stained the hollyhock fields at Brocéliande.

Feast of Saint John

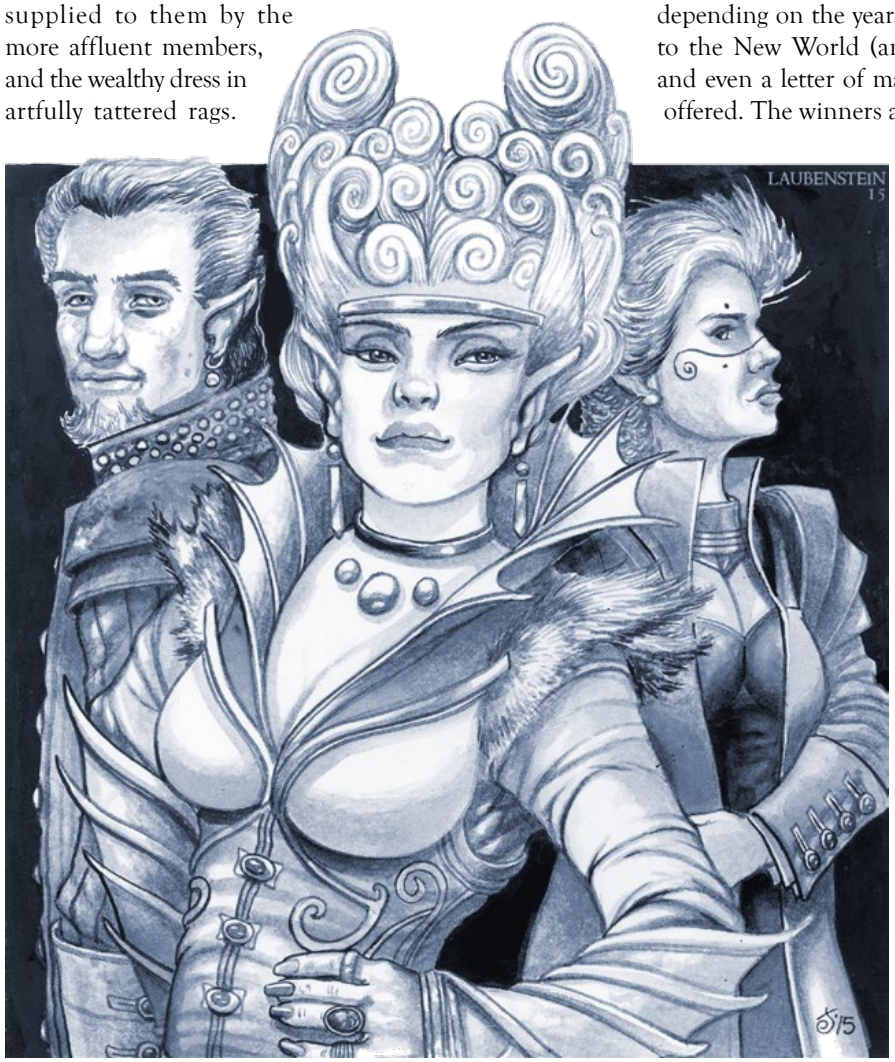
The Feast of Saint John takes place on June 24th. It is a festival of early harvest of the bounty of a freehold in the summer. The harvest is typically conducted at night — the herbs and fruits of the Hedge harvested between sundown and midnight are said to have twice the magical potency of those harvested on other nights. It is a night when hidden things are illuminated; lost

items have a tendency to reappear. It's also a common evening for newly-emancipated changelings to return home.

The Feast of Saint John marks the only night of the year when bitter lilacs bloom in the Hedge. The blossoms of the mature bitter lilac can be dried and brewed into a tea. Any of the Lost who imbibe this beverage will be intermittently haunted with visions of their Durances. The visions will be brief, but clear. This prompts a degeneration roll in any characters with Clarity above 6. This roll is made at a –2 penalty if the victim does not know what he has ingested.

Le Fete des Fous

The Fête is a masque held annually on Twelfth Night (the 5th of January). From sundown to sunrise, the Lost of the freehold gather together and hold a formal court. According to the traditions of the masque, however, the court is turned completely on its head. A low-ranking member of the Freehold is promoted to King. The gender of the participant is irrelevant; and in some freeholds, an ensorcelled mortal will be promoted instead. The participant wears the masque of the King and is led into his court riding backwards on an ass. All of the other Lost are expected to dress as if their social roles have been reversed; the poor of the freehold dress in finery supplied to them by the more affluent members, and the wealthy dress in artfully tattered rags.



The Lost petition their "King," who listens to intentionally-absurd requests and in return, makes arbitrary or contradictory demands on his court. A great toast is had at the end of the evening, when the clock strikes midnight and the "King" dismisses his court. There are rumors that in rural Provence, the local tradition is that the King of Fools is ritually slaughtered at the end of the feast, though any Provençal changeling denies this in conversation with an outsider.

Some Lost — particularly among the Winter Court — argue that this tradition is antiquated and dangerous. There are no records of a Fête gone sour. But some argue that it's only a matter of time before a King invokes the sovereignty granted to him by his Wyrd to enforce cruel demands on the partygoers, or where courtiers invoke the Wyrd to cement requests made in jest as powerful pledges.

The Frozen Market

This variation on the typical Winter Market only occurs in those years when the winter is cold enough that the Seine freezes solid. Beneath the shadows of the Pont Neuf after sundown, the Frozen Market opens. The Frozen Market differs from a typical Winter Market. It's not a market *per se*, but a silent auction. The items sold at auction vary wildly depending on the year, but they're always valuable: passage to the New World (and back), titles to various Hollows, and even a letter of manumission from Arcadia have been offered. The winners are always anonymous, of course — as the identity of the auctioneer is a secret held by the Winter Court, and the auctioneer herself pledge-bound to silence.

Grand Intrigues

There are many, many possible settings for a swashbuckling **Changeling** game. Here we present two venues of particular note, about to come into fierce conflict: the grand North Star court of Brocéliande, and the furious summer of Rennes.

The Empress of the North Star

The Empress Appears, from the Memoirs of Reynard of Paris

The Carnival of Marseilles is always a sight to behold. The grand pomp and splendour of the celebrations of the year 1655, however, paled in description to the sight of one of the spectators.



In my mind, she stands as tall as a tall man, though I know her to be of but moderate height. She wore a gown of deepest indigo, embroidered in lavender beads. She wore a simple circlet of marcasite upon her brow. The silver of her jewelry matched the brilliant gray of her eyes, striking against her radiant ebony skin. Her hair hangs in tight, elegant spirals that set many ladies and men of the court to envy. Her eyes seemed to pierce my very soul when I met her gaze; I knew her at once to be a woman who would not be deceived.

Her retinue was splendid as she. At her right, elegant and still as a caryatid, stood her bodyguard, an island of tranquility and poise in the raucous streets. Her guard seemed carved of marble in her white coat and periwig, with movements neat and spare as any dancer's. At her left stood her man, all in black, with long fingers like flechettes and a thin-lipped mouth full of needle-like teeth. Her servants stood at the ready – a half-dozen hobgoblins, splendid in their blue tunics trimmed in silver – and I knew that I would obey any command she uttered as certainly as they would.

Madame Estelle appeared first during Carnival in Marseille in 1655 accompanied by a splendid troupe of hobgoblin servants and a motley of Lost servants. She claimed to be a refugee of the Thirty Years' War. Her holdings had been seized by the Dutch government during wartime, and she was forced to liquidate what few holdings she had left. (Thankfully, she had a hidden cache of gold from her investments in the New World, and was able to acquit herself nicely.) Bearing no particular love for the Dutch government, she fled to France, and hoped to re-establish herself among the courts of the French Lost.

Estelle succeeded all too well, by the estimation of many.

Swearing fealty to no freehold, she traveled across the country, her magnificent retinue in tow. She had an uncanny knack for arriving at the right place at just the right time to be able to provide whatever a struggling freehold might need — money, advice, or strength of arms. She built up an extensive catalog of favors and friends. If it seemed suspicious, no one was able to point out any wrongdoing on her part. (And at least she's made her reputation on helping others rather than dragging good changelings into the mud, or so her defenders point out.)

The Accord of the Spheres

Madame Estelle continued in this manner for nine years. Then, in December 1664, as a brilliant comet appeared in the winter skies, seasonal monarchs across France received invitations to a grand fête at the North Star's manor, Brocéliande — a place which there had been much speculation about, but to which no one had even been. Though the fête would last several days and travel is difficult in the winter months, many accepted her invitation. Though it coincided with a number of important festivals, all but a few of the monarchs of the most prominent freeholds attended either in person or by envoy. Those who followed her directions found themselves at Brocéliande, a sylvan Hollow on the outskirts of Paris. What happened over the many days and nights following is a secret, but by Twelfth Night, the crowned heads of Paris, Lyons, and Marseille were connected in an alliance.

So Who Is She?

Who is the Empress of the North Star? What is her ultimate goal? There are several possible answers; you are encouraged to choose whichever suits your Chronicle or use your own ideas as you see fit.

Exactly what it says on the tin: She is an affluent, ambitious changeling who has a knack (or maybe a Goblin Contract or two) for being in the right place at the right time. Though her motives are not entirely altruistic, she truly does believe that a strong and united France is the best for every changeling.

One of Them: The Empress is either one of the Gentry in disguise, or one of their agents. Her goal is to centralize and organize the Lost so the Gentry can find them.

Personal: Perhaps her motives are something more personal. Maybe she seeks to crush a particular rival (or freehold) that has wronged her in the past.

Whatever her motives are, she's a powerful player at the Lost's oldest game, and the thought of crossing her should give most changelings pause.

The exact nature of these oaths (known as the Accord of the Spheres) is unknown, but the aforementioned freeholds now have a permanent political presence in Brocéliande, and each court always has a representative from Brocéliande at court. Brocéliande and the Court of the North Star have served to unify the Lost of France and serve as a neutral ground for inter-freehold disputes. Many more freeholds would soon follow in their footsteps. Madame Estelle became widely known as the Empress of the North Star.

One clause of the Accord of the Spheres is widely known: All freeholds who abide by the Accord have sworn to divide the seasons evenly by the celestial calendar. The courts transition from one to another during the equinoxes and solstices. *"The seasons are fickle and cruel,"* claims the North Star. *"We are men and women of reason; we need watch the world with the cool grace and detachment of the stars."*

The North Star has no small share of detractors, most of whom refer to her by the unflattering name of "Dog Star." The Knights of St. Collen denounce her publicly, claiming that she has too much power. The Empress herself is irreligious and bitterly critical of the Knights, claiming that the Knighthood is corrupt and self-serving, an accusation that is not entirely without merit. Furthermore, she has publicly chastised the Knighthood for not rebuking Catholicism, comparing their loyalty to the Church even as it exterminates them under the mantle of the Inquisition to a Loyalist's deranged love for its Keeper.

The Bretons and the French

Brittany (which contains Nantes, Rennes, and arguably Saint-Malo) has long been a culturally and linguistically distinct part of France. The linguistically and culturally Celtic Bretons cherish their independence, and they revolted against the increasingly powerful central government several times during the rule of the *ancien regime*.

Some are wary of her origins, which seem conveniently unverifiable. She does not hesitate to respond directly to these insinuations. *"Who among us is reconciled to our former lives?"* she responds. *"I am the Empress of the North Star, but you are right to say that I was not always. None of us are what we used to be. Before you would have me recollect the pain of my Durance and my lost mortal life in excruciating detail, I would insist that you go first."*

Brocéliande is but a few hours' from the freehold of Versailles, and it has frequently availed itself of the artisans — mortal and otherwise — of that storied place. Furniture of solid silver, mirrors of Venetian glass, ornate Persian carpets, and gilded wood decorate the halls. The decor changes from season to season, and as the fashions change, but a sidereal theme is always present.

Life at Brocéliande is highly structured and as regular as the stars. The signers of the Accord each have a permanent ambassador in that place, and guests are always welcome. The entirety of the house arises at eight in the morning exactly, and all lights in the manor are extinguished at exactly midnight. It is forbidden to walk the grounds or to leave one's apartments after midnight. The Empress's favorites (each of whom is given a celestial title and particular responsibilities at court) are exempt from these rules, as is the Empress herself. Her detractors claim that her rigidity is solid proof that she is, if not one of the Gentry, then surely one of their agents.

Music always has a prominent place at Brocéliande, as the North Star is fond of it. Elaborately rehearsed dances, opera, and symphonies fill the evenings, and the idle afternoons are spent at hunting or wandering the extensive pleasure gardens. A sure way to impress the Empress is to gift her with a musical performance of some sort; she may even grant a boon in return for a particularly excellent recital.

Rennes, Summer, 1683

The world is changing. As the Lost grow more numerous and better-organized, they find themselves increasingly divided in other ways. The country and the city drift apart. The Seasonal Courts threaten the autonomy of the Courtless. Older human ethnic and political divisions stir as the rise of the modern era threatens to erase entire cultures.

This is the background of Rennes, Summer, 1683. The story follows the struggles of five freeholds that struggle to protect their interests — or expand their reach — in the wake of a hostage crisis.

The city of Rennes has been run by a series of tyrants as for as long as anyone can remember. Any Lost who find their way to the city (and there are several) are press-ganged into service or sold back to the Fae. These tyrants call themselves the Bagaudae, and they answer to no authority but their own.

Other Breton Lost are tired of the Bagaudae's depredations, and are even willing to forsake some of their treasured independence to be rid of them.

Background

Rennes is located at both the confluence of the Illies and Villaine rivers and a crossroads of two trods. One, called the Via Vannin, leads from Nantes to Truro in Cornwall and terminates in the Isle of Man. The other, the Via Britannica, leads between Paris and Brest. The changeling population of Rennes has been ruled by the hard-nosed Bagaudae since the fall of the Roman Empire, and they have no intention of changing their ways for anyone or anything. They aggressively defend their territories and demand exorbitant tolls from anyone caught traveling their rivers or trods without their permission.

Because it is located along several trods, it is not uncommon for Lost who have newly escaped the Hedge to end up in Rennes. They soon are found by the Bagaudae, and, after grueling initiation rituals, pressed into pledges of loyalty to the freehold. Despite the fact that nearly all have been unwilling recruits, the Rennes Lost are a tight-knit group.

The Bagaudae have never been strangers to violence, either against mortals or other fae. They occasionally raid caravans of goblin traders or other freeholds for riches, captives to ransom, or even for the sake of proving one's worth to the Bagaudae. A changeling who has led a successful raid is considered a formal citizen of the freehold, and worthy of at least a limited amount of respect.

The Bagaudae are not foolish. They don't antagonize their neighbors to the point of open war, and they don't pick fights that they know they cannot win. But the Bagaudae have grown bolder in recent years. Their current leader, Comorre, is courageous in battle and fiercely charismatic. Recently, Comorre and his followers seized a vessel carrying envoys from both the Freehold of Nantes and Paris en route to Rossignol in Saint-Malo.

The Parisians were outraged and demanded that the Nantais pay the ransom, as the freehold of Nantes had sponsored the journey and thus were responsible for the envoys' protection. But the Nantais could not pay the ransom, and the situation deteriorated; a hobgoblin messenger presented the left hand of the Parisian envoy to the Spring Queen at the Vernal Equinox.

Paris was outraged, and demanded satisfaction from Nantes. Nantes' hands were tied — the ransom was still beyond the means of the freehold.

Enter the Court of the North Star.

An emissary from Brocéliande has arrived in Nantes, making an offer: They will pay the ransom in its entirety. In return, several things will happen: Nantes will sign the Accord of the Spheres; and the Nantais will bring the Bagaudae to heel.



They will not be alone, of course — the Freehold of Nantes is not particularly martial, and they will require assistance. The Court of the North Star — as well as a few glory-seekers of Paris — is willing to lend its assistance.

After the defeat of the Bagaudae, the spoils of war will be divided into four shares. Brocéliande and Nantes each take one share, and Paris receives two (as recompense for their insult and injury).

Complications

Though they know it is likely suicidal, many of the proud and pestilent Bagaudae will defend their liberty to the death. Others are uneasy with their leadership and are more willing to compromise.

The Malouins of Rossignol have had a bitter rivalry with the Bagaudae for centuries, yet they are torn. The Malouins fear the expanding power of the Court of the North Star and of the French in general. Perronik, Summer King of Rossignol, is unconvinced that the entire hostage crisis wasn't staged; if the Bagaudae ask for his aid, he may very well grant it unless convinced otherwise.

One of Comorre's lieutenants has also gotten wind of the plan. Doenna, Comorre's second-in-command, knows that the Bagaudae are doomed if the combined forces of Brocéliande, Paris, and Nantes descend upon them. She's not as proud as Comorre, and she's not willing to die to preserve the autonomy of the Bagaudae.

Gildas, Summer King of Nantes, is privately furious at Trémeur, the Spring King who pledged his freehold to Brocéliande. He resents the influence of outsiders, and believes that Nantes could have handled the situation without involving the French.

Paris itself is also troubled. On the fateful day of the Vernal Equinox, one year after his christening, the son of Madame Lucarne, the Spring Queen, and her consort, Favier, has gone missing. The Queen is determined to have him back, and has made a deal with the rest of the freehold: Whoever returns her son to her will have half of Paris' share of the plunder of Rennes.

Involving the Players

The players can become involved in this situation through a variety of ways and at a variety of points in time. They may very well take the place of any storyteller characters listed below — they may very well be the hostages in the initial crisis themselves. The adventure material presented here is entirely intended as suggestions for enriching your chronicle. Take them, and use some (or all, or none) of them, and make them your own.

Those characters who wish to gain the favor of Paris or of Brocéliande can easily find it in this situation. Lost who lack a strong connection to any of the freeholds involved may simply want a share of the plunder or the glory. Others may feel a moral duty to stop the practices of the Bagaudae. On the other hand, they may feel a sense of regional pride that demands that the forces of Paris and Brocéliande be stopped in their tracks.

Regardless, the forces will muster in Nantes on the first day of August, and will strike the Bagaudae one week later.

Dramatis Personae

The Bagaudae

Comorre is the barrel-chested leader of the Bagaudae. His massive stature and his fearsome presence mean that he is occasionally mistaken for an Ogre, but his feathered crest and brilliant red scales betray his Draconic nature. He is proud and terrifying, and has never been known to seek compromise or forgiveness. No one in the freehold would dare contradict him openly, but Comorre rules with love as well as fear. He is as loyal to his band as they are to him, and he never leaves a man behind on the battlefield.

His second in command is **Doenna**, a Waterborn with a subtler approach than Comorre. Anyone in the freehold with a grievance knows to approach Doenna rather than their leader. She has known Comorre for 40 years and knows how to suggest ideas to Comorre in such a way that leads the proud Dragon to think that he thought of them himself.

Unlike Comorre, Doenna is unwilling to die for the Bagaudae. She will sue for peace with Nantes, if she has the chance. She is willing to hand over Comorre to do it. She's also been seeking out the lost child of the Parisian Spring Queen. If her freehold is going to be reduced to a smoking ruin, then she might as well be queen of the ruins.

Nantes

The attack on Nantes will be led by **Gildas**, the Summer King. Gildas is wise, and his wrath is a potent force, but he is no longer the young and umbrageous Stonebones he once was. He is privately furious with the young Soldier **Trémeur,** but he will honor the deals that the Vernal King made. Trémeur sees submission to the more powerful Courts as an inevitable fact of life and thinks that Gildas is simply old-fashioned and sentimental. Gildas' highest priority is the safety and autonomy of his freehold; he thinks that an invasion into Rennes will cause needless bloodshed on all sides and is simply being done for the benefit of the foreign freeholds. He will not break any oaths, but he will entertain any other alternatives to the current plan.

Paris

The strike against the Bagaudae will be led by antlered Woodblood **Favier**, *adjutant d'fer* of the Summer Court. Favier is the consort of **Madame Lucarne**, the Spring Queen. The Queen was withdrawn through most of the spring and left most of her official duties to her seneschal. Favier and Madame Lucarne appear to be on poor terms; there are rumors that Percinet, the missing child, was fathered by someone other than Favier. The last person to poke fun at the child's parentage, however, was gored to death in a hunting accident not long after. Few people dare question Percinet's paternity publicly anymore.

Comorre, First Among the Bagaudae, The Dragon of Brittany

Seeming: Fairest

Kith: Draconic

Court: Summer

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 2, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Enigmas 3, Occult 1, Politics 2

Physical Skills: Athletics (Impressing People) 3, Brawl (Multiple Opponents) 4, Ride 2, Survival 2, Weaponry (Dueling) 4

Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Empathy 1, Expression 3, Intimidation 4, Persuasion (Inspiring Courage) 5, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Fast Reflexes 2, Giant, Status (Bagaudae, Breton criminals) 4, Striking Looks 2

Willpower: 8

Clarity: 5

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Pride

Initiative: 10

Defense: 4

Speed: 13

Health: 9

Wyrd: 6 (Cannot drink alcohol without falling into a deep slumber)

Contracts: Blades 3, Eternal Summer 3, Punishing Summer 3, Elements (Fire) 2, Stone 1, Vainglory 4

Glamour/per Turn: 15/6

Pledges: Comorre has a twisted version of the Knight's Pledge for the "proven" members of the Bagaudae, and another pledge with the leadership of Saint-Malo that states "they will only fight as brothers do." Some observers consider this proof of an ironclad alliance; others note that Comorre killed his mortal brother in a duel over a woman.

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Brawl	0B	9 (May spend 1 Glamour to re-roll one failed Brawl roll per scene)
Greatsword	4L	(9 again) 8

Favier is a reserved, calculating man. He is privately annoyed at being sent off on a provincial errand, but relishes the opportunity for combat. Like most Parisians, he is annoyed by the stubbornness of the rural Lost and has little patience for their customs, but he is unlikely to express it openly.

Brocéliande

Two representatives of Brocéliande are present at Nantes. The caryatid-like **Zelionne** leads two dozen hobgoblin mercenaries who are well-disciplined and loyal (by hobgoblin standards, anyway). Zelionne sees much, and speaks little; she presents herself as a good soldier and nothing more.

The crafty Chatelaine **Ametz** is present in an administrative role. He presents himself as a humble, gracious servant, but this serves only to aggravate Gildas further.

Saint-Malo

The Lost of Rossignol are a shrewd and free-spirited lot. They have raided and been raided by the Bagaudae for centuries. Their quasi-friendly rivalry is a long-standing tradition. Indeed, there is even a local tradition of each freehold raiding the other on Midsummer Eve. The tradition was suspended this year for the first time in living memory.

Perronik, current Summer King, has called for a moratorium on raids against the Bagaudae at Comorre's request (though the suggestion was originally Doenna's). Ametz of Brocéliande visited Rossignol recently. During his stay suggested obliquely that Perronik's actions could be construed as support for the Bagaudae. Perronik sneered openly at this suggestion, and demanded that Ametz retract his insult or suffer the King's wrath. Ametz retracted it, of course, but the threat still remains.

Perronik, then, is at an impasse. He doubts that the Bagaudae can fight off the Nantais alliance, but he despises Brocéliande and Paris. He knows that if they capture Rennes, then Saint-Malo will become all the more valuable to them; it guards a major seaport and lies on the Via Britannica. On the other hand, he knows that defying them openly will likely spell disaster for his freehold.

Aftermath

If no one interferes, the Bagaudae are annihilated. Rossignol does not aid them. Several of the Bagaudae escape into the Hedge (including Doenna), but they do not regroup. Some flee to Saint-Malo. Comorre is in possession of a Blood Pennon **(Changeling: The Lost,** p. 208) and he will use it to make his final stand. A well-equipped hunting party of the Others will arrive in the city the following day, and inflict even more casualties on the occupiers. The Nantais Lost will bear the brunt of the losses, including Gildas himself.

Character Creation

Character creation in this Era is mechanically similar to that of **Changeling: The Lost**, but the setting of the game raises some questions that might have greater importance to this era.

Where are you from? Do you speak French as your first language, or as a second? What are the Lost like where you are from (if you're from a different place than where your chronicle is set)? Do you ever get homesick? Was your family wealthy?

Can you read? Most people in this era are illiterate. How did you learn?

Are you religious? While virtually no one publicly identifies as an atheist in this age, there are a few people to whom religion is utterly irrelevant. How have your religious views (or lack thereof) been changed by your Durance? Do you view the Gentry as demons?

Do you care about politics? Does the immense gulf between the rich and the poor bother you, or do you dismiss those as mortal concerns? Do you think that the urban courts have the right to impose their protection (and their will) on the rural Lost?

Skills

Here is a listing of all of the Skills available to players of *Lily, Sabre, and Thorn,* and some ideas on how they might appear on your chronicle.

Academics

Several men in the 17th century were credited as "the last man to know everything": Athanasius Kircher, Thomas Young, and Gottfried Liebniz have all been dubbed thusly by various historians over the last few centuries. This term is not only meant to convey praise for those men, but also to demonstrate that the entire body of Western knowledge could be known by a single person at the time. A character with Academics has a solid grounding in history, geography, literature, theology — all of the things that are the province of learned men (save for natural philosophy, which is covered by Science). He can appreciate the fine arts and otherwise pass himself off as learned in his social circles.

If a character purchases any dots in Academics, she is considered to be literate.

Possessed by: Students, clergy, artists, philosophers, lawyers, nobility of the robe

Specialties: Impressing Rich People, Casuistry, Military Strategy, Philosophy

Enigmas

The fae have an uncanny logic all of their own. Some can untangle the threads of their twisted logic with their sharp intellect; others find that they have an intuitive grasp of it. Enigmas covers those skills required to solve riddles and logic puzzles, and to make connections between seemingly unrelated phenomena.

Possessed by: Changelings, philosophers, madmen, occultists

Specialties: Riddles, Logic Puzzles, Leaps of Intuition, Dream Interpretation

Crafts

Keeping up with the demands of courtly life demands both good taste and a team of excellent craftsmen to keep a courtier supplied with the latest fashions. The arts of cooking, architecture, and fashion are in high demand in the court of the Sun King, and a top-notch craftsman can win considerable favor by plying her trade.

Possessed by: Artisans, servants, laborers, farmers, ladies

Specialties: Textiles, Jewelry-making, Winemaking, Cooking, Architecture, Cosmetics, Perfumery

Investigation

The world of the Lost is rocked by intrigue and scandal. Though the Lost are notorious deceivers, a keen mind and careful observation can find the truth of any situation if the observer knows what to look for. On the other hand, Investigation can also be used to hide any traces of one's involvement at a crime scene.

Possessed by: Servants, police, burglars, librarians

Specialties: Crime Scenes, Finding Lost Items, Destroying the Evidence

Medicine

Medicinal knowledge in the 17th century is largely unchanged from the medieval era. Disease is thought to be caused by foul vapors, demonic possession, or imbalances of the four classical humors. Basic understanding of sanitation and hygiene are poor. However, a character with Medicine possesses a basic understanding of human anatomy and knowledge of various herbal remedies. Some choose to use this knowledge to practice the healing arts; others might ply their trade in the dungeons of the Bastille or by mixing "inheritance powders" for unscrupulous nobles.

Possessed by: Surgeons, midwives, poisoners, torturers

Specialties: Field Medicine, Herbal Remedies, Diagnosis, Infectious Diseases

Occult

A clever changeling knows that she is not the only thing that lurks in the dark corners of the world. Ghosts, magicians, and the *loup-garou* are but a few of the mysteries that haunt the world. Whether learned from a grimoire in a monastery or at your grandmother's knee by the hearth, the Occult skill represents knowledge of the dark, hidden forces of the world.

Possessed by: Autumn Courtiers, clergy, ritualists, astrologers, oneiromancers, Hedge explorers, rural people, con men

Specialties: Astrology, Hedge Lore, Occult Symbolism, Oneiromancy

Politics

The baroque world of changeling politics can be nigh-incomprehensible to the untrained mind. The genealogies, ancient feuds, and labyrinthine bureaucracies that determine who holds the titles and who is really in charge are vital knowledge for the ambitious courtier or revolutionary.

Possessed by: Courtiers, bureaucrats, aristocrats, ambitious people

Specialties: Heraldry, Appropriations, a particular court or region

Science

Scholarship is gaining a newfound respect in the Age of Reason, and a shrewd courtier should either be able to keep up with current discoveries or be able to bluff her way through scientific conversations. The reign of Louis XIV would see a number of scientific innovations: the discoveries of Newton, the discovery of microorganisms, the first blood transfusions, and many more.

If a character purchases any dots of Science, she is considered to be literate.

Possessed by: Students, explorers, philosophers, intellectuals

Specialties: Astronomy, Botany, Physics, Mathematics, Impressing People

Athletics

What swashbuckler story would be complete without daring feats of athletic prowess? Athletics covers everything from swinging from a chandelier to kicking a barrel down a staircase to climbing down from your mistress's balcony. It's also used for competing in the popular sports of the day, such as tennis or, in the New World, lacrosse.

Possessed by: Performers, laborers, farmers, children, soldiers, swashbucklers

Specialties: While Fighting, Climbing, Impressing People

Brawl

The universal art of using one's fists to beat an opponent senseless is a timeless custom enjoyed by people all over the world. Specific schools of martial arts exist in the early modern era: Collar-and-elbow style wrestling is an old folk custom in Brittany (and other Celtic lands), and the gentlemanly art of fisticuffs is beginning to become fashionable among the gentry in England. Among the refined classes in France, however, duels are still mostly commonly resolved by sword or pistol.

Possessed by: Soldiers, thugs, Bretons, Englishmen, Ogres

Specialties: In Taverns, Impressing Potential Mates, Gentlemanly Fisticuffs, Fighting Dirty

Firearms

In the 17th century, firearms are still quite rare. Muskets are seen primarily in the military, though outlaws and wealthy people often carry a pistol as well. Even in large battles among the fae, they are of limited utility — the Lost do not march in lines like men or ants. Due to their relatively short range, poor accuracy, and tendency to misfire, they are often fired once in combat and then discarded in favor of a melee weapon.

Possessed by: Soldiers, nobles, outlaws, ne'er-do-wells

Specialties: Duels, Reloading, While Mounted, Trick Shots

Larceny

A swashbuckler might have a heart of gold, but sometimes she finds herself on the wrong side of the law. Larceny covers any manner of knavery or skullduggery that a changeling might regrettably find herself forced to do (only out of deepest necessity, of course). Larceny covers everything from cheating at basset to picking locks to feats of legerdemain and showmanship.

Possessed by: Urchins, criminals, con artists, merchants, police, knaves, ne'er-do-wells

Specialties: Sleight-of-hand, Breaking and Entering, Counterfeiting

Ride

The Ride skill is detailed on page 26. The fae often ride non-standard mounts, such as elk made of stars, wolves made of teeth, giant bumblebees, and so forth. These non-standard mounts are also governed with Ride (though the Storyeller may decide to impose a penalty for truly unusual mounts or



mounts not suited to the rider's size). It is not unheard of for oathbreakers in some freeholds to be cursed to serve as mounts for a year and a day, though this practice is considered old-fashioned by many modern Lost.

Possessed by: Farmers, hunters, nobles, messengers, cavalrymen

Specialties: Stunts, Racing, a particular steed, Flying Mounts, While in Combat

Stealth

The art of moving unnoticed is an invaluable skill for any courtier. Whether listening at doorways in the halls of Versailles, stowing away on a ship in Marseille, or hiding in a crowd from the *gens d'armes* in a Paris marketplace, Stealth is helpful for getting any swashbuckler out of — or into — trouble.

Possessed by: Courtiers, servants, hunters, burglars, Darklings

Specialties: Hiding in Crowds, In the Hedge, Indoors, Moving Silently

Survival

Mere survival is a challenge for people in the world of *Lily, Sabre, and Thorn*. The state of constant warfare (and its accompanying tax burden) means that most of the rural poor are surviving by the skin of their teeth (if they indeed survive at all). The spectre of famine looms constantly over rural life.

On the other end of the spectrum, hunting is a diverting sport for wealthy nobles. Game wardens in their employ spend a great deal of time hunting for game to flush toward

their lords, and hunting for poaching peasants who would dare steal the animals that are on their lord's land.

Possessed by: Peasants, farmers, hunters, game wardens, Beasts

Specialties: A particular region (either in the Hedge or the mortal world), Hunting, Sailing

Weaponry

Though dueling has been officially outlawed since the mid-16th century, duels of honor are popular in 17th century France. So too is the art of swordsmanship on the rise. Master swordsmen seek to teach their art to whoever can afford their fees, while con artists fleece gullible students and noblemen that they're learning the "true secrets" of master fencers.

Possessed by: Soldiers, university students, criminals, nobles

Specialties: A particular weapon, Showing Off, Dueling, Improvised Weapons

Animal Ken

Animal Ken can be used for both natural and supernatural animals. Most talking cats enjoy having their ears scratched or their bellies rubbed, but Beasts are unlikely to take kindly to such offers. Some Beasts at particularly low Clarity may respond to Animal Ken when Empathy fails, but the aspiring courtier should exercise good judgment in this, lest he give grave offense.

Possessed by: Farmers, huntsmen, Beasts, Hedge explorers, stablehands

Specialties: Horses, Hounds, Training, Falconry, Hedge Beasts

Empathy

Emotion is at the core of the changeling's being. It is his sustenance and his addiction. It is a crucial tool of courtly life. When dealing with the feckless fae, knowing *when* to ask for a favor is as important as knowing *who* to ask.

Possessed by: Oneiromancers, servants, priests, courtiers

Specialties: A Court's chosen emotion, Formal Settings, Building Trust

Expression

In the early modern period, artistic and musical skill was much more common than in modern times. Before the era of mass media, people needed to provide their own entertainment. Whether at a highly formal courtly dance or leading a rousing song in a tavern, Expression is a valuable tool for ingratiating yourself into any social circle. It can also be used in lieu of Occult for performing rituals in a courtly setting.

Possessed by: Courtiers, peasants, students, poets, Fairest

Specialties: Dancing, Masques, Formal Settings, Rituals

Intimidation

Intimidation is used in a wide variety of social situations. Whether it's a skinny urchin in the slums demanding your purse while brandishing a bent kitchen knife, or a blustering duelist trying to scare off her foe before drawing her sword, or a thinly-veiled threat through smiling teeth delivered at a formal dinner party, Intimidation covers all forms of coercion.

Possessed by: Thugs, Ogres, steely society matrons, police, guards, police, bureaucrats, the Inquisition, aristocracy

Specialties: Rooting Out Heretics, Extracting Confessions, Braggadocio, a class of target (e.g., commoners, criminals, children)

Persuasion

The gentler cousin of Intimidation involves getting someone to see things your way without use of force. Though it's not necessarily any nobler than Intimidation, it's generally more socially acceptable.

Possessed by: Leaders of all stripes, cunning-men and women, tricksters, lotharios, peddlers, merchants

Specialties: Kissing Up, Seduction, Solicitation, Inspiring Others

Socialize

While conducting oneself with grace and tact is timeless, the world of courtly intrigue has its own specific codes and etiquettes. Socialize also allows a character to understand the secret ways that courtiers communicate — whether it's decoding a floral arrangement, sending a message by placing one's beauty mark just so, or surreptitiously signaling a lover with one's fan.

Possessed by: Servants, the wealthy, clergy, entertainers, prostitutes

Specialties: Formal Courtly Settings, Informal Parties, Slumming It

Streetwise

Navigating courtly life can be treacherous, but so can the back streets of Paris. A character with Streetwise knows where to buy poisons, how to speak *l'argot* (the Parisian thieves' cant of the 17th century), and which coffee shops the real revolutionaries frequent.

Possessed by: Criminals, police, students, the urban underclass

Specialties: A particular location, A particular class of people (e.g., Beggars, Thieves, Prostitutes), Fencing Stolen Goods

Subterfuge

Mastering the fine art of subterfuge is essential for the successful courtier. Whether it's the simple art of the white lie to appease a superior or disguising oneself in order to get into an exclusive party, outright lying is often an excellent tool when charm alone won't do the job.

Possessed by: Clergymen, smugglers, courtiers, courtesans

Specialties: Flattery, Recognizing Liars, Disguise, Concealing Emotions



Merits

Certain merits may be more valuable in the early modern era than in modern times. Natural Immunity may save a character's life during a plague year, Iron Stomach is more important in the era before food safety inspections, and Direction Sense matters more in the era before the GPS. As always, the players and Storyteller should all discuss the level of grittiness expected in play before the chronicle begins. While the Storyteller might think that dealing with the brutalities of life in the premodern era might be compelling, the players might not be expecting a game where D'Artagnan's nose rots off from syphilis.

Language

Multilingualism is more common in this place and era. Even if a person doesn't speak the local language, most French speakers can get by on *lingua franca*, provided they are in an area that speaks another Romance language. Each dot taken in the Language Merit indicates that a character can speak an additional language with the same fluency as his native language. He can only read and write in that language if he possesses the Literate Merit.

Literate (•)

In this Era, very few people can read or write. Perhaps only a quarter of the population is literate. By purchasing this Merit, the character is literate in every language that she knows. Literacy is a prerequisite for the Academics and Science Skills.

Contracts of Blades

The Fae love conflict and strife of all sorts, and thus long ago they struck a Contract with Blades — the ultimate symbol of separation. While initially intended as a martial Contract, its clauses have been put to more peaceful uses by gardeners, miners, and other laborers in Arcadia. The material of the blade is irrelevant; an obsidian dagger or a crystal letter opener would honor the contract, but a wooden club or steel spike would not. Iron blades, of course, never honor these contracts successfully. Contracts of Blades count as Affinity Contracts for all changelings.

Trusty Blades (•)

Bladed implements come readily to the aid of the changeling who invokes this clause. Swords spring from scabbards at the first hint of violence and daggers stubbornly refuse to be pried from the grip of their master.

Cost: 1 Glamour

Dice Pool: None. For the remainder of the scene the changeling may draw a bladed weapon reflexively, without forfeiting her attack for the turn. Thus when entering combat, an unarmed character can invoke this Contract, draw her weapon, and use it to attack or perform a weaponry dodge in the first turn. Additionally, all attempts to disarm the character or turn the blade on its user are made at a –1 penalty. If a character is successfully disarmed, she can retrieve a dropped weapon (if she is not being restrained in such a way that the weapon is beyond her natural reach) reflexively as well, and attack or dodge with it in the same turn.

Action: Reflexive

Catch: The character loudly bids her blade to come to her assistance.

Well-Honed Edge (••)

The changeling can call upon this clause to temporarily sharpen or strengthen bladed implements. Swords slice cleanly through handkerchiefs, butter knives glitter keen as razors, and shears bite deep into vines tough as stone.

Cost: 1 Glamour

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Weaponry

Action: Instant

Catch: The character is about to face an opponent more heavily armored than she is.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The blades present are offended, and the next action attempted with a bladed implement is made at a –2 penalty.

Failure: The blades are unmoved, and the contract fails.

Success: For the rest of the scene, bladed tools and weapons employed by the character gain +1 Durability. Additionally, bladed weapons gain a +1 damage bonus for the remainder of the scene. If increasing a tool's Durability also increases its damage when used as an improvised weapon, this additional bonus does not apply. This Contract cannot be invoked on the same blade more than once per scene.

Exceptional Success: For the remainder of the scene, non-combat related rolls made with bladed implements benefit from the 8-again rule.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+1	The character takes a few moments to praise the fine qualities of the blade.

Song of Flashing Steel (•••)

Using this clause, the changeling can call to her hand one weapon or tool with which she is already familiar and has touched at least once with her bare skin. The blade literally flies through the air, weaving and ducking around objects and people, until it places itself in the character's hand.

Cost: 2 Glamour (+1 Willpower if the blade is not within the line of sight)

Dice Pool: Presence + Wyrd (– opponent's Strength or Wyrd, if applicable)

Action: Instant

Catch: The changeling has previously given the blade a unique name and calls it in a loud, clear voice.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The blade flies wildly around its environment, damaging itself and other objects present for several minutes, then falls lifeless to the floor. It cannot be summoned again for 24 hours.

Failure: The Contract fails, and the character is aware.

Success: The blade flies to the hand of its master, deftly avoiding all obstacles save solid barriers. If the blade is within sight and has a clear path, it should reach the character within a turn. If the blade is not in the character's line of sight, it travels as quickly as a horse at a full gallop.

With the expenditure of 1 Willpower, this clause can even be used on objects that are not currently in the changeling's line of sight, though the object must be in the same world (and not in the Hedge or Arcadia). A blade answering this call cannot be stopped; any attempt by another being to restrain a blade answering the call fails automatically, as the blade nimbly dodges and continues on its course. The only exception to this rule is the case in which this clause is enacted against a blade currently being held (not just carried) by a person more familiar with the blade than the changeling who invoked the Contract. In this such a case, the changeling suffers that person's Strength or Wyrd (whichever is higher) as a penalty to the activation roll.

Solid objects and barriers present more of a problem. If no open path is available, the blade will attack any barrier at its weakest point — breaking windows, cutting through thatch, and so forth until it reaches its target or it is itself destroyed by its effort.

The summoned blade always seeks the hand of she who called it, even if the character moves from the location at which she activated the clause, and even if she dies before the blade arrives. Once the blade has been successfully called, the effects of this Contract cannot be canceled. The blade will not rest until it reaches the hand of the summoner unless it destroys itself in the attempt.

A flying blade has no Mask. A blade traveling a long distance is likely to fly high enough to avoid trees and obstacles (and therefore notice) for most of its journey.

Exceptional Success: The result is the same as a regular success, except that solid barriers prove less of a problem for the blade. Driven by the Wyrd, fate conveniently provides opportunities for the blade to bypass obstacles — safes and vaults are accessed, windows and doors are left open, manholes and drains are left uncovered. The blade passes harmlessly through obstacles and therefore need do no damage to its environment or itself on its journey.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+1	The character's call to the blade is made verbally and is especially poetic.
–1	The character has touched the blade only once before and has never used the blade.
–2	The blade belongs to an enemy and it has tasted the character's blood.

Swords into Ploughshares (••••)

This clause can transform any blade into any other blade. A prized silver epee can become a pair of dull kitchen shears, or vice versa.

Cost: 2 Glamour and 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Presence + Wyrd

Action: Instant

Catch: If used to make a weapon into something less deadly, she must insult the wielder's fighting prowess. To make a tool into a deadly weapon or transform one bladed weapon into another, she must praise the wielder's martial skill. To change one kind of tool into another (e.g., a scalpel into a hoe), she must wax poetic about whatever task she intends the tool to accomplish (e.g., to transform a scalpel into a hoe, she must praise "the noble farmer, upon whose ceaseless labors the whole of civilization depends," etc.).

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The clause backfires spectacularly, and the opposite of the intended effect is achieved. If used to destroy an opponent's weapons, the weapons are treated as if they had been the targets of Well-Honed Edge, above. Tools simply fall apart. The character cannot invoke this clause again for 24 hours.

Failure: The clause fails, and any blades remain unchanged.

Success: The character can affect any number of blades within her immediate vicinity, whether she knows they are present or not. She can exclude any blades she wishes. She can choose only one type of transformation with each use of the power, however. She cannot transform her opponent's sabre into a letter opener while simultaneously upgrading her own dinner knife into a claymore, for example. The effect remains until the invoker wishes otherwise or dies.

Exceptional Success: Any weapons created by this power automatically benefit from Well-Honed Edge for the scene (above); any tools created give their owners a +1 bonus on all rolls related to their craft.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+1	The target's Vice is Pride.

Saber Dance (•••••)

Graceful dancers twirl swords effortlessly, butchers carve meat with brutal efficiently, surgeons operate with exacting precision, and even gardeners trim hedges into stunning works of art. But when the time comes for battle, the blade-wielder blessed by this clause finds that her civilian skills significantly augment her fighting prowess.

Changelings who invoke this contract are beautiful to watch, graceful and mesmerizing, and sometimes more than a little disturbing. Dancers spin and undulate with blades

striking out in rhythm to their steps. Jugglers throw knives with breathtaking flourishes and pinpoint precision. Butchers land devastating blows that take their victims apart cleanly at the joints, and surgeons' scalpels land deadly strikes against their opponents' most vulnerable points.

Cost: 3 Glamour

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Wyrd

Action: Reflexive

Catch: The character is dressed in a manner appropriate to her relevant non-combat skills — a juggler in motley, a surgeon in a smock, and so forth.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character gracelessly miscalculates, falls prone, and must spend a full turn getting to her feet. She is stunned and suffers a –1 penalty to her defense until she regains her feet. She cannot attempt the Saber Dance again for a full day.

Failure: The Contract fails to activate, but the character can act normally.

Success: To use this clause effectively, a character ought to possess both the Weaponry skill and at least one blade-related specialty in a non-combat skill such as Expression (Dance), Athletics (Juggling), Crafts (Cooking), or Medicine (Surgery).

In combat, the character gains the appropriate bonus to all blade-based weaponry attacks for a number of turns equal to the number of successes made on the activation roll times her Wyrd. Outside of combat, she gains the appropriate bonus to one use of a skill in which she has a relevant blade-related specialty. If the roll to use the skill is extended, then she gains the bonus for a number of rolls equal to the number of successes made on the contract activation roll times her Wyrd.

Exceptional Success: The character can carry on the dance for the duration of the combat or until she has completed her skill-based endeavor.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+1	The character uses blades of a fine or superior quality.
+1	The character's clothing fits loosely and allows a maximum range of movement.
–1	The character is wearing more than one point's worth of armor.

New Tokens

The Honest Thief (•)

The Honest Thief is a small jeweled brooch that resembles a stylized magpie. While wearing it, the wearer can choose to activate the token at any time. While the pin is activated, it can perform one of two functions.

The first function is that of recording. When activated, the Honest Thief will listen and remember any sounds it hears for next minute. Its senses are approximately as keen as any normal human's. It can only remember one minute of sounds at a time, and the minute must be contiguous.

For the second function, the Honest Thief will perfectly reproduce what it has been bidden to remember. It can imitate any sound, but it cannot reproduce supernatural effects that are carried via sound.

As a tertiary and somewhat less obviously useful function, the Honest Thief attracts magpies. While it is worn, any nearby magpies congregate near the wearer. They will not attack the wearer or obsessively follow him, but they will be attracted to his location.

Action: Reflexive

Mien: The Honest Thief is a silver brooch decorated in enamel and colored glass. When bidden to speak, it turns its head and moves its beak as if speaking, revealing a tiny red tongue like a drop of bright blood.

Drawback: Magpies are chatty birds, and the Honest Thief is no exception. No more than once per scene, the Thief may randomly blurt out a snatch of conversation that it has overheard at some point in its life. It may be an irrelevant bit of nonsense such as the cries of a fruit seller or a line of a poem heard at court. More likely, however, is that it will reveal a secret that is deeply embarrassing or incriminating to the wearer. It needn't be something that the Thief has specifically been instructed to remember. Even when it isn't active, the Thief is always listening.

Catch: Sometime after the next sunset, the Thief disappears from its owner's possession, and it takes something precious with it. The Thief likes shiny objects, but it also prefers objects of great sentimental value to its owner. The stolen object appears at the next Goblin Market that the former owner attends, typically for resale at an exorbitant price.

The Claire de Lune Mask (•••)

The Claire de Lune Mask allows a changeling to create an alter ego. The first time the mask is worn, the wearer can fundamentally alter her appearance within certain constraints. While wearing the mask, the wearer may change her apparent height, weight, gender, voice, age, and clothing, but she will always appear as if she were an ordinary human masked for a costume ball. Her kith will always be evident in her costume in some manner. A petite lupine Hunterheart might appear as a towering man in a leopard mask; a moss-covered, elderly Woodblood might disguise himself as a young man adorned with lilies. Once an alter ego is created, the Changeling cannot use the mask to disguise herself in any other way. For example, the Hunterheart mentioned above could not disguise herself as the man in the leopard mask one day and then disguise herself as a child in a tiger mask the next; she may only choose one disguise.

Action: Standard

Mien: Though it appears to be a simple wooden half-mask, the Mask covers the nose completely and adjusts itself to conform closely to the wearer's face.

Drawback: The mask conforms so closely to the user's face that it tends to become stuck. Successful removal of the mask requires a Strength + Athletics roll. In addition, the mask inflicts one level of bashing damage during each removal attempt, successful or not.

Catch: The mask takes a subtle toll on those who do not sacrifice Glamour to it. The personality of the alter ego will begin to change from the wearer's true personality as she develops a mild Derangement of the Storyteller's choice whenever she wears the mask. Though the Derangement will disappear when the mask is removed, it will unerringly reappear when the mask is donned again. If the wearer continues to refuse the price, she may acquire additional Derangements, or her symptoms may become more severe.

Hobgoblin Truce (•••)

The Hobgoblin Truce is a truly rare item — an enchanted flintlock pistol. To activate the Truce, the wielder selects a target, points the pistol at him, and pulls the trigger. The target must be within short range and able to hear the wielder. The wielder makes a simple command that can be accomplished in a single turn, such as "Give me your purse!" or "Drop your sword and get on your knees!" The player then makes a Manipulation + Wyrd roll resisted by the target's Composure + Resolve. The target may not spend Willpower on this roll. A wielder may only use this power on a given target once per day. If he attempts to use it more than once,

The Chronicles of Darkness

France in this era is a bastion of Western culture. Anyone who's anyone pays attention to the movements of the French fleet, the fashions from Paris, and the skirmishes of the nation's gallant troops. This, of course, includes other supernatural entities. Louis' court isn't thick with immortals, of course, but one might cross paths with an exotic rival as one might meet a foreign dignitary.

The idea of the **vampire** as a romantic figure is a long, long way from establishing itself in the public eye. However, many Kindred may fancy themselves romantic figures when tempted by the lavish spectacles of the Sun King's court. The Invictus and Lancea et Sanctum are the strongest covenants in France, and of course their rivalry has never been more courteously bitter.

The European **Uratha** of this time are fervently interested in the New World. Rumors circulate that the faraway continents are utterly free of the Pure — or alternately, that the Pure alone live there, a savage paradise for the Predator Kings. Though they still keep their provincial sacred places and chase down fattened spirits in the streets of Paris, many are beginning to book passage or stow away to cross the Atlantic. Some have already made the trip, bringing back strange fetishes or trophies — and sometimes they're followed by enemies like nothing yet seen in France.

Hunters keep their Vigil here as they might in any other time. The Malleus Maleficarum are young yet, and use Louis' persecution of Protestants as camouflage for their own crusade. Another compact of note is the Inexorables, formed by survivors of the Thirty Years' War who teach their apprentices martial discipline to fight the atrocities visited by things other than humanity.

The Seers of the Throne are strong while the Sun King shines, their agenda of division working splendidly where wealth and religion are concerned. Pentacle **mages** must devote their attention to discovering which nobles, scholars, advisors or courtesans are secretly tools of the Exarchs, which leads to intrigues as occult as they are dashing.

The **Sin-Eaters** are in much the same predicament as many Lost. They are victims of unhappy accident, compelled to forge their own small communities as a defense against otherworldly threats. Many cluster around cathedrals, often naming their krewes for the grand churches that are the local landmark. This habit is tied to a little secret — a surprising number of cathedrals sit above potent cenotes, for obscure reasons that resemble the chicken-and-egg conundrum. Were the cathedrals built to help keep the doors closed, or did their presence change the flow of the Underworld's energies? If the former, they're not doing a very good job.

France is certainly not the homeland of the **Arisen**, but neither is it so terribly far away. A modest number of mummies can be found in the region, following the trade routes and investigating a shadowy economy of occult objects. Legends of Templar gold have never quite died down, and several nobles boast of trophies their ancestors took from the Crusades.

the power will fail and he will suffer the effects of a misfire (see below).The perverse magics of the Truce tend to favor smaller, weaker wielders over more imposing ones.

The Hobgoblin Truce cannot be used as an ordinary pistol. If the gun is loaded and fired, it will automatically misfire and its other powers will be useless until the next sunrise.

Action: Contested

Mien: The Hobgoblin Truce is a silver-plated Queen Anne pistol engraved with mermaids. When the trigger is pulled and the power is activated, great puff of purple smoke emits from the barrel and the mermaids open their mouths to reveal rows of shark-like teeth.

Drawback: The wielder begins to feel an unearned sense of superiority after using this weapon. His inflated ego makes it difficult for him to relate to others, and he is at a –2 to all Empathy rolls until the next sunrise.

Catch: The wielder is afflicted with cowardice. He is at a –2 penalty to any action that would demand courage or daring on his part, such as climbing a precarious cliff, facing down a foe in mortal combat, or resisting intimidation.

Suggested Modifiers:

Modifier	Situation
+1	The wielder physically unimposing in comparison to his target
+1	The wielder is Wizened
–1	The wielder has an Intimidation score of 3 or higher
–1	The wielder has a Size greater than 5



The Knights of St. Collen

Ours is the burden of the cross and the sword. We bring succor to the weak, and judgment to the wicked. We serve Him who wore the crown of Thorns, our Lord and Savior, who knows our pain like no other.

The Knights of St. Collen is a proud order that dates back to the 7th century. It was well respected among the Lost of Western Europe, and once rivaled the Courts for popularity. Many Lost felt that the stories of Christ's earthly suffering closely mirrored their own suffering. The Gentry are often repelled by the trappings of mortal religion, and the Lost could rely on the church for a measure of protection against their former masters. But as forces of the mortal Church began to stamp out heterodoxies and heretics in their own ranks toward the end of the Middle Ages, membership in the Knighthood waned. Many among the Lost began to fear that they were no longer welcome in the modern Church, an increasingly authoritarian and violent organization that categorized all spirits and fey creatures as demons.

In the 17th century, the Knighthood is struggling. Though many of its number wish to refrain from the political conflicts of the day and focus simply on spiritual matters, others are called to defend the faith from its mortal enemies. An Irish branch of the Knighthood, the Knights of St. Dymphna, was all but wiped out during the Cromwellian conquest, and the surviving members of the Knighthood are deeply bitter at the Irish Courts' decision to lay low and hide from the mortal conflict.

In accordance with venerable custom, high-ranking Knights are often called in to arbitrate inter-Court disputes that cannot be otherwise settled. It is not uncommon to see a freehold with a permanently-appointed chief minister or seneschal from the Knighthood who oversees many aspects of the freehold's stewardship, but this practice is becoming increasingly unpopular in modern times.

In addition to their magisterial roles, the Knights are honor-bound to give succor to changelings who have newly emerged from the Hedge, or those who are succumbing to loss of Clarity. Mortal charity is close to the hearts of many of the Knights as well. Most Knights believe that the Lost should reconcile themselves with mortal society, but they also believe that mortal society should reconcile itself to them. It is not





Rumors of the Knighthood

A changeling Inquisitor and witch-hunter is roaming eastern England. His targets? Fetches. He accuses them publicly of witchcraft and conducts various "tests" — submerging them in water, pricking them with a mysterious pin — before riling the townsfolk into murdering the "witches" in their midst. His actions have only resulted in the murder of fetches, so far, but his brand of vigilantism is angering the Courts. Is he affiliated with the Knighthood? How is he able to detect fetches so unerringly?

A freehold's confessor and Knight of St. Collen has disappeared. At the goblin markets, a strange vendor has appeared, selling what appears to be confessions of sins written in blood — signed with the names of the penitents. The Knighthood is tracking this vendor down, but they have not yet found him. Are they concerned for the fate of their priest, or are they trying to cover up their own sins?

Some Courts openly disdain the Knighthood. The persecutions of the Inquisition left many Lost embittered toward anything resembling Christian religion, and the Knights are criticized for not distancing themselves from mortal politics. The only violence, however, has been between Knights. Rumor has it that Huguenot and Catholic Knights have been quarrelling in Southern France after the Edict of Nantes legalized persecution of Protestants. The Bishop of Marseilles, Lady Rose-de-Lys, has been looking for stout-hearted Knights to help ease tensions. She'll pay, of course.

uncommon for more powerful Knights to lead worship for mixed congregations of changelings and loyal human followers, though the mortal Church would almost certainly frown on their unconventional forms of worship.

In *Lily, Sabre, & Thorn*, the Knights find themselves increasingly conflicted. Can they maintain their faith in the face of a church that no longer has room for them, or will they dissolve utterly, a medieval relic out of place in the modern world?

Titles: Sir, Lady, Magister (male or female), Bishop (male or female). Nuns and clergy in mortal churches may choose to refer to themselves by their monastic or ecclesiastical titles.

Prerequisites: Clarity 5 or higher, Willpower 5 or higher. At least two of the following must have a score of 2 or higher: Academics, Investigation, Politics, Empathy. They may possess Court Goodwill (Any), but not Mantle.

Joining: Joining the Order is no simple task. The Knights are expected to demonstrate courage, strength of character, and good judgment. The exact means by which these tasks are administered varies; some of the more serious Knights might require that prospects publicly self-flagellate or devote themselves to great acts of asceticism. In Gascony, a prospective Knight might simply need to arm wrestle an Ogre. (Success is not mandatory, but imbibing copious quantities of Armagnac with one's fellow Knights afterward is.) There are no formal vows of celibacy, poverty, and so forth as we associate with the modern Church, but many Knights will take these vows as a demonstration of their loyalty.

As a final requirement, the prospective Knight must make a full confession to one of the Knighthood's priests. Initiation takes place during Midwinter. When the sun goes down, the prospective Knight begins to confess. He must, to the best of his recollection, confess every sin that he can recall during that time. If he willingly deceives or misleads his confessor, he is unable to join the order and suffers the penalties associated with renouncing an order (see "Quitting an Order," **Changeling: The Lost**, p. 289).

While a confessor has a sacred duty to keep the contents of any confessional secret, he is not pledged to do so; in this respect, he answers only to God. If it is deemed that a Knight is behaving in such a way that undermines or embarrasses the Order, then it might only be appropriate for a confessor to use some of the knowledge he has gained from confession. For the good of the organization, of course.

Mien: Most Knights dress in a manner appropriate to the martial caste or the clergy of the area. In general, they tend to eschew elaborate fashion and wear simple clothing, though the definition of "simple clothing" may vary widely depending on local standards. An ascetic Knight might wear sackcloth and ashes, while a courtly Knight of the First Estate might wear flowing robes of scarlet velvet trimmed in ermine.

The mien of a Knight reflects his piety. Some will tend to manifest stigmata on the hands or on the forehead in intense situations such as combat. Others will affect the stillness and calm of a sacred icon; they appear tranquil and composed even in the most horrific situations. At high Wyrd, they may manifest a halo or a crown of thorns.

Background: Prospective Knights are typically recruited from the ranks of Christian (and particularly Catholic) changelings. Not all religious Christian changelings join the Order, and not all changeling clergy join the Order, but those who find themselves drawn either to the institution of the mortal Church or the salvation of the Cross over the intrigues of the Courts may find a home there.

Because of the political and magisterial bent of the organization, membership in the Knighthood requires sound judgment and a strong mind. Mental and Social Skills are common, as is an Academics specialty in Religion. Allies, Contacts, Status, and Mentors (either in the Knighthood or in the mortal Church) are also common.

Organization: The Knights are comparatively well organized. Each region or metropolitan area (called a synod within the ranks) has a ranking member known as a Bishop. Directly below the Bishops are the Priests-Magister, who are the overseers of a given freehold. Beneath them are Knights.

Concepts: Scheming courtly minister, penitent former criminal, gentle-hearted wandering friar, esteemed legal scholar, heterodox occultist, iron-willed magistrate, lecherous monk.

Privileges

Phial of St. Collen (Token 4)

The Phial of St. Collen is any small vial of water that has been blessed by a Bishop of the Knighthood. It is given to those members of the Order who achieve the rank of Priest-Magister or higher, though a Priest-Magister may loan some to a subordinate for a specific purpose.

Water thusly blessed is typically used for divinatory purposes. When sprinkled on the head of any target, it can be used to compel her to answer a single question truthfully to the best of her ability — without lying, deceiving, or willfully misleading the querent. The Phial of St. Collen can only be used in this way on a target once per day; subsequent applications will have no effect.

The Phial of St. Collen will also deal one level of bashing damage when applied to any creature with a Clarity score of 5 or lower. It has the additional property of dissolving dreamstuff such as those items produced by Cobblethought (**Changeling: The Lost**, p. 126) as well as Hedgespun items upon contact.

Action: Standard

Mien: Water from the phial glitters as if sunlit, even indoors or at night.

Drawback: After using the phial, a Knight cannot enter a Hollow again until the next noon. If it is used inside of a Hollow, the Knight is immediately transported to the Hollow's entrance.

Catch: The phial burns the hand, causing serious burns and one level of lethal damage. The catch is also invoked if anyone who is not a member of Knighthood attempts to use the phial, regardless of whether they pay the cost or make their Wyrd roll.

Inspirations

Fiction

The fiction of Alexandre Dumas. Any list of swashbuckler fiction would be sorely incomplete without mentioning Dumas. However, Dumas wrote serial fiction and was paid by the word. Though his novels are highly entertaining and well-worth reading, they are quite lengthy. The time-pressed player may wish to watch one of the excellent film adaptations of his work. The 1973 film version of *The Three Musketeers* is a must-see. *The Count of Monte Cristo*, with its themes of identity, imprisonment, and revenge, is an excellent choice. (The 2004 anime series *Gankutsuou* is a visually stunning and novel take on the story.) The 1998 version of *The Man in the Iron Mask* is worth watching especially for **Changeling** players, though the performances are uneven. It could easily be viewed as a story of the struggle between a young changeling and his sadistic, powerful fetch.

***Scaramouche* by Rafael Sabatini.** "He was born with a gift of laughter and a sense that the world was mad." Though it takes place during the Revolutionary era rather than the reign of Louis XIV, Scaramouche is the tale of a man who follows his heart and brings down an oppressive regime in the name of love, honor, and revenge. It uses classic swashbuckler tropes to great effect.

The Fairy Tales of Madame d'Aulnoy. The rise of nationalism during the Early Modern period (and in Louis XIV's reign) led to renewed interest in cataloguing and preserving France's national folk heritage. This collection by Madame d'Aulnoy is a classic anthology of French folk tales catalogued during the reign of Louis XIV. A treasure trove of inspiration.

Non-Fiction

***Strange Revelations: Magic, Poison, and Sacrilege in Louis XIV's France* by Lynn Wood Mollenaur.** A rigorously researched and highly readable look at the occultism and labyrinthine intrigues surrounding the rule of the Sun King. Highly recommended.

***The Book of the Courtier* by Baldassare Castiglione.** Though originally published in Venice over a century before the Sun King would take the crown, *The Book of the Courtier* was regarded as an indispensable text in Louis XIV's day and considered mandatory reading for men and women of good manners.



“Liam, you must let me through.” I must admit, I never thought I’d see my brother take up arms against me. We were Irish cobblers caught between two Churches — Liam was a Puritan and I, his sister, a Catholic — and new to Salem Town. Liam was tall and built like a lumberjack. I, on the other hand, had fiery red hair and a face filled with freckles. To see him standing there on the bridge, so afraid — a lantern in one shaking hand and a musket in the other — it was as if he thought I’d curse him. “If I don’t reach the heart of the forest by the time the moon rises, I’ll...”

“Then it’s true. You are as Goody Blackbourne says. You consort with the Olde Boy.”

I froze, shocked that my brother would succumb to such vile gossip. I would rather sacrifice my own life than sign a pact with the Devil. Instead of getting angry, as Goody Prescott did when she was accused, I took a deep breath and said a prayer: “Lord, may I serve thee faithfully in this hour of need...”

Liam listened with great interest. When I was done, he glanced around to make sure no one was watching and leaned in to whisper in my ear. “Are you a witch, Patience? What do you do out in the forest at night? Do you dance naked under the full moon?”

How could I tell Liam about the Vigil? Surely, any confession of my secret vow could be twisted to condemn me. Salem Village is gripped with a terrible fever, an invisible malady that drives good men and women mad. I decided to show him, to force him to deal with the truth: that the Devil does exist and I was chosen to stop Him and His agents, and that those forces lingered at the very edges of our home.

“To your first question, my brother, I am no more a witch than you are.”

“And to my second?”

I pulled out my wooden cross, bowed my head, and laid my hand across his. “Lord, let this be the hour You remove the blindness from Liam’s eyes, so that he may take up arms in Your name.”

Liam jerked his hand away. “You speak as if you know Him personally. Are you so prideful, sister, that you make demands upon Him?”

“Come my brother,” I urged, pointing at the rising moon filling the blue-black sky. “I will show you what God has asked of me.”

“Then let us run...lest I turn you in for witchcraft.”

We crossed the bridge in silence and hastened to the treeline. The forest was unusually quiet that unholy night. I could not hear the owls hoot or frogs croak, nor see any signs of my fellow hunters: twigs snapping, cries echoing, leaves rustling. It was as if we were standing before our father’s gravesite, remembering him.

I rushed to the edge of the clearing, the moonlight showing me the way, my brother not far behind. Once there, I crept behind a large oak and pulled out a satchel hidden by its roots. The pouch contained my Bible, vials of holy water, fresh rosemary, salt, and a musket loaded with silver bullets.

“Patience? Why did you lead me here?” Liam sounded anxious. I could not fault him for that. “Do you seek to distract me from my duties?”

“I intend to give you a set of new orders,” I said, my voice grim. “But first, I must —”

A sweet voice began to sing a lullaby, interrupting me.

“Lullay, mine Liking, my dear, mine Sweeting. Lullay, my sweetheart, mine own dear darling.”

“Anne! Is that you?” I thought I recognized the speaker as my friend and allied hunter, the midwife Anne Hodgkins.

“Lullay, sweetie. Come and join us. We’re all waiting for you.”

“Anne?” I did not understand what she was saying. We had agreed not to hunt the Beast until we were all accounted for, unless —

“Liam! It’s a trap. Stay here.” I stepped in front of that great oak, keeping its wide trunk at my back, and readied my holy water. There, standing out in the open, was Goody Hodgkins, the same midwife who delivered my own child not two summers past. She was but a shadow, a bloodless pale form, blood dripping from pearl-white fangs, staining her apron. The minister, who I considered my friend, lay crumpled in a heap in front of her. His wife and newborn babe, too. “It’s Anne. Brother, she’s...she’s been turned.”

“And the one who performed this great evil?” Liam ignored my warning and snuck up beside me. This was too much for him. I was sure of it. “Is this what you wanted to tell me?”

It was then my worst fears were realized, for my fate was sealed not with a well-timed bullet or a vampire’s fangs deep in my neck, but six words followed by an unholy, high-pitched laugh.

“Patience, of course. She’s a witch.”

Doubting Souls

Future generations will tell the story of the English colonies as if they were alone in the dark. But they are not alone. They have allies and enemies among the natives, and troubled ties to their former homes across the sea. Most of all, though, they are kept company by their fears. The fear of walking into the forest at night. The fear of being driven back by those whose land they usurped. And more than anything, the fear that among them, on their own farms and in their town squares and even in their very homes, dwells the Devil.

Theme: Challenged Beliefs

Though Salem's townsfolk correctly identified that a supernatural threat lurked on the fringes of their town, they began to blame each other for inexplicable fits, the appearance of cloven hooves on their bare skin, and spontaneous bleeding. These phenomena occurred because they came to understand that the supernatural is not of the invisible world, but the *visible*. It is this belief that hunters must challenge carefully — or risk being accused of witchcraft themselves.

Hunters who quickly acclimate to the good people of Salem are not exempt from scrutiny, even amongst themselves. This era forces hunters to examine their consciences, their communities, and their feelings about the Vigil. It is a time of great unrest, both for native hunters and for those who immigrated to the Colonies from Europe, and many innocents are at risk.

Although the most acute judges of the witches and even the witches themselves, were convinced of the guilt of witchery, the guilt nevertheless was non-existent. It is thus with all guilt.

–Friedrich Nietzsche

Mood: Fear of the Unknown

Imagine a doctrine that draws distinct lines between the forces of good and evil, and warns that those entities can manifest in every aspect of a settler's life. Puritanism takes the idea of the Devil and makes Him real. Does Satan exist? Can this spirit infect a hunter's soul? Sway an unsuspecting wife to perform great works of evil?

Those are the questions that every cell must come to grips with, for monsters, innocents, *and* hunters are all at risk of being tried and executed. It is also why most hunters — especially in this time period — may be so tormented that they don't know who (or what) to believe. Fighting the supernatural is easy. Understanding what's real and what isn't in a time period where colonists believe in magic is much, much harder. Throw that up against the Colonial era, the fight for land, and the growing need for independence. Suddenly, a settler's calm, peaceful way of life has exploded with doubt and uncertainty.

One sincere warning is all it will take before hysteria sets in and innocent people die. That's enough to frighten any mortal — especially a hunter.

A Charred Past

The word "witchcraft" had been associated with black magic or Satan-worshipping since the early days of the Holy Roman Empire and the publication of *Canon Episcopi* in 900 BCE. It fell under the umbrella of heresy, a punishable crime, and many were accused, tried, and arrested. The victims included free thinkers, pagan priests and priestesses, town healers, soothsayers, troublesome bishops and priests, midwives, and naturalists. Or, to put it bluntly: Anyone who didn't believe in the sanctity and authority of the Holy Roman Empire was thought to practice heresy and dabble in the black arts.

17TH-CENTURY HUNTERS

Witches, mystics, seers, vampires, and mages are part and parcel of the Chronicles of Darkness. When viewing the supernatural through a modern lens, the hunters of today may have a hard time convincing folks that magic is real. This wasn't always the case, as the history of the witch trials clearly shows. Here, a Euro-centric history is presented to show that a belief in the supernatural was tangible, visible, prevalent, and prosecutable through a system of duality: God versus the Devil.

The events that occurred in Salem, Massachusetts happened at the tail end of the European witch trials in the midst of great religious, political, and social unrest. The information presented is meant to be used as inspiration for your game, not as fact. Some liberties were taken in order to put the witch trials in the framework of **Hunter: The Vigil** and to flesh out the time period.

A DIFFERENT KIND OF HERESY

Some hunters believe that the Church's renewed focus on tracking down heretics was, in part, fueled by the Cainite Heresy. For years, the Cainite Heresy believed that vampires had infiltrated less-populated areas in order to build an army of bloodsuckers that would one day storm and destroy the Vatican. Hunters suspected that vampire blood had been mixed with sacramental wine and fed to villagers throughout Europe to increase the number of vampires in rural villages. Many members of the Cainite Heresy believed that it was bloodsuckers — *not* witches — that were actually the cause of Europe's ills. They felt vampires were stirring up trouble for witches to take the focus off of their schemes to attack the Church. As a result, many Cainite hunters attempted to use the nascent beginning of the trials to root out suspected vampires and ghouls and stop an epidemic before it started.

The majority of the records describing the conspiracy's actions from the 13th and 14th centuries can either be found within the Vatican or with certain members of the Lucifuge and the Aegis Kai Doru.

For more about the Cainite Heresy, refer to **Night Stalkers** on pp. 103–117.

Both the European and American civil witch trials are deeply rooted in the Inquisition, which was formed in 1229. Trials to punish suspected heretics were conducted by approved papal agents, some of whom were devout hunters, and incorporated torture to extract voluntary confessions. Often, it was difficult for the black-clad Inquisitors to obtain an admission of guilt, for most of the accused tried to prove their innocence. Everyone — hunters and witches, innocents and monsters — was at risk of being tried.

Torture devices, like the *strappado*, the hanging cage, the heretic's fork, the pear, and the rack, were commonly used in conjunction with an extended stay in solitary confinement. Those who didn't starve to death committed suicide. Those who didn't commit suicide were dismembered, disemboweled, and burned. To make matters worse, age didn't matter; children as young as 12 years old, and dying, elderly priests within the Vatican itself, were prosecuted.

The transition between the Inquisition and the civil witch trials can be traced to the emergence of new theological beliefs, the papal decrees that followed, and the Church's growing coffers as the centuries progressed. The Vatican funded the Inquisition by accumulating the property holdings of convicted heretics, which is partly why wealthy nobles were targeted early on. That is, until the Church began accepting handsome bribes from anonymous donors asking the Inquisitors to steer clear of certain estates.

Conspiracies during this time period were hesitant to involve themselves in the trials for fear that they would be deemed heretics and draw the Church's ire. This first Inquisition, while heavily focused on vampires, mostly swept up innocents and few monsters. Only hunters who had a strong relationship with the Vatican opted to become Inquisitors during this era, simply because these trials weren't an effective method for capturing monsters due to their political undertones. For many hunters, the first Inquisition had less to do with monster hunting and more to do with increasing the Church's coffers, so they opted to avoid it until a later date.

Then, in the mid-13th century, the Church formed a second Inquisition, one geared toward finding, collecting, harvesting, and cleansing sorcerers and witches who lurked within many of Europe's royal halls, primarily in England, France, Spain, Italy, Germany, and Austria. This second, secret Inquisition, which lasted for a single decade, is commonly referred to as the Shadow Purge. It specifically targeted what the Church deemed to be the worst, most monstrous offenders and concentrated its efforts on magic-users. Heretics and other non-desirables were not targeted by the Shadow Purge. Behind the scenes, the Church's focus shifted from vampires to witches, and there's little evidence that shows why this happened. In the end, the Shadow Purge was short-lived because it evolved too quickly and was supplanted by a newly formed public Inquisition, one that shared its goals and resources.



Satan's Children Stand Accused

The Lady of Milan knew of the Church's desire to eradicate heretics, but did not make a move to protect her hunters until the Shadow Purge began. According to documents obtained by the Malleus Maleficarum conspiracy in the 16th century, the Lucifuge's approach outlined several methods to avoid capture, detection, and suspicion. She spent much of her resources on reconnaissance to pinpoint the location of every Inquisitor in Europe. More surprising, however, was the fact that the Lady reached out to the leaders of the Acheron Shipping & Trading Guild (the Cheiron Group's name at that time), Aegis Kai Doru, the Cainite Heresy, and the Ascending Ones to propose that they form a new, temporary compact specifically designed to defend hunters from widespread paranoia. The Lucifuge claimed that while *her* hunters were obviously at risk, *any* hunter who upheld the Vigil was also in danger of being targeted and eliminated as well.

Though this compact was never created, rumors spread throughout Europe, pressuring hunters to examine their allies closely. While conspiracy leaders may have acted in the best interests of their groups by not joining the compact, some hunters still thought it was a good idea to band together, since innocents were just as likely to be victimized as captured monsters. To others, the Lucifuge and her hunters were abominations. Her hunters may claim to take up the Vigil, but that wasn't proof the demonic blood flowing through their veins didn't influence their actions.

The question of what to do about the Lucifuge drove a wedge between European hunters. Groups fractured and formed several smaller demon-and-witch hunting groups — like the Divine Artificer, a compact intent on killing demons, the Lucifuge, her hunters, and all those suspected to share Satan's blood.

Backed into a corner, the Lucifuge set up an underground network to hide and relocate any hunter who was at risk of being accused, convicted, or executed. Rescues were guided through the labyrinthine catacombs that once hid practicing Christians from the Romans long ago. The compact overseeing the effort came to be known as the Silent Imperative.

It is said that the Lady of Milan didn't relax her stance until witchcraft could no longer be tried civilly, both in Europe and in the Americas, for of all the hunters, she had the most to lose.

Silent Imperative

The Silent Imperative quickly took on a life and identity of its own, separate from the Lucifuge. Mireille Debruler, a hunter who operated the French arm of the underground network, led hundreds if not thousands of citizens through the passages and crypts that zig-zag beneath all of Paris, not caring who her charges were, where they hailed from, or what crimes they had committed. When the Plague took hold, the Imperative disbanded, only to reform once again in the American Colonies centuries later.

As for the Lucifuge herself, some hunters believe she relocated with the Silent Imperative's help until it was safe to return home.

Outer Demon, Inner Witch

Since the days of the pharaoh, demons were thought to be monstrous creatures — mortals could visibly identify a devil by its hooves, horns, wiry beard, wide-spaced eyes, and hooked nose. The Shadow Purge changed this belief and was influenced by the teachings of Thomas Aquinas, who emphasized that humans and demons were indistinguishable from one another, and that all foul deeds are the work of demons in disguise.

Up until that point, witches weren't automatically associated with the Devil, not even by the hunters who tracked them down. This widespread change in belief, which focused on the idea that a neighbor, friend, lover, or sister could be the physical house for a demon, altered the public's view of witches permanently. The heavy-handed emphasis on witchcraft shifted the Inquisition's supernatural focus from bloodsuckers to magick-wielders. Witches were thought to be more dangerous than any other creature— a fact that made many hunters nervous. Was there a master vampire lurking in the Vatican, scheming to misplace blame on witches? Or, was there an even darker creature — a demon or a mummy —riling up the mob? To this day, no one knows for sure.

As the witch trials slowly spilled out into the civil courts, the idea that mortals have no free will affected how suspects were prosecuted. To a king, judge, or jury, it didn't matter if the witch's intentions were pure. Any signs of witchcraft, whether the end result was helpful or harmful, were prosecuted the same way — a fact that set many hunters on edge.

This idea definitively lessened the need for civil judges to take the accused's own testimony into consideration — a practice that held true in the American witch trials centuries later. It meant that the victim's allies could *also* be targeted for heresy, because if the accused was a witch, her allies were no doubt in league with the devil, too. Further, any mortal seen associating with a suspected witch, like a hunter, might also be accused.

Though the hunt for magic-users would have ended eventually, the Black Plague all but solidified how the public viewed witches, for they and their feline familiars were to blame for so many deaths.

Tragically Accused

By the 14th century, the belief in witchcraft became so entrenched in a European's everyday life that the population was ripe for hysteria. When a deadly pandemic called the "Black Death" wiped out 25 to 50 percent of Europe's population in the late 1340s, believers looked to the Church for answers. Millions died and a burdened populace sought a supernatural reason for their affliction: Witches.

The fear of witchcraft intensified during this time period to an all-time high. In response to this, some hunters openly shared information about the Vigil and took it upon themselves to educate villages about what a witch really looked like. In theory, the practice should have worked to combat the hysteria; however, as the Plague spread, small bits

of information were often twisted to the extreme. A witch didn't have "a" familiar; anyone who had an affinity toward toads, snakes, owls, or cats was likely to be a witch. Black cats, in particular, were deemed to be clear evidence of witchcraft due to their human-like cries for milk during suppertime.

The untimely and inexplicable deaths of over 25 million people had a profound effect on the political and supernatural landscape throughout Europe. The Black Death also impacted social mores, for victims found it difficult to remain "modest" once they fell ill. Everyone's physical body — rich or poor, male or female, child or elder — was inspected for the plague's telltale mark, a precursor to the witch's mark. At the time, even the Acheron Shipping & Trading Guild found it difficult to operate within the moral confines of polite society. No hunter could easily touch a corpse, unless he was burying it, let alone ask a nurse to expose part of a corpse's naked body. Not being able to touch a corpse was a problem for hunters, and the population of bloodsuckers increased as a result.

The scrutiny for signs of the plague had an impact on the witch trials as well, for the practice coincided with popular superstition and led to future examinations of moles, warts, birthmarks, genitalia, chests, teeth, and toes. In many ways, the Black Death amplified the belief that the damned not only walk among humankind, they mimic mortals to do the devil's work.

Acheron Shipping & Trading Guild

Since its inception in pre-Roman times, the Cheiron Group has had many faces and names throughout the ages. While the group's mission remained shrouded in mystery, the organization's leaders often molded Cheiron's public face to avoid suspicion and blend in.

During the Middle Ages, Cheiron's headquarters were located in the south of France. The conspiracy was referred to as the Acheron Shipping & Trading Guild, a title that served them well. The Acheron Guild, which was represented by a mermaid holding a trident, began as a fleet of ships primarily used for transport and trade. The conspiracy found that this guise gave it and its hunters the mobility required to travel from one destination to another and avoid undue amounts of scrutiny. Some hunters took up sailing and traveled widely; others targeted monsters who fled to Europe's docks, harbors, and bays until the Inquisition subsided.

At the time, the Acheron Shipping and Trading Guild had a long-term goal: to pull hunters back into the shadows and combat the public's view of the supernatural. A population that believes magic is real was (and is) much more dangerous than one that believes it isn't. Some conspiracies, like the Malleus Maleficarum and the Aegis Kai Doru, are convinced that Acheron intentionally triggered the Black Death to wipe the slate clean. By the time the Black Death was in full swing, Acheron had protocols and resources in place to deal with the outbreak, and left Europe behind in favor of the West Indies and the Americas. Of all the hunter groups, Acheron suffered the fewest losses and, as a result, increased its holdings ten-fold.

Needless to say, Acheron's fortuitous fate put the conspiracy at odds with other conspiracies active in Europe during this time period. While other hunter groups struggled to stay alive, Acheron prospered, in part because it had no qualms about letting innocents die whilst it stuck to hunting monsters from the shadows. However, even Acheron could not escape the scrutiny of the Church and was subject to surprise "inspections" by concerned members of the clergy. Rumor has it that the Vatican even went so far as to actively thwart Acheron's plans for expansion, and attempted to infiltrate its holdings, too.

Active hunters living in the 17th century have a very distinct, if not fractured, view of the Acheron Shipping & Trading Guild and its activities during this time period. By the time the American witch trials began, the Acheron Shipping & Trading Guild was all but a distant memory, for the conspiracy changed names and outward-facing occupations several times over to better fit the colonists' needs — or so most hunters believe. The secrets behind the conspiracy's activities in this century are buried along with Acheron's name.

The Hammer Swings

In the Middle Ages, the public's belief in witchcraft was omnipresent. At no time in human history has the belief in witches — both real and imagined — ever been higher than it was during this period. The trials themselves were varied and didn't involve public executions until the *Malleus Maleficarum* was published in 1487.

One of the most important inventions during this time period was the movable type printing press in 1450. Without it, the *Malleus Maleficarum* would never have been distributed in such large numbers — and neither would Cotton Mather's *Memorable Providences, Relating to Witchcrafts and Possessions* in the Americas almost 200 years later. Though movable type was not a new invention, having been developed in China almost 325 years earlier, Gutenberg's printing press allowed for the manufacture of *millions* of copies of books, which were then widely distributed throughout Europe.

Ironically, the *Malleus Maleficarum* was extremely popular; its contents both directly and indirectly influenced all witch trials going forward. The book also pitted priest against priest, for though the Church publicly denounced the Hammer of Witches, the tome's popularity had an impact on Inquisitors and hunters throughout Europe, many of whom cautioned against relying on its methodology.

Though witch trials occurred prior to the publication of the *Malleus Maleficarum*, this book altered the frequency of accusations and how witches were punished. Over 90 percent of those accused of witchcraft were female following its publication. To this day, it is unclear why the author chose to target women or what he hoped to gain by imprisoning and executing them. In Russia and Scandinavia however, where the book's grasp was not as firm, men were accused in greater numbers than elsewhere in Europe during the same period.



A CONSPIRACY BY THE SAME NAME

The Malleus Maleficarum conspiracy existed in a proto-form for decades prior to its official inception in 1567, almost 80 years after the Hammer of Witches was first published. Founded by a minor bishop named Ambrogio Baudolino, the formation of the Malleus Maleficarum was done in secret with a simple goal: to hunt vampires and demons. During the witch trials, the conspiracy spent most of its time honing its effectiveness. Baudolino was convinced that vampires were too smart to get caught up in the witch trials, and demons likely knew how to avoid the tactics hunters used to trap them.

Instead of testing God's might on accused witches, Baudolino searched for other hunter groups in Italy in the hopes that a more experienced cell might have captured one of the damned. Much to his surprise, Baudolino *did* manage to find a demon — the Lady of Milan.

The nature of the bishop's relationship with the Lucifuge is a secret kept between the two of them. One thing is clear, however: the Lady helped Baudolino secure a vampire to test his Benedictions. The Lucifuge revealed valuable information about the Shadow Purge and shared her worries about the impact the witch trials had on the Vigil, though no one knows why. Hunters who have studied the secret history of the witch trials assume that the Maleficarum's nickname, Shadow Congregation, originates from that period.

During the 16th and 17th centuries, citizens were swept up in a new "witch fever" and used the *Malleus Maleficarum* as justification for killing unwanted neighbors, unpopular townsfolk, and rejected lovers. Hundreds of thousands of innocent men, women, and children died over the course of 400 years all across Europe; this figure includes family-based casualties caused by the accused's extended stay in prison. Of this number, it's impossible to pinpoint how many monsters were tried and killed. Some hunters believe as few as 10 percent were actually guilty; others think it was high as 30 percent. The one thing all hunters could agree upon was that the trials were not an effective way to hunt. The cost was too high.

While witches were being burned, many European hunters, nobles, priests, local leaders, and villagers examined their faiths and begged for the hysteria to end. These efforts included a sequence of events commonly referred to as the English and Protestant Reformations. Both led to England's break-away from the Vatican and the eventual creation of the Puritan religion in the 16th century.

Hunters often felt the world around them was crumbling in ways they could not control. While the Acheron Shipping & Trading Guild prospered, other conspiracies and compacts operating in Europe during the 16th and 17th centuries were overwhelmed. Torn between the Vigil, the Church, and their loyalty to the Crown, hunters struggled to make sense of it all — especially those accused of witchcraft. Witch trials were a common, everyday occurrence with a deep impact on hunters. There was no escape. For an over-zealous Inquisitor, there was no difference between a member of the Aegis Kai Doru's pursuit of magical artifacts and a witch who created a relic. Both were equally guilty — a fact that tore through many compacts and conspiracies, forming tenuous alliances like the Silent Imperative, ushering in an era of great mistrust among hunters. Still, this did not deter all hunters from taking up the mantle of the Inquisitor. Many did. To some, it was easier to hunt in a world where morality was black and white, even though the truth is that living in the Chronicles of Darkness isn't that clear cut.

While individual hunters could always choose where they wanted to live, every compact and conspiracy either avoided Europe or became entrenched in politics during the height of the trials. The Ascending Ones and the Aegis Kai Doru were both notably absent during the 17th century, and the aforementioned Lucifuge went into hiding. While the Lucifuge's actions were thought to be wholly understandable, the Ascending Ones set an example for the rest of the world, and other, non-European based groups followed their lead.

From the late 15th century up until the early 18th, witches were as commonly prosecuted as thieves. These trials were legal under the Holy Roman Empire's rule, which lasted from 962 until 1806, and had also been prosecuted under civil law or royal decree at various times. Historians cite that the largest frequency of European witch trials took place in a 20-year period from 1610 to 1630 — 60 to 80 years prior to what happened in Salem. Though King Louis XIV put an end to witchcraft trials in France in the year 1682, another bout of testimonies and executions occurred throughout Germany during the 1660s.

New World, New Trials

The European witch trials were the twisted inspiration for the trials in the New World. It shouldn't be surprising that the practice of accusing and prosecuting witches also occurred in the Colonies, for those who immigrated to the New World brought their Old World beliefs with them — along with monsters hitching a ride in the belly of their ships. There are well over a dozen cases on record from 1647 up through 1688, taking place in Boston, Hartford, Cambridge, and Fairfield. In 1647, for example, Alice Young was the first to be hanged for witchcraft. Years later, her daughter was also accused of the same crime. For the most part, these cases ended similarly to those tried overseas. Though hunters were involved in each and every case, not one of the trials correctly identified a monster.

The winds of change blew through the 17th century in the form of the Reformations, civil wars, and royal decrees. Unhappy Europeans from every country crossed the Atlantic Ocean to the New World, and hunters followed suit. Some abandoned their existing groups and struck out on their own, to conduct their Vigils in their own ways. Others, like the Knights of Saint George, were deeply convinced that witches had infiltrated hunter cells and investigated other hunters to ensure their ranks were pure. No hunter, no cell, no compact, no conspiracy was immune to the far-reaching impact the European witch trials had on the Vigil — an effect that culminated in the events that occurred in Salem, Massachusetts.

The Salem Witch Trials were not the first such cases to be heard on New England's soil, nor were they the last. What happened in puritanical Salem, however, secured its place in recorded history.

AVOIDING SUSPICION

The Ascending Ones and Aegis Kai Doru conspiracies were both aware of the events taking place in Europe and chose not to actively participate in them. It's not clear why, but members of the Aegis Kai Doru actively recruited hunters in Spain and launched an expedition to Central and South America to avoid the Inquisition altogether. Some believe they were after the Fountain of Youth. Others speculate that the Aegis Kai Doru conspiracy got their hands on a prophecy that predicted the fall of the Aztec and Mayan civilizations. Whatever the reason, the conspiracy's European numbers were few and far between from the 14th to the 17th centuries.

The Ascending Ones conspiracy, on the other hand, had been swept up by the Ottoman Empire. Most of the group's members were on the front lines of several skirmishes between vampires and the Undying's cults. Though few members of the Cult of the Phoenix did watch the events in Europe closely, they believed the witch trials were a fight they couldn't win. To them, the trials had nothing to do with the supernatural and were a political excuse to target and fracture Christians. That, coupled with a growing fear of foreigners, forced members of the Ascending Ones to focus on self-preservation until the time was right for them to rejoin European society.

Naumkeag

Salem was originally named Naumkeag and was first settled by a European company of fishermen in 1626. The settlement was built on the remains of an ancient Native American trading community near the mouth of a river. Located in what would eventually be known as the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the area north of Plymouth Colony, Salem was surrounded by traders, trappers,



A MODEL PURITAN

To be a good Puritan, you must believe that your corporeal body houses a spirit devoted to God. Your relationship to the Divine flows into every aspect of your life, including your marriage. The husband represents the male aspect of God and speaks with authority to watch over his family and guide them on spiritual matters. Women, on the other hand, focus on the material needs of the house as obedient caretakers and humble life-givers. Children have a special relationship with God and should get closer to Him through education and obedience.

You avoid alcoholism and extramarital sex, in part because you'd be publicly humiliated for your crimes. You don't celebrate Christmas, birthdays, or any other holiday. You don't attend or host gatherings that include idle activities involving games and theatrical performances, either.

If you find any one of your fellow Puritans engaging in undesirable acts, it is your duty to report him or her to your leader. While you strive to be humble and live a simple life, you do believe in the Devil and pray to thwart His influence at every turn, in yourself, your family members, and others.

militia, and several Algonquin-speaking tribes including the Wampanoag, Pequot, Nipmuck, Massachuset, and the remaining Naumkeag people.

At this point in history most tribes, like the Mi'kmaq, Abenaki, Pokanoket, Algonquin, and Passamaquoddy, were familiar with strangers arriving on the shores of their land. They had already met the first non-native hunters years prior and introduced them to monsters such as Tsi-Noo the Soul Eater and Ne Hwas the Sea Maiden.

To the People, the European settlers who came to Salem Town were strange and unlike the hunters who had come before. These folk believed in the Devil but didn't know how to track, capture, contain, or kill what they claimed they feared, as early settlers weren't equipped to hunt the supernatural. They specialized in certain trades like candle making, cobbling, or baking, but had no knowledge of the difference between a poisonous berry and an edible one. As a result, many tribal leaders took pity on the new arrivals, and believed the Puritans might not survive their first winter — considering *their* hunters were already aware of the monsters that stalked them in the night.

Though the Puritans did not have support from the Crown, those who left England behind were members of the gentry and sought the New World to live free from religious persecution. Among them were hunters who had also abandoned the British Isles for various reasons. Some thought it was their duty to uphold the Vigil while keeping watch over their fellow Puritans. Others tired of the internal disagreements that had continued to fracture the various hunter groups and hoped to escape them by putting miles of ocean between the New World and the Old.

Unfortunately, some hunters found themselves in over their heads. Not only were the Colonies barely habitable, but new monsters lurked to prey on them, too. Early life in Salem Town was incredibly difficult due to a lack of manufacturing and trade within the local area for goods the settlers had grown accustomed to in Europe. While foreign trade was part of the economy, merchants visited the area infrequently if not rarely. Seafarers as far away as the West Indies and the British Isles sailed to the shores of Salem Town to do business with the locals as they had in years past.

Though foreign trade did help support the local economy somewhat, the settlers survived through the shared use of knowledge with area tribes. Local tribes taught the Europeans how to plant variable crops, fish along the coastlines and in rivers, trap fur-bearing animals, and hunt game. Local native hunters also shared knowledge with their European counterparts, and cells formed out of necessity as once-foreign monsters attempted to take hold in the area.

At first, Puritans treated the tribes respectfully — provided the natives were willing to adopt their lifestyle and beliefs. The tribes, on the other hand, became increasingly wary of the settlers, for they suffered heavy losses from strange illnesses, diseases, and the never-before-seen monsters that the settlers unwittingly brought with them.

These losses, combined with a cultural clash between the two groups, led to several skirmishes and an all-out war that devastated the local population.

Warring Factions

Salem forged its own destiny in the 1670s despite the outbreak of war. Salem Village officially broke off from Salem Town in 1672. The French moved further inland to explore and expand new territories, while the Dutch battled for possession of New York, and the Puritans fought in Metacomet's War against the Wampanoag Nation, the People of the Dawn, and their allies, the Narragansett. The Pokanoket, which is the primary tribe that sits at the head of the Wampanoag Nation, is known by many colonists as the natives who sat with the Puritans at the first "Thanksgiving."

Metacomet, who was also referred to as King Philip, led an uprising in 1675 to stop colonial expansion after a series of conflicts that culminated in the hanging of three Wampanoags who murdered a converted native. The Wampanoags fought the colonists to stop them from encroaching further onto their territories which were directly tied to their culture, birthright, and beliefs. The colonists defended themselves with the help of the Wampanoag's competitors and enemies which included the Mohegan, Pequot, Massachusetts, and Nauset. Several towns were either razed to the ground or



Charges Levied

It has been brought to my attention that several new arrivals to Deer Island have failed to take on a more civilized appearance befitting a proper Englishman or woman. While your argument is valid, that our strength would be greater if we were to spread out among the Natives, I cannot ignore the fact that as many as three women were spotted without a blouse to speak of.

I'm not sure what you wish to gain by respecting the local tribes for their way of life. Your sympathies lead me to believe that your allegiance to this community may be in question. If that's the case, then I suggest you go and live among the Wampanoag. I am quite certain they'd be happy to take you.

Let me return to the matter at hand. As I understand it, the newest members have already begun to either teach or learn a trade for the betterment of all. I order you to pay them, minus a fee for their indiscretions for the following:

Public idleness, five shillings

Sex out of wedlock, five shillings

Wife beating, five shillings and time in the stocks

Loose, uncut or unstyled hair, five shillings

Speaking a native tongue, one shilling

Frontal nudity, two shillings

Eating with hands, four shillings

Once the list of requirements is made clear, begin charging them for flour, fresh eggs, and cured meats. Show them how their obedience will earn them food on their tables, warm beds at night, and the safety our town can offer them.

Yours in Peace,

Reverend Makepeace

severely damaged in the conflict — with the exception of Salem Town. King Philip himself was killed in 1676, and by the end of Metacomet's War, the local economy had been destroyed and 40 percent of the Wampanoags had died.

The conflict for Salem's residents and area tribes was far from over, however, for many rebellions and wars erupted all along the eastern seaboard. In 1686, King James II drastically changed the landscape of the independent colonies by forging them into one, unified entity. His effort to consolidate New England's colonies not only put the power back into the hands of his agents, it wiped out all local legislatures as well. The consequences of this act spurred rebellions in places like Ipswich and Boston, and eventually led to the downfall of King James II in 1688.

After King James II was deposed and forced to flee to France, King William and Mary of Orange took the throne, which incited several battles and raids that took place both in Europe and in the Colonies. These conflicts, which are often referred to as King William's War, began in 1688 and involved several area tribes and settlers for nine, long years. For example, colonists from New France fought with the Abenaki against Acadians and surviving members of the Wampanoags in Maine, but they also attacked Schenectady, New York with allies that included warriors from the Mohawk, Sault (Ojibwe), and Algonquin tribes.



My Dear Reverend,

I see your reasoning and it is sound. Certainly, Deer Island is much more secure with the whole of Boston to protect it than those unfortunate communities to the North. I am curious as to why you chose to discuss the matter of Deer Island but did not respond to my inquiries regarding the horrors lurking northeast of Salem Town.

To this day, I am surprised that Salem Town has rejected my proposal to build a praying town close to its borders. Mark my words, one day I believe Salem Town's ignorance will end in tragedy. Certainly, their conflict with Salem Village will spill out into the surrounding area, but that is not what I am referring to. The Town's strange, insulated manner confuses and worries me. Are they becoming Separatists after all? Is there some dark force manipulating the good people there?

I will heed your request, but I urge you to think carefully about what I've said. If you will not authorize an investigation, I fear that I must put the others on high alert. I do not believe in prophecies, either, but I do trust that God blessed me with eyes to see and a brain to tell fact from fiction. Isn't that why you value my foresight? Because you understand that God speaks through me just as easily as He would a burning bush? One day soon, we will all turn our heads toward Salem. I pray when that day comes, we will be vigilant and true in our actions, may they be swift and for God's glory.

Yours in Faith,

Felicity Sykes

Surrounding native tribes suffered the most from the battle for land. They continued to be wiped out by disease, sold into slavery in the Colonies and to the West Indies, killed in battle, executed as war criminals, forced to flee further North, or converted to Christianity and relocated to what were known as "praying towns." Puritan-led praying towns, formed between the 1640s and 1670s, converted surrounding tribes by slowly indoctrinating them into colonial society and Christianity. Membership was voluntary throughout the dozen towns located in the Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay colonies. While the population of these towns waxed and waned, local tribespeople primarily sought refuge to avoid the fighting and get access to Western medicines. Frontiersmen of the period, most notably trappers and survivalists, have a different view of the praying towns. They believe that the Puritans were trying to increase their ranks in anticipation of a new migration to the colonies and the threat of war. The Society of Friends, otherwise known as the Quakers, was experiencing the same harsh treatment in England as the Puritans once did. What's more, there were rumblings of growing tensions between France and England, a fact that did not go unnoticed by the Puritans who still had ties to their homeland.

In the aftermath of Metacomet's War, the Puritans felt they'd been blessed by God with a great victory, and that the skirmishes they participated in were a precursor to a series of much larger conflicts. Salem-area residents reacted poorly to the destruction caused, in their minds, by the very people they had tried to help, and looked to the Bible for answers to find peace. Like the survivors of the Black Plague, these settlers sought a sign, and found one in the heavens — the Great Comet of 1680. They renewed their faith by taking a stricter approach to daily life despite the existing laws against non-conformists at the time. Praying towns were abandoned, English and religious customs were reinforced, and new settlers, like Reverend Samuel Parris and his family, were welcomed from respectable cities like Boston.

CHOSEN VS. UNCHOSEN

Life for a 1690s Colonial Puritan revolved around the rhythm of the seasons and strict religious practices. Most Puritans were farmers who considered themselves Chosen, led by a Minister who interpreted God's voice for them. Anyone who lived among the Puritans, but did not take up their faith, was considered to be Unchosen. Severe punishment was meted out for all manner of crimes — including public executions for adultery or, in some cases, swearing.

A non-Puritan hunter is at greatest risk of being punished for a crime she did not commit; it will be difficult to uphold the Vigil and the rigors of a Puritan's daily life equally well. Unchosen hunters, people who live in the community but do not follow the mandate of Puritanical beliefs to the letter, are treated with suspicion and mistrust. Unfortunately, anyone who is not a Chosen member of the community isn't taken as seriously as those who are, even if that individual has proven herself to be trustworthy in the past.

The cultural and economic upheaval caused by Metacomet's War has had a profound impact on hunter groups as well. The easiest post hunters could manage was within the rank and file of local militia or traders. Since the roles of both men and women were clearly defined, leading Puritans questioned anyone who wasn't "doing their duty" for fear that their own citizens would be sympathetic to opposing forces. As a result, Puritan hunters living in Salem find it difficult to communicate and do business with local tribes after the war.

Native hunters are just as conflicted, and are dismayed that racial and cultural tensions are running high. After all, it's much easier to trap a witch or a vampire if hunters put the Vigil before local politics. Many native hunters who live in the area believe that European hunters are corrupt and dangerous. They, too, feel that trust has to be earned. Groups fracture into homogenous communities, while hunters who had previously reached out to tribes and settlers may find their relationships are strained. Perhaps the greatest impact Metacomet's War had on the Vigil was that Catholic hunters are now more likely to hunt with other Catholics, English with English, French with French, and Nipmuc with Nipmuc. This tendency has not gone unnoticed by their supernatural prey and, in many ways, is working *against* hunters.

Because commoners fully accept that the supernatural is real and a constant threat, hunters will find they have a much easier time rousing the Puritans to destroy monsters or ostracize "outsiders" and "Satan worshippers" — provided they can earn their trust. Since native tribes already knew that supernatural threats existed, hunters will find allies among the People too, if tribal hunters can convince their elders that outsiders uphold the Vigil, too.

Strained and Broken

Post-war unrest, a persistent belief in the supernatural, and a hierarchal approach to local politics, led to the Salem Witch Trial hysteria. All that was needed to stoke the fires of hysteria, was a smoking flintlock.

A Murky Future

Though the Salem Witch Trials officially began in 1692, Ann Glover was accused and convicted of witchcraft in Boston four years earlier. This trial is significant for its timing and the people involved. Cotton Mather, a witchcraft trial historian and Puritan minister, harbored the accuser in his home afterward and published *Memorable Providences, Relating to Witchcrafts and Possessions* in 1689. That book, which sat on the shelves of many Puritans in Salem Village, breathed life into the witch trials. It gave the trials a contemporary face that reaffirmed the Puritans' faith in the supernatural and the legal methods they used to combat witchcraft.

The Salem Witch Trials have a profound impact on the Massachusetts Bay Colony as a whole, in part because Salem is considered to be a capital of the colony. Hunters may or may not realize that fighting amongst themselves better serves their enemy than their cause. Some groups will never trust each other again. Others will declare war on hunters deemed not pure enough, not vigilant *enough*, because they use sorcery to catch monsters.

While many Puritans continue to be swept up in matters of politics, land ownership, and faith, hunters in the area have another challenge to deal with: the Shadow Court led by the

SAINT AGNES EVE

Though demon-worshipping and black magic were forbidden, certain forms of divination were common among the Puritans and tied them to their British ancestry. On the Eve of Saint Agnes, rites were performed to help an English girl obtain a vision of her future husband. These rites included baking a "dumb cake," walking backward to bed, and invoking Saint Agnes by sprinkling holy water mixed with rosemary, thyme, and basil under the girl's pillow.

The residents of Salem most likely said a prayer to Saint Agnes and made a dumb cake in recognition of the holiday. The confection was so named because it required the baker to mix an unusual list of varying sweet and savory materials, in total silence. The baker, or the unwedded, would then eat and dream that night of her future beloved.



I am sorry my darling, but I fear I will not make it home for Magda's christening. I know not why these godly Knights, so far from home, would attack our kind and treat us as if we were Damned. I must warn you of what's to come, for as I write this, I sail for Ireland and leave this madness behind me.

First, a confession, for I have sinned against God and abandoned the Vigil. I have received help from a vampire who took pity on me in my hour of need and, in turn, I helped her by giving her my precious blood to survive. You must understand, darling, I had no choice. There were as many as four Knights who captured, imprisoned, and tortured me. First, to verify that I was not a supernatural spy working for the Devil. Then, to see if I was truly worthy of the Vigil according to the rules of their order. Can you imagine? Their order?

I do not know if the Lady in Milan is aware of this new development, nor do I know if others will come to our aid. I cannot apologize enough for abandoning you here. I have not betrayed your true nature, either, darling. I leave now so that you might walk free, so that you might save yourself from the terrors of the Shadow Court and find refuge in the forests and trees.

Enclosed is a small sum to help you in your travels. If you find all roads closed to you, even after you beg the natives for mercy, then go to the great oak where we first met. At sundown, slice open your hand and mark the tree with your sacrifice. Do not be alarmed by what comes, for the vampire who will greet you seeks an unholy alliance. Darling, I beg of you to remember this: there is nothing in the Colonies that frightens me more than the Knights. Survive, return to me, and we will seek atonement for the rest of our lives. Die, and the Lady will cry tears of blood.

Knights of Saint George. An ancient order, the Knights of Saint George are gathering their forces in Ipswich to conduct trials similar to the Salem Witch Trials in Salem Town. These trials, which are commonly referred to as the Shadow Trials, reflect the same attitudes as the Shadow Purge centuries ago.

Several towns within the Massachusetts Bay Colony, which existed from 1630 through 1691, are involved in the witch trials including: Salem Town, Salem Village, Ipswich, Andover, Topsfield, Boston, and Wells in Maine. In 1691, the Province of Massachusetts Bay merged a much larger area into one region. Plymouth Colony, Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard, Nova Scotia, and the Province of Maine fell into the new territory. The witch trials and accusations themselves took place from January through October 1692, beginning in Salem Village, and were heard by a special Court that convened in June.

At the same time the Salem Witch Trials are happening, the Shadow Court is beginning its investigation in the same region. Its mission: to verify a hunter's ability to uphold the Vigil — regardless of association or identity — and root out hunters, native or not, suspected of using witchcraft. Though many Knights are devout and have different views on faith, the hunters who created the Shadow Court have a unified view and seek to uphold that belief. Any hunter, whether they belong to the Knights or not, may petition to act on behalf of the Shadow Court in some "legal" capacity.

Though the witch trials began in Salem Village and Salem Town, once their jails were filled the surrounding towns, like Ipswich, were caught up in the hysteria as well. Both Ipswich and Boston, which is notable for its size, sophistication, and influence on the area, are also outlined here.

Salem Town

Salem Town has a long history stretching back centuries. Rooted in native traditions, the European occupation of the area began in 1626. The settlement was originally named "Naumkeag," or "Fishing Place." A few years later, the area took on a new name, Salem, which was the English spelling of the Hebrew word "Shalom" for peace.

The town is politically connected to Salem Village, which lies at the northern edge of Salem Town, but is also financially independent and a key trading post in the era. In 1692, the population of Salem Town is approximately 2,200, compared with 500 in the agriculturally based Salem Village. The differences between the Town and Village aren't just economic, however: The Village has a set of beliefs that diverge from those in Salem Town.

A 17TH-CENTURY CHRONICLE

Before running a chronicle, Storytellers should talk to players about what matters to them. Hunting monsters during this time period is challenging — and a lack of high-powered weapons is only the start of a player's problems. Adding social and political conflict on *top* of the hunt may frustrate players and make them feel inadequate. You can avoid that by asking good questions.

The key to planning a historical-era game is to leverage what the players want to explore against what happened in the Chronicles of Darkness. The generalities presented here are meant to give you a feel for the time period. If a player wants to fill the shoes of a swashbuckling pirate, then throw Boston Harbor and its islands at her. If a player hopes to step up as a local Judge, introduce him to the Shadow Court. If a player wants to skirt Salem entirely and head for the frontier, give him the chance to meet up with the new compact, Les Voyageurs.

The local mystery is the witch trials, but there are more stories to be found during this time period in and around Salem. Plot your chronicle accordingly.

Foreign hunters hoping to do business with Salem Town will have a much easier time than if they were to wander off in Salem Village. Salem Town, especially in 1692, is more worldly. Though five to eight miles of farmland separate the two areas, the Town's permanent residents are used to dealing with travelers, traders, and trappers hailing from the British West Indies and the British Isles, as well as Spain, the Netherlands, India, and China. While these newcomers visit the area infrequently, approximately once or twice a year, their appearance is almost always due to a business transaction that's scheduled to take place in a nearby town, village, or city.

More services can also be found within Salem Town than the smaller, provincial Salem Village. These include pragmatic trades like carpentry and metalworking as well as labors related to certain vanities like paintings and flowers. It should also be noted here that slavery and indentured servitude are legal and many people, hailing from a variety of backgrounds, are members of the servant class. The wealthier settlers, including the local Minister, commonly buy slaves from Africa and the West Indies, or purchase the debts of young European immigrants. Thus, the demographics in Salem Town change depending on the day, and it is not uncommon to interact with a sailor or an Algonquin speaker.

Generally speaking, the town had not suffered much economic hardship until the war with Metacomet. In the aftermath of that conflict, the wealth of local citizens was greatly affected because of the laws and their impact on widows and widowers, Chosen and Unchosen, native and non-native. Despite all of these conflicts, Salem Town and Salem Village were spared from total destruction. Occupants from both, however, barely tolerate the presence of local tribes, and regard them with suspicion due to the losses they suffered as a result of Metacomet's War.

Locations

Salem Bed and Breakfast

Located near the edge of town, Salem Bed and Breakfast is open to all travelers who can pay for their lodgings. A sign out front, painted with a bed and a loaf of bread, invites wayfarers in for the night. The locals tolerate the establishment's owner, the recently widowed Prudence Winters, but question why she's closed herself off. The truth to anyone with eyes to see is quite clear: business has been booming and the Widow is short-handed, assisted only by her teenage boys named Philip and Samuel. A frequently trafficked area, customers are loyal to the Widow and her family — which is why some traders passing through prefer to camp out in the woods at night. Those who stay here for too long find themselves wrapped up in local gossip.

General Supply Store

All raw materials in Salem Town are sold through the General Supply Store. Its wares are plentiful and fresh, arriving weekly from Boston's harbor. Goods include lanterns, lye, nails, tobacco, tea, cured hams, salt, tools, plain cloth, crockery, and more. While the General Store does have a variety of dry goods, all inventory must be approved by the local Council in accordance with Puritan beliefs. Alcohol, certain foodstuffs, silks, jewelry, and other finery are not available in this store, but they may be found in larger cities like Boston. However, local goods from neighboring farms may also be found here and, if needed, repaired at an additional cost. The General Store is owned by a local merchant family named Willoughsby. Though James, Sr. and his family are wealthy, which is a sin to some within the community, they are in good standing with the Church partly due to their generous, weekly donations.

Watering Hole

The public consumption of alcohol is frowned upon in Salem Town, but that hasn't stopped residents from "stealing" a sip at the local watering hole. Run by an old fisherman named William "One-Eye" Easton and his wife Mary, the watering hole is a shack connected to the couple's main house. Mary, who hails from the Canary Islands, tends to her customers by day and William at night. Local Ministers have been trying to shut down the tavern for years, but as long as One-Eye keeps sweet wine, ale, and rum in stock, the Church'll have a hard time of it. Like the Salem Bed and Breakfast, the Eastons attract a lot of travelers, provided they can find the place. In polite company, most Town and Village

residents won't mention where thirsty passersby can sample the local ale. For a shilling or two, however, the locals will grudgingly point the way to the Eastons' home.

Bit Players

Town Drunk

Albert Little was a respectable Puritan, a model Chosen, until he took up arms against Metacomet in the war. When he returned to his home on the outskirts of town — minus a leg — Little found his wife and newborn child dead. Accused of their murder, Little was eventually freed after a long and confusing trial. Unfortunately, to cover the costs of his imprisonment and trial, his home was confiscated and Little was left penniless. His disability, coupled with the loss of his wife, has left him with few options. Now, Albert sells information to strangers and spends his nights drinking at the Eastons. He is a staple in the town who, despite his near-constant state of drunkenness, has a remarkable memory. With a little prodding, Albert will reveal intimate details about anyone in town — much to the chagrin of those folk who wish to keep their secrets. **Streetwise (Salem) 3, Survival 1, Larceny 2**

Experienced Scout

Jacques DuFour, who sailed from France nine years ago, lives in a log cabin just outside of town. A skilled hunter and trapper, DuFour has traveled far into Canada. Unlike Salem Town's residents, DuFour has a mutually beneficial relationship with several Algonquin-speaking tribes in the area (like the Nipmuc). In exchange for furs and other crafts, DuFour supplies tribes with information about his clients and the Westerners who call Naumkeag home.

DuFour makes a modest income off the "English" by guiding travelers through preferred trade routes. He's an experienced scout who only speaks when necessary. The locals believe DuFour is bewitched, for he never falls ill and has never had an accident. While no one has been able to verify the rumors, DuFour has seen and heard more than he's willing to share with superstitious townsfolk. **Survival 3, Weaponry 3, Crafts (Traps) 2**

Superstitious Midwife

Goody Ainsworth is an older woman who trained as a midwife in Yorkshire. Though she acts and dresses in accordance with Puritan beliefs, the midwife has not abandoned her heritage and unconsciously practices English folk traditions on a regular basis. These customs, which range from decorating maypoles to recounting tales of Jack-in-Irons and Jenny Greenteeth, have put her at odds with many of the sterner townsfolk.

While she is superstitious, Goody Ainsworth believes herself to be a devout Puritan and a pillar of the community. She knows everyone in town and makes it a point to introduce herself to strangers when she can. Despite her being labeled a busybody, Goody Ainsworth can keep a secret as she's shown on a few occasions. **Occult (Folk Traditions) 2, Socialize 3, Medicine 2**

Salem Village

For the most part, Salem Village runs autonomously from Salem Town both in finances and in belief. The village is considered to be an agricultural suburb when compared to the older, more well-established town, and it strives for a full separation from Salem Town. The villagers' interpretations of the supernatural here — a blend of Christian and folk beliefs — have caused considerable strife and a rift within the population. If Salem Town is full of Puritans who take an orthodox approach to their religion, Salem Village has emphasized an aspect of that dogma and spun it out of proportion. Working in the fields all day, farmers attribute every natural disaster to the Devil and spend hours cleansing their crops with holy water, hoping that unseasonable blights and hardened pests will disappear with prayer.

The first accusation of witchcraft originated not from two Salem Village girls, but from their doctor, who confirmed that their physical afflictions had been caused by the supernatural. Many Bostonians believe that if the doctor had caught on to the girls' play-acting and poking fun, the trials would never have begun.

Puritans here are hypercritical of those who live within the town's borders, and believe that Salem Town's residents have grown far too tolerant of outsiders. In many ways, there are two Puritan-related factions living a few short miles from one another. Hunters should note that there is a heavy emphasis on Puritanical dogma in this area. Salem Village's long-term residents are required and encouraged to choose which Church they'd prefer. Typically, anyone who's Unchosen is treated like an outsider.

Locations

Miller's Farm

Nestled between two other homesteads, Miller's Farm consists of a two-story house, a trio of fields bordered by picket fences, and a nearby forest that provides natural shade and a local hunting ground. The Miller's farmhouse is a modest home built against the treeline with a small garden out back. Goody Miller can either be found tending her flowers, or out in the forest with her daughter Hope gathering nuts, apples, and berries while Daniel Miller and the couple's four sons, Jacob, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Esau work the fields.

The farm is a recent addition to Salem Village and its well-tended fields are always green — a fact that has made some of the other villagers jealous. Late at night, the villagers claim blue witch-lights can be seen floating over the crops. Spooky cries from the nearby forest can also be heard as the Devil makes his way through the Miller's fields, blowing on a trumpet, calling all nearby witches to his side.

Witch Caves

Deep in the forests near Miller's Farm lies an ancient network of underground tunnels once occupied by native tribes centuries ago. The tunnels have been since used by hunters and trappers seeking shelter for the night — provided

they can stomach the grisly sight of bloody handprints on its walls and bones strewn across the floor. Strange, indecipherable glyphs are carved deep into the ceiling. When the moon is full, these figures glow bright red.

Superstitious locals have named this "natural" formation the "Witch Caves." Salem residents believe that witches seeking to avoid God's judgment fly here to the Devil's side to beg for His unholy protection. Most steer clear of the area to avoid being accused of witchcraft. The absence of humans in and around the Witch Caves has allowed the forest to take over, but even the squirrels and robins won't venture here at night.

Gallows Hill

The grisly witchcraft trials end not with a cleansing or prayer vigil, but excommunication and death. Witches are put on display in the courts, their bodies shaved and inspected for witch's marks.They are then tossed in jail to await the judge's decision. After sentencing, witches are stripped of all their possessions and publicly marched to Gallows Hill to be hung at midday under the full light of the sun. Three gallows were dug into the hill overlooking the village square. Since the gallows were first built, over 60 villagers have been hung for crimes ranging from adultery to theft. Gallows Hill, which was once an unremarkable patch of land, is now thought to be haunted. The Minister often visits the gallows to bless the wood in an attempt to remove whatever taint plagues the area.

Bit Players

Carpenter

The village carpenter is a Dutch man named Felix Aiken. His house, which is located next to the village church, is larger and more elaborate than the Minister's home. He and his partner, Johannes, repair and build barns, fences, churches, and homes in Salem Town and Village. Their services are in high demand and their counsel is often sought in matters of architecture and local affairs. Of all the village folk, Aiken has the strongest connection to other merchants in the area.

Felix Aiken is a bachelor who has yet to take a wife. A pragmatic man, Aiken will listen to reason and steers clear of rumors when he can. He feels that publicly chiming in to either accuse or support any suspects will affect the health of his business. Instead, he seeks to help Salem Town and Village by encouraging newcomers to visit the fine homes, community centers, and stores he builds. **Crafts (Carpentry) 4, Brawl 2, Persuasion 2**

Farmer's Daughter

Felicity Mansforth is a 16-year-old girl who lives with her parents, two siblings, and five cats on the Mansforth family farm. When she's not gardening, sewing, or reading, Felicity takes to the woods behind Miller's Farm. Her friend, Tenacious, chides her for spending too much time among the trees — and that rumor is beginning to spread. Tenacious is a fanciful girl, curious about English folklore, and prone to gossip. She is jealous that Felicity's parents have allowed her to read books other than the Bible, for hers are a lot stricter.

Felicity found a naturalist's guide in the Minister's library and is secretly teaching herself to identify local herbs and wildlife. Her dream is to become a healer, and she feels that the names of plants and their uses is the best place to start. Recently, her mother warned her to abandon this desire, and her pet cats, for fear that villagers will accuse her of being a "white witch" — a crime still punishable by death. **Survival 2, Academics 2, Medicine (Herbs) 1**

Night Watchman

Throughout the Colonies, a strict curfew is enforced after the sun sets. The only resident permitted to be outside after dark is the night watchman. For Salem Village, that man is Job Caldwell, a veteran frontiersman and excellent lookout. Job is tasked with protecting the town at night by ensuring the villagers remain indoors, being on the lookout for n'er-do-wells, and watching for signs of an attack, storm, or fire.

Salem Village has also tasked Job with duties befitting a town crier. Job is not allowed to sleep until the curfew is lifted; to ensure that he remains awake, the night watchman must call out the time at hourly and semi-hourly intervals. He'll also report news that cannot wait until morning, like inclement weather or a runaway horse. He may temporarily lift a curfew should the need arise. **Firearms (Rifle) 2, Investigation 3, Survival 1**

Ipswich

Established in 1634, Ipswich, Massachusetts lies approximately 15 miles north of Salem along the banks of the Ipswich River. Like Salem Town, the area was re-settled and re-named, first from Wonnesquamsauke to a new spelling, Agawam, and eventually to Ipswich. This town is significant because of its similarities to Salem Town, and the wildly divergent paths both took. Pioneers from Ipswich share the same economic wealth as those who hail from Salem Town. Both towns boast of diverse communities, the same types of commerce, and Puritanical beliefs. That's where their similarities end, however, for Ipswich is primarily an agricultural center with a heavy concentration of Irish immigrants who grow corn, wheat, barley, and flax. Ipswich's population is about half that of Salem Town's and, though it is smaller, the community is not as superstitious as Salem.

Ipswich's lesser emphasis on supernatural matters and general level-headedness leads some hunters to believe that, by contrast, the inhabitants of Salem Village have either seen or had a direct encounter with the Damned. The Knights of Saint George have proposed that the testimonies of the accused should be used to track the location and frequency of the accusations. By drawing a map, the trials could point out a much greater threat or, as the Knights commonly believe, a hunter who's gone rogue.

Some hunters believe that Ipswich settlers are being targeted because it's convenient for Salem's zealots to accuse and arrest them simply because Ipswich has something Salem does not: a gaol. The Ipswich Gaol was designed to guard

high-profile prisoners and mete out unusual punishments like branding, slave labor, public whippings, and controlled starvation. Many of the accused wind up imprisoned here. Many might die here, too, depending upon what happens within the judicial system and how quickly the growing numbers of accused can be justly processed.

Locations

Ipswich Gaol

Built in 1652 by the banks of the Ipswich River, the Ipswich Gaol is a formidable two-story fortress built in the shape of a fortified barn. Outside the jail, a small, modest shack provides lodging for its jailer, Solomon.

All prisoners, guilty or innocent, spend time in a gaol like this before trial. Though they are whipped regularly and served moldy bread and water, most prisoners don't bother trying to escape. Anyone who's caught is branded with the letter "B" and is sent to the stocks for a fortnight.

Nearby townsfolk avoid Ipswich Gaol, for the screams of prisoners — both living and dead — can be heard outside its walls. Currently, the jail holds two dozen cells, half of which are filled with accused witches. The other half are empty.

Dun Bridge

The Dun Bridge is a natural formation made of grey slate, silt, and granite. This stone archway allows townsfolk to cross the Ipswich River at its deepest point. Used by native tribes, settlers, and villagers alike, the Dun Bridge is a high-traffic area during the day. As soon as the sun sets, however, even the local night watchman steers clear of the bridge.

In the time between night and day, a pale rider dressed in grey, awaits her loved one ever fair, atop a giant, spotted mare...

Most townsfolk are quite willing to share the bridge's haunted past — a story about a lonely woman pining for a lover who never returns. Though the stories have yet to be verified, the Dun Bridge is avoided at all costs.

Marshall Cemetery

Marshall Cemetery is one of three burial grounds in the area. Townsfolk whisper that the haunted cemetery is dangerous — even by day — and only travel here in large groups. Originally, the land belonged to an English nobleman who lost his life at sea. Before that, the site was said to be hallowed ground used in religious ceremonies. Now, gravediggers report crypts opening of their own accord, freshly dug graves spewing mud and ash, and headstones flipping upside down. The only one brave enough to try to track down the taint is a 70-year-old gravedigger named Bill Carter.

Key Players

Jailer (or Gaoler)

Ipswich's jailer, Solomon, sleeps in a small house connected to the jail. For his trouble, Solomon ears five shillings per meal provided to the prisoners. Those fees are extracted from the prisoners, regardless of guilt or innocence, upon their release. To him, no man or woman is without guilt, and he gladly seeks to use the tools of his trade to force a confession. The tools of his trade include whipping posts, stocks, and a pillory. If need be, he'll arrange for a public display in front of the jail at the court's request. There, the townsfolk can throw rotten fruits and vegetables at the accused. Though Solomon can treat the prisoners the way he sees fit, the jailor does not have absolute authority and must answer to the local judges. **Subterfuge (Doubletalk) 2, Crafts (Torture Devices) 3, Brawl 2**

Gravedigger

Ipswich's oldest resident has seen his fair share of horrors over the years. A soldier in the British army, Bill Carter first

KNIGHTS OF SAINT GEORGE

The Knights of Saint George is a hunter-based faction within the Church of England. It has been active in the Colonies since the late 1500s. Far removed from their European counterparts, Knights living on this continent have spent a hundred years classifying, tracking, and hunting down the supernatural. To spread out over larger territories, the Knights took a naturalist's approach and splintered into small cells of five to eight members, partnering with like-minded individuals to get a lay of the land. Record-keeping within the organization employs a variety of techniques ranging from hand-carved trail markers to parchments sealed with wax and buried beneath altars.

Though the Knights have amassed a lot of information about the world of the supernatural so far, approximately two-thirds of that history is in danger of being wiped out by the Colonials and the westward expansion. What's more, the Knights continue to lose members due to aggressive negotiations with the French, Dutch, certain tribes, disease, and magical creatures. Unfortunately, these deaths have challenged cell leaders, for the vast majority of Knights in the New World struggle with the First Revelation.

Despite their current status and location, all Knights not only consider themselves loyal to the British Crown, they also believe they are acting in an official capacity for the Church of England. For these reasons and more, this faction's mood has recently soured for, at every turn, another threat moves against them.

For more about the Knights of Saint George, see pp. 99–111 in the **Witch Finders** supplement for **Hunter: the Vigil**.



sailed to Boston with his regiment. Unfortunately, Carter took to the bottle on his second campaign and was declared unfit for duty then dishonorably discharged. Instead of returning to his native England, Carter fell in with a lot of hunters and trappers, traveling up and down the Colonies. When he could no longer stomach the life of a frontiersman, Bill Carter settled down in Ipswich but never married. A quiet fellow, Bill refuses to give up his duties though his body is riddled with arthritis. He has long since given up drinking and has yet to talk about what drove him to it. **Firearms 2, Brawl 1, Occult 1**

Scribe

All Colonial children are taught to read so that they may one day recite Bible passages as a means of defending themselves against the Devil and His tricks. Though most villagers know how to read, scribes like Elisabeth Watkins are rare. Typically, anyone trained as a scribe can work in almost any trade that requires a written record. Some scribes specialize as court reporters or work on the docks. Elisabeth, on the other hand, is a British Loyalist who records legal documents for the town, including property deeds, wills, and birth and death certificates. She is a new addition to Ipswich who recently came into possession of her late Aunt Martha's home. Elisabeth's skills are in high demand, and she has recently been recruited to record the minutes of the witch trials in Salem. Though she regularly attends church, she is more worldly than most of the town residents, a fact that puts her at odds with some of the locals — especially those who are angry with the Crown. **Academics (Law) 2, Expression (Courtroom) 2, Politics 1**

Boston

Boston, Massachusetts is considered to be the second capital in the region. It is situated approximately 15 to 20 miles south of Salem. Founded in 1630 by the Puritans on the Shawmut Peninsula, the region encompasses several ancient sites and has quickly emerged as a favored settlement in part because of its geographic location — a "city upon a hill." Boston Puritans share the beliefs of others within the settlement, but primarily concentrate on core Puritan values. These tenets, which include literacy, education, and industriousness, led to the foundation of the Colonies' premier schools: Boston Latin School and Harvard College.

Of the three settlements, Boston has a larger and even more diverse population than Salem and Ipswich. For example, other Christian believers — Quakers, Baptists, and Roman Catholics — also live within the town limits. Other residents hail from different parts of Europe — not just England. Non-believers and pagans are both punished with impunity, however. Boston ceased to operate autonomously in 1686 with the arrival of the first royal governor — who was quickly deposed two years later.

Boston's location, coupled with its weekly town hall meetings, is attractive to immigrants all over Europe. At

THE CASE OF GOODY GLOVER

Many immigrants who arrived in Boston came to the Colonies to strike out on their own and find opportunities to amass wealth and worship freely. Ann Glover was not one such immigrant. Captured by Cromwell and sold into slavery, Glover and her children eventually came into the Goodwin family's employment years later. She was an Irish housekeeper, fluent in Gaelic, who followed the Roman Catholic faith, a wholly unpopular religion at the time. Accused of witchcraft in 1688 by a doctor who was examining Goodwin's daughter for "fits," she was unable to defend herself. Though Goody Glover could recite The Lord's Prayer in her native tongue, she did not speak English well. This was deemed proof of her guilt.

this time, Boston's population is approximately 13,000 and growing. It is an area that is not as isolated as Salem. As a result, the city is often the focal point for civil matters in the region, for its infrastructure is well-developed and respected. Though Boston is strongly rooted in Puritan tradition and ideology, the interference of the British Empire leads its citizens to band together and defend their liberties despite their differences. Slavery and indentured servitude does exist in the area, just like it does in Salem and Ipswich, and primarily includes household duties at wealthier estates.

Hunters hailing from diverse backgrounds will find it easier to blend into Boston than elsewhere in the Province. However, this does not mean that they — or their families — are exempt from scrutiny. The Shadow Trials impact Boston just as much as Salem. Politically related topics are more commonplace in the area, and hunters will find it easier to strike up conversations about local happenings here, for Bostonians seek to forge a new destiny free and independent from the Crown. Fiercely independent, residents here aren't sure what to think of the supernatural, for they feel that Boston enjoys a divine blessing and don't trouble themselves with witchcraft — unless it suits their purposes.

Locations

Harvard College

Founded in 1636 and named after its primary benefactor, Harvard College began educating pupils in a house built on a single acre. Though its class size is small — only nine scholars graduated in 1642 — the institution produces highly educated

DOCENDO DISCIMUS

Based in Boston, these scholars are a group of hunters dedicated to teaching select students about the world of the supernatural. Founded by Phillip Manchester in 1657, the Docendo Discimus catalogues all events and scours court records for evidence of the supernatural. Theirs is a philosophical take on the Chronicles of Darkness, as these teachers have a fascination with the occult they keep hidden from the rest of society.

The compact's goals are tri-fold:

Collection: Manchester possesses a hidden library built beneath Harvard College. The group collects evidence of the supernatural by interviewing witnesses, creating sketches, buying books about the occult, and by mapping the suspected trajectories of known supernatural creatures along the coastline.

Analysis: Before materials are approved, the scholars study the materials to sort out fact from fiction. Priding themselves on their intellectualism, the Docendo Discimus must reach a consensus before approving a piece of evidence as "fact." Once that material is added to the collection, it then becomes part of the curriculum. Only "real" data is kept within the confines of the library. The remainder is burned.

Instruction: Manchester has created a curriculum based on critical thinking. He believes his hunters must learn to recognize that the supernatural world is just another reality superimposed upon our own. Though Manchester has had no direct contact with any creature — unlike his deceased brother, Benjamin — he feels his role is best served by educating new hunters.

Scholars pursue knowledge with an innocent zeal, believing that one day they will accomplish what centuries of compacts and conspiracies have not — a clear identification of the supernatural world and, more importantly, what methods work to contain it. Manchester realizes the currently available knowledge is thin, which is why his focus is on education. Eventually, he hopes to built a second tier into the Docendo Discimus, one based on taking down the supernatural with a skilled, educated precision.

Unfortunately, this newly formed compact is currently being scrutinized by the Shadow Court, and is danger of being disbanded.

My dear Goody Withersby,

I share your concern about the accusations circulating in Salem Village, for they are quickly spreading beyond the village limits. What's more, I fear that estate owners are particularly vulnerable as families are destroyed and properties are being ransacked. I agree there is a good possibility many of the Accused will be homeless regardless of their guilt or innocence.

However, while I am sympathetic to the plight of the Accused, I am in an uncomfortable position, for the Trials are indeed a civil matter grounded in law. Though this new development makes any civilized individual uncomfortable, the Trials must play out in the courts. If I cannot judge fairly, there will be consequences not limited to, or including, an angry mob raising pitchforks and torches against us. The unfair treatment of the Accused in prison is much preferred to an attack within city limits by a rabble of farmers and fishermen.

For these reasons and more, I urge you to consider your position carefully. As a member of Boston's high society, you enjoy some protection from the debacle to the North and should not fear yourself Accused at this time. However, should the Trials be halted unnaturally and Salem's residents accused in a manner that agitates them, they could enflame small-minded individuals within our own city limits and be inspired to spread this hysteria.

Yours in faith,

Judge Matheson

and influential students. One such individual was John Sassamon, a Native American scribe and translator. Sassamon eventually worked for Metacomet and was assassinated as an English spy, touching off King Philip's war.

As a place of higher learning, the College boasts of a large public library filled with hundreds of books. These publications range from discourses on law to primers on languages and books about witchcraft; the collection's depth and breadth increases with each passing year. All publications distributed throughout the Colonies, including pamphlets, newspapers, and flyers, are collected here for preservation and further study.

Apothecary

An apothecary in Boston is a cross between a pharmacist, surgeon, and a family physician. Patients seek and receive treatment for their ills; medicines, typically natural remedies, are prescribed and sold over the counter. Roses steeped in vinegar are used to treat headaches, honey is given to bolster weak constitutions, and sweet wine treats anxiety and depression. All apothecaries boast a sign above the door — a mortar and pestle — and treat any colonist who can pay their fees or trade for services. Apothecaries are trained to mend bones, deliver babies, and perform surgeries.

Jefferson Cooper's practice is an example of how one apothecary varies greatly from another. His remedies, which he claims are a mysterious blend of "new" science and old, are in high demand. Bostonians line up for miles to receive his miracle cures. The only trouble is, he will not disclose his ingredients nor will he admit magic is at work. Cooper and others in his line of work feel forced to couch their treatments under the guise of science. The witch craze has forced a more empirical view — even the classifications of typical herbs and spices used by midwives and so-called white witches are renamed to more "English"-sounding words. If apothecaries like Cooper aren't careful, they will find themselves under scrutiny by more superstitious folk.

Fortunately, Boston's population requires constant medical attention. Many don't care how their hurts are healed, provided that they are, and the prices are reasonable.

Harbor

The Boston Harbor is a key destination during this era. Ships from across the Atlantic Ocean sail here to drop off and pick up cargo which is then transported up and down the coastline. The bulk of manufactured goods in the area originate overseas; merchants in the harbor accept shipments and then redistribute them to shops within the city. Some of those merchants work for a subsidiary of the former Acheron Shipping & Trading Guild. In Boston, however, the group presents itself as several independently run family businesses and does not reveal they're all owned by the same shipping company.

The hustle and bustle on the docks presents many opportunities for entrepreneurs and anyone looking to find work. Smugglers, pirates, legitimate merchants, dock workers, scribes, inspectors, and soldiers mingle about the harbor to swap stories and share important news.

In addition to the docks, several islands of varying sizes dot the area, no bigger than four square miles. The size of the harbor is often overlooked, for the real business is conducted in the city, but there are plenty of places to hide.

Key Players

High Court Judge

Judge Livingstone is a cornerstone within the community and enjoys being the center of attention. Prone to gossip, Livingstone acts as the ultimate authority (along with his fellow judges). Together, they interpret and establish laws as part of their duties overseeing both the legislative and judicial systems. Though the Judge is required to follow English Common Law, he often persuades the court to rule in favor of popular opinion.

Livingstone is a skilled interviewer who uses question and answer techniques to lure prisoners to his desired outcome. Most courts are absent of prosecutors and defense attorneys, for only the wealthiest citizens can afford their services. When an accused prisoner comes before Livingstone, he first asks for an admission of guilt. If the prisoner will not confess, then he proceeds to question the witnesses. He'll then ask the accused for her side of the story, gauge the reactions from the audience, and pronounce judgment. Sentencing ranges from spending time in the stocks to public execution — even that is influenced by the public at large. **Academics (Law) 3, Expression (Courtroom) 4, Politics (Boston) 3**

Dressmaker

Mary Hopkins works as a dressmaker in a shop located at the heart of Boston. She is a skilled seamstress who specializes in designing gowns for society's elite. Her business has recently taken a hit as a strange paranoia has sent Boston's respectable families into hiding. Salem is the talk of the town, and many women fear that hysteria will spread within the city's borders. Hopkins, herself, has worried about her position, for she is unmarried and lives with her mother, Alice.

Though she is having a hard time, Hopkins is extremely resourceful and has found work repairing draperies, sacks, aprons, and other garments for working-class citizens. Her new contacts have given her a fresh perspective on the trials and she is quickly accumulating gossip faster than she can share it. **Socialize 2, Crafts (Dressmaking) 3, Expression (Rumors) 3**

Postman

The Colonial postal system was recently centralized. Carriers, like Tom Waite, are assigned an area where they walk or ride from home to home, picking up and distributing letters and packages. Tom is known to many on his route. He's

FOR THE STORYTELLER: BALANCING STORY WITH HISTORY

The 1690s are in a constant state of change as Europeans (mainly the French, British, and Dutch) vie for their survival to claim land that was traditionally occupied by native tribes. The era is especially problematic in the sense that slavery was legal during this time period, attitudes toward natives varied widely, and non-Christians as well as the poor were often treated as social outcasts. Slaves from the West Indies and Africa, while some were either given or earned their freedom, often lived in horrendous conditions and were treated as sub-humans as well. In a historical context, this means that a simulationist-based game would likely result in conflict on a massive scale since many natives resisted conversion, sought to overturn or escape slavery themselves, or were distrustful of the colonists.

In your chronicle, you'll need to weigh the pros and cons of which characters you introduce and why, because a character's race, gender, age, background, and beliefs do matter during this era. Despite all of the challenges you'll face introducing natives and colonists in the same chronicle, monsters are still the beating heart of the Vigil. A good rule of thumb is to talk about the problematic aspects with your players ahead of time to find out what they're comfortable with so you clearly know what to avoid. After all, the purpose of this era and the material provided is to give you the backdrop for a compelling experience in your Chronicles of Darkness game.

a friendly enough sort who hails from a big Catholic family. He doesn't put stock in superstitions and thinks the Salem Town residents are killing innocent people. However, Tom is taking advantage of "witchcraft fever" to press his own advantage.

A tried-and-true Bostonian, Tom is fiercely in favor of Colonial Independence. His work for the growing rebellion is done in secret. Tom is a skilled forger who copies letters from British Loyalists and redistributes them to the rebels. If the Governor ever found out what Tom was really up to, he'd be hanged as a traitor to the Crown. **Subterfuge (Colonial Spy) 5, Crafts (Forgery) 4, Politics 2**

The Supernatural

Hunters who live in this era have their hands full. Not only do they feel forced to keep the Vigil a secret, they are also influenced by recent events. Their knowledge of the occult not only makes them suspect in the eyes of superstitious townsfolk, often hunters feel conflicted about their own traditions, their own beliefs.

A number of modern-day compacts and conspiracies did not exist in this era; only a few *might* have proto-groups that are radically different from their modern counterparts, like Null Mysteriis. Notable, however, is the lack of unity among hunters in the New World. Alliances are either strained or non-existent in the Colonies. Tensions run high as matters of faith and politics intersect with centuries of history.

Some hunter groups, like the Lucifuge and the Aegis Kai Doru, face harsh times and often find themselves lumped in with witches. According to the tenets of the Shadow Court, they will likely be branded as servants of Satan and outsiders. Playing these kinds of hunters could be challenging but also rewarding, as they play "rebels" fighting against a corrupt government and innocent townsfolk to save them from themselves. There is nothing barring accused hunters, witches, vampires, and innocents from forming their *own* resistance, a shaky alliance that seeks to end the witch trials once and for all on American soil. Both the Shadow Court and the Salem Witch Trials already have a sophisticated structure in place to deal with suspected witches and magic-users, which means their opponents will be scattered, fighting an uphill battle.

Shadow Court

By day, the witch trial hysteria spreads from Salem Village to the outlying areas. By night, a different Court holds sway as the Knights of St. George seek to find and eradicate the mysterious threat plaguing the townspeople. Similar to the Judges who believe themselves to be right, the Knights also feel they are justified, doing God's work for the Church of England. They are dissimilar in other ways, for the Knights frown on hysterical tendencies. They have set up their jurisdiction according to how Boston, a more sophisticated and metropolitan area, handles their witch trials. They do not suffer pomp and circumstance, or sarcasm or fools, nor will they allow any propaganda such as pamphlets or books to be circulated.

The Knights who formed the Shadow Court have declared jurisdiction in the area, and will investigate any and all suspected of witchcraft. They believe they are helping restore order among hunters and local settlers. Any hunter may bring her grievances before the Court; any hunter may petition to become part of the Court in an official capacity. Though the Knights have an internal structure, they don't care about titles, pedigrees, or uniforms. Their goal is to find the truth about what's happening.

Here's how the active conspiracies during this time period are affected by the Shadow Court. The trials are also mentioned for those conspiracies who have a hand in them.

- **The Lucifuge:** Though the Lady has an allegiance with the Malleus Maleficarum in Europe, that relationship is fraying in the New World. Targeted for their demonic blood, members of the Lucifuge have gone into hiding from the Knights and from superstitious villagers all too willing to hang a real witch. Some have gotten so desperate that they've teamed up with other accused witches and vampires in a temporary truce. Others seek out allies where they can, even among those who don't hold European settlers in high regard. Either way, most have gone on the run, heading further and further into the frontier.

- **Malleus Maleficarum:** Though the Malleus Maleficarum has a long history with the European witch trials, hunters within this organization are fractured. Some who have experience with the events overseas feel conflicted about what's happening in the Colonies. To them, targeting hunters is counterproductive. On the other hand, others have long harbored resentment for any hunters who don't share their views. Hunters within this group are either wholly vested in the Court, or have shunned it to conduct investigations of their own, tracking down witches and vampires who threaten the faithful. The conspiracy's leaders focus on the trials, for the Malleus Maleficarum wishes to avoid a widespread catastrophe.

- **Aegis Kai Doru:** In the Colonies, members of this group are suspect because of their desire to procure artifacts at all costs. If their greed does not betray them, the use of any artifact surely will. Most members of the Aegis Kai Doru here will not remain in one location. They will travel up and down the coast, visiting new immigrants to ask them about their precious family heirlooms, working when they can to procure the shillings to buy them, and garnering as many allies as they can. Some of those allies operate within the civil courts; while the Aegis Kai Doru is actively dismissing the Shadow Court, they are attempting to protect hunters from being caught up in the civil trials.

- **Ascending Ones:** The Ascending Ones don't have much, if any, interest in the trials or the Shadow Court. Politically, they find themselves at odds with what's happening in the Colonies and prefer to steer clear of social interaction altogether. They take great offense at the notion that the Knights of Saint George have assigned themselves to be the authority on witchcraft in the New World. If they engage the locals, they'll stick to the frontier or high-trafficked areas to find supplies before going out on the hunt. To most within the Cult of the Phoenix, they'd prefer to leave hunters here to their own devices, primarily because any member of this conspiracy will stick out and attract unwanted attention. Those who do get swept up in either the trials or the Shadow Court often seek positions of authority. Some believe an old enemy may be behind the hysteria, one that can never die.

- **Cheiron Group:** The Cheiron Group was based in Boston and hunted monsters all along the coast line. This conspiracy is one of the most active groups during the era and has many guises, including Hygieia Apothecary & Sons founded in 1681, and its many subsidiaries rooted in the Acheron Shipping & Trading Guild. Hygieia operates clinically out of a need to medically treat a burgeoning populace; the company will treat anyone who can pay for services and steers clear of the witch hysteria. This has allowed the group to become entrenched in local politics and learn valuable information. Conspiracy leaders believe the witch trials and the Shadow Court are meaningless and not worth dealing with; they are more interested in what's happening with the Crown and on the frontier. Members who choose to side with the Knights of Saint George are expected to report back to the rest of the conspiracy, however, and are encouraged to identify potential monsters.

In addition to the other compacts hinted at previously, two new compacts are active during this era. Their impacts on the witch trials and the Shadow Court are outlined in their respective write-ups.

THE CHRONICLES OF DARKNESS

The Chronicles of Darkness during the time of *Doubting Souls* is a dangerous place for supernatural beings and mortals alike. Paranoia and suspicion run rampant as the witch trials engulf the local community. Any supernatural beings that want to survive must hide their natures, or be willing to sell out or sacrifice others to throw the hunters off their trail (and further their agendas when it suits them).

Ghosts, spirits, and the walking dead have been in these lands as long as people have walked these shores. Amongst the evil monsters, there are legends of gifted people who could talk to their ancestors and those who have passed on for generations. European **Sin-Eaters** have made it one of their priorities to get to know these native "ghost talkers" when they can, as some of the departed in this part of the world seem to have different powers and make strange (to outsiders) demands. Among the many mysteries during this era, it is unknown whether the evil creatures that consume the flesh of the living are a type of walking dead or some other horror altogether.

The **vampires** stay mostly to the more populated cities, hiding amongst the crowds of mortals. Hunters, especially among the Scarlet Watch, have driven many of the undead into hiding, some fleeing cities such as Philadelphia and Boston. Though a few attempt to hide in smaller communities, the insular nature of these farming villages, settlements, and outposts makes blending in extremely difficult. Manipulative vampires have done their best to steer attention away from their nocturnal activities and onto "witches," using the hysteria to focus the attentions of would-be hunters toward other targets.

Of all supernatural beings, **mages** are feeling the most heat from the trials and increased hunter activity. They've all but abandoned Salem and Salem Town altogether to avoid being swept up in the chaos. Intrigues and power plays continue in Boston, although even there hunters pay close attention to anyone who might show signs of working with the Devil. This is a dangerous time for anyone who claims to understand magic of any kind. The authorities working with the trials are quick to seize those who show signs of corruption.

The **Created** have embraced the concept of exploring the frontier with great enthusiasm. The opportunities for self-reflection, and avoiding those who would hunt them, has great appeal. The frontier also is the territory of **werewolves** and other creatures. The New World is home to a vast array of monsters, and they'll either be found manipulating or preying upon colonists and native peoples, or heading further south and west, creating havoc for fleeing tribes and explorers.

The Scarlet Watch

Blood Never Lies

The Scarlet Watch is a secret society of vampire hunters that formed sometime in the Middle Ages in response to the Inquisition and its effects on certain families. The founding members, who felt betrayed by the Church, formed an alliance to ensure they protected each other in times of dire need. Nine hunters from Europe's oldest families signed a pact in their own blood to watch out for one another, a blood signature that bonded them together in their common goal: to hunt down the vampires responsible for the heavy losses they suffered.

The oath the Watch signed is magically sealed. Should any family member leave the compact or forego her obligation, another must take her place. According to the bargain that was struck, the Watch may increase its ranks with new members, but the compact must always include a single descendant from each of the original nine families or a terrible catastrophe will strike them all down. When the time is right, the Watch's hunters are called together in the land of dreaming, to rise up and take arms against the vampiric taint. Upon awakening, the dreamers will begin acting on their intuitions. Strange coincidences will reunite the Watch, as Fate reconnects these hunters and their families, until they come together per the terms of their bond.

The original Watch included wealthy merchants, bankers, lords, bishops, and landholders who hailed from Europe's finest: Bogda, Kohler, Dupont, Horvath, O'Connor, Conti, Drake, Jansen, Warrick. Pooling together their resources, the Watch donated handsome sums to the Church and paid more than their fair share of taxes in exchange for information about vampires. In this, the Watch was successful, and the Church temporarily lent some of its own agents (through the Malleus Maleficarum) to give the Watch the tools it needed to hunt vampires.



For 50 long years, families sent their sons and daughters to hunt down bloodsuckers and murder them by the light of day. As the vampire threat subsided, members moved on, expanding their estates, forgetting about the blood oath they swore to one another.

Until today.

Now, these families find their livelihoods are being threatened once again, by the very same creatures who almost destroyed them all those years ago — but in a New World. Unfortunately, the passage of time has all but wiped away the record of how the founding members hunted bloodsuckers and their ilk. Worse, these families have drifted far apart and no longer share the same camaraderie they once did. What they share in common, however, is sacred promise to uphold the Vigil together; an oath written in blood, a promise that has been renewed in secret once every 10 years by a single volunteer.

Membership in this compact waxes and wanes with each passing era, as one threat blends into another. Though its members uphold the Vigil in times of peace and strife, the members of the Scarlet Watch are being drawn by fate to the eastern seaboard of the Americas.

To the Watch, that can mean only one thing: vampires.

The Enemy

During this era, the Scarlet Watch cooperates with the Shadow Court when it suits them to expose vampires; the group turns in witches in exchange for any

help the Knights and their allies might provide. The Watch is, by far, the most paranoid compact during this era. Though the families are old, descendants do not share the same power or luxuries their forebearers claimed. Some of the original family trees have branched off, incorporating new families. Now, the Scarlet Watch is primarily made up of commoners pledging to protect other commoners based on an old promise — an eternal oath that holds little meaning to the hunters of today. Soldiers and farmers, judges and executioners, dressmakers and clerics now form the ranks of the Watch. They operate in a diminished capacity; what few allies they do have care for nothing but gold.

Vampires have long memories, and bloodsuckers know when an opportunity presents itself. In Boston and the surrounding towns, vampires are actively hunting members of the Watch, to wipe the compact from existence once and for all. Some are even collaborating with one another to bring the Watch to "justice." Others simply wait for these hunters and pick them off, one by one, when they least suspect it.

The Watch is at considerable risk during this era. Vampires stalk them in the night; by day, the Watch is trying to work with one another, to find the common thread tying them together. For some members, that means engaging in local politics or reaching out to other cells for help, advice, and information. For other hunters, however, the seeds of distrust have already been sown. The Watch is desperate to feel safe, and its members will do whatever it takes to protect their lands and families from harm — even if that means turning a blind eye to other hunters who don't belong to the Watch to save themselves.

During this time period, the Scarlet Watch's goal is to reclaim the occult information it once had, and build an arsenal of weapons it knows will work against vampires. It is obvious to the inheritors of the Watch that they cannot win without both.

Status

Within the Watch, status is not based on a hunter's prowess, but on her connections. Hunters who have proven themselves to be trustworthy, and who have renewed the promise of their original forebears, are afforded more status than those who don't. Hunters who signed the pact, but don't take the Watch seriously, may choose to belong to other compacts or conspiracies. Membership is voluntary, but the threat of vampires specifically targeting certain hunters is all too real.

- A member of your family has only recently told you of the pledge your ancestors made to protect the other members of the Watch. You are not necessarily new to the Vigil, but as far as the Watch is concerned, you have yet to prove your worth. Provided you can show yourself to be trustworthy, you will impress upon other members in your community that you will keep your family's oldest vow, despite not knowing much about it. Gain 1 dot in Resources or a 1 dot Allies (The Watch).

••• Your grandfather or great-grandmother saved a hunter from a vampire over 50 years ago. You have been aware of your obligation to the Scarlet Watch since you were a small child. You have a few friends within the Watch and feel it would be an honor to uphold the Vigil. Outside of your neighborhood, however, you are an unknown quantity. You will need to prove your worth to the long-standing members if you wish to participate in strategy meetings. Gain 2 dots in Resources or 2 dots Allies (The Watch).

••••• You can trace your family all the way back through the Middle Ages. You come from a long line of proud hunters, and you can name each and every one of them. You are well-respected by your peers; the other families not only know you by name, they are aware of your deeds and ask you for advice. You have made an impact in the New World, and families from up and down the coastline will seek you out. Gain a Merit or two of your choice at your Storyteller's discretion. Combined, your new Merits may be rated up to three dots to reflect your long and storied heritage.

Stereotypes

Knights of Saint George: Agents of the Crown may be useful to me, provided they don't dare target my family. To ensure they don't, I will cooperate with their foolish endeavors. The Shadow Court seems like it might be useful, but I'm more interested in using it to find out more about these Knights and the other hunters. Still, it makes me wonder if a vampire hasn't infiltrated *their* ranks. Certainly seems like the kind of thing a bloodsucker might do.

Aegis Kai Doru: I have yet to see a magickal relic that will lead me to every vampire in town. What good are objects of power if they're not useful to hunt bloodsuckers? Still, I cannot deny I'm curious to know if there *is* a relic that could help me run faster, jump higher, or shoot a crossbow straight into a vampire's heart.

Malleus Maleficarum: I do not know for sure, but my grandfather told me that they helped us once, and then left us to our own devices. Why? Did they seek to damn us? Use us as bait? Why didn't they reach out to us, to warn us that we could never stop hunting the vampires? I have more questions than answers, and that bothers me more than it should.

Acheron Shipping & Trading Guild (Cheiron Group): I recognize a few names painted on store windows. Is it possible that members of the Watch abandoned the group to cast their lot with these merchants? They prosper where I do not, and have found a way to make money to finance their hunts. That is more than I can say for myself. Still, that doesn't mean I agree with all their methods. There are, after all, different forms of vampirism.

Les Voyageurs

Take Back The Forest

In 1534, the French began to explore and colonize the Americas in a region known as New France. While the English colonized the eastern seaboard, the French pushed westward, building forts and trading posts, and developing relationships with tribes like the Huron and Algonquin far to the north and south. The French occupation took hold, and a new industry flourished — the fur trade.

Furs from native species, like beaver, bear, wolf, and raccoon, became hot commodities and were exported back to Europe. With fur in such high demand, the Dutch, French, English, and several native tribes (most notably the Iroquois) fought for control of the trade, culminating in a series of conflicts known as the Beaver Wars. These skirmishes were fought between the French and their tribal allies (the Erie, Huron, Algonquin, and Susquehannock) against the Iroquois; the struggle lasted well into the 18th century as the colonial landscape changed and new threats, like the English, were targeted.

Unlike other compacts, this group has no clear leader, no legendary founder. Where there was a demand for fur, there were hunters. Where there were hunters, there were Les Voyageurs, the forest runners, a group that formed out of necessity. Comprised of French hunters and their allies, like the Algonquin, Les Voyageurs have a unique focus: to hunt monsters and sell their hides.

Beliefs, expertise, and backgrounds vary widely among Les Voyageurs. There's no clear structure in this company, only a single mission: to rid the land of werewolves who've preyed on too many for far too long. As such, Les Voyageurs have a high attrition rate (they will eventually die out as the land is settled and werewolves adapt). Their tools — mainly muskets and axes — are often ineffective.

They are loosely formed; members operate either individually or in small groups, forming more of an alliance than a strict organization with clear ranks. The longest-surviving members tend to hold the most sway.



The Enemy

Les Voyageurs operate out in the wild. Operating in tandem with the fur trade, the pelts produced by Les Voyageurs fetch high prices overseas; the money is funneled back into the organization to procure supplies and replace broken equipment. The compact's number include hunters, trappers, scouts, woodsman, and furriers. While they have sold the pelts of rare creatures, like the occasional shapeshifter or watery beast, Les Voyageurs dedicate their lives to finding and erasing werewolves from the land.

Hunters in the 17th century use a variety of tactics to track down werewolves, and they do so with great care. Relying on traps, natural environments, and bits of werewolf lore, hunters share knowledge whenever possible to ensure that their brothers and sisters survive. Unlike other big game hunters, Les Voyageurs do not eliminate werewolves for sport. They do so because they believe that werewolves are cursed, feral monsters who cannot be negotiated with, who need to be put down. This belief, that werewolves are evil, unites them in the hunt.

Forest runners share information in Algonquin. They also leave messages for other hunters on the trails using a simple, symbolic language. If a werewolf is spotted, local tribes are warned to steer clear of the area. Though any non-hunter is welcome to participate in the hunt, provided they can prove their worth in a fight, the werewolf's carcass will go to the group as payment for clearing the area of the threat.

Unlike other hunters, Les Voyageurs do not hunt werewolves in secret. They may not, out of respect, mention how many *different* types of hunters there are in the

Vigil, but they are always looking to recruit given their high mortality rate.

Both the witch trials and the Shadow Court baffle Les Voyageurs, for they have mixed feelings about witches in general. Many forest runners — especially members of native tribes — don't understand the Puritan's definition of a witch. Some witches have used magick to help these hunters heal and find their quarry; to these hunters, witches are a means to an end, and it's foolish to condemn all of them. As a result, Les Voyageurs tend to stick to the neighboring forests and only participate in the trials when necessary.

Status

To gain status within Les Voyageurs, hunters are ranked according to the number of successful hunts they have participated in, regardless of whether or not they earned the kill. This system is geared toward rewarding hunters who work together, and a great amount of ceremony is attached to each tier. Hunts that capture monsters other than werewolves may be included as well, provided higher-ranked cells agree that the kill is worth counting.

To cut down on boasts or pelt-stealing, hunters skin werewolf carcasses in a public ceremony, where status is doled out during a monthly ceremony to honor the living hunters — and the dead.

- You are new to the hunt and have the least amount of knowledge about the supernatural. The kills you've acquired have not been verified yet, but as you accumulate more pelts, you hone your skills to increase your success rate. You are the last to sit at the dinner table, and the last to be rewarded when the proceeds of your efforts are doled out. Your hurts are patched in time; your family is eventually taken care of. Gain 1 dot in Resources (Basic Gear) or a 3-dot Mentor.

••• You are a seasoned hunter who has accumulated a decent-sized body of knowledge to hunt monsters. You and your cell are known, accomplished veterans. You train new hunters and incorporate one or two into your group. You have seen your fair share of battles, and you have told many stories about your fellow hunters. When you sit down to eat, you are seated second. You receive your fair share of the profits, after the veterans have been paid, and you have enough to fix your tools, obtain medicine, and give your loved ones a small stipend. Gain 2 dots in Resources (Weapons), two additional Contacts, or 2 dots in the Fame Merit.

••••• You are a legendary hunter, an expert on the supernatural. You have a unique way to hunt, a sixth sense to track werewolves. Your knife is prized as a ceremonial object, and when you die your name will be whispered like a legend. You sit first at the table, you guide the ceremonies of remembrance, and you are valued as an honored protector of the land. Your skills are so legendary, you take up to four new hunters to train alongside you. Of the profits, you and your family are taken care of first. Gain 3 dots in Resources (Traps), four Allies, or 3 dots of the Fame Merit.

Stereotypes

Knights of Saint George: I have no time for stuck-up, pompous blowhards who think they're better than I am. What are they doing to protect me? Nothing. They form this Shadow Court to root out other hunters, put my friends at risk. There are real monsters out there with claws. Maybe they should try hunting them for a change.

The Scarlet Watch: Hunting bloodsuckers in town doesn't seem like that much of a challenge. What I wouldn't give to live in a big, fancy house, worry about my kids — I may not live to see 20. Vampire comes to attack me, I can count on my fellow hunters. Can they say the same? Or are they more worried about their holdings?

Keepers of the Weave: It makes sense that there are hunters who tell stories about monsters to warn other members of their tribe. By indicating what these monsters are, who they feed on, and where they roam, the Keepers of the Weave are arming the members of their tribe with knowledge they can act on. I hope they will work with me one day, to fill me in on the stories I have yet to learn.

Malleus Maleficarum: I'm not sure what to think about a hunter who bases all of his comings and goings on the Church. I came to the New World to get away from the Church's influence and live my life freely. Do these hunters put the Vigil first? Or their faith?

KEEPERS OF THE WEAVE

Defend through our Stories

The Keepers of the Weave is an ancient group of native hunters that documents and records monsters and shares occult knowledge through the stories they tell. Their primary goal is to obtain this knowledge through the exchange of information with other native hunters. Their stories may be told, sung, danced, or woven according to the customs and beliefs of each unique tribe. While the Keepers of the Weave is not unique, members tend to be grouped together in cells that are composed primarily of members from either one tribe or allied tribes.



Historically, the biggest challenge the Keepers of the Weave has had to overcome is the barrier of language and, in some cases, politics, as competition and rivalries between tribes may prevent these hunters from interacting with others. Often, other hunters may not realize that the Keepers of the Weave aren't simply recording "a" monster with specific name or "an" iteration of a particular story. They are recording every mention and resharing that tale through the cultural traditions of their tribes. Typically, they recite a poem or perform a song or dance to warn others of that monster's existence.

These hunters are acutely aware that one creature could have several names that reflect the many tribal languages spoken for thousands of years. For example, the evil ghost called Swamp-Woman from Wabanaki folklore is also referred to as M-ska-gwe-demoos, Maski-mon-gwe-zo-os, Meskagkwedemos, Mskagwdemos, P-Skig-Demo-Os, Pskegdemus, Skwakowtemus, Skwakewtemus, Skwakcwtemus, Squaw-oc-t'moos, Squeao-ta-mos, and Sqewtomuhs. These variations originated from mentions of the Swamp-Woman found amongst the Abenaki, Maliseet, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot tribes.

Traditionally, the Keepers of the Weave has a lateral structure and individual cells operate according to the traditions of that specific tribe. Its members' goal, however, is to support other hunters as opposed to competing with them or running afoul of their ideological beliefs; they will continue to tell stories as a way of achieving this goal. They are less concerned with how well a hunter upholds the Vigil than they are about making sure people are safe from the monsters that prey upon them. While they won't seek out a European or rival hunter without just cause, they are not adverse to working with them, either, provided those foreign hunters respect their ways and treat them as equals.

The Enemy

Prior to the 17th century, the naming conventions and sheer number of stories about monsters were challenging to track, but not impossible. Each Keeper set out to learn other languages and gather stories from as many native hunters as he could in order to further the compact's overall goal, passing down these stories from

generation to generation in the region. However, the colonial expansion ushered in many challenges that have dramatically impacted this compact's ability to collect and retell stories. One of these difficulties is the fact that the new monsters that have appeared are called by English, Dutch, and French names. Unfortunately, the Keepers of the Weave were one of the first groups of native hunters to recognize that upholding the Vigil became infinitely more complicated due to colonial expansion.

While the Keepers of the Weave likely existed in many forms throughout the years, the 17th century version of this compact is thought to have formed after the conclusion of one of the many conflicts that decimated the Northeastern tribes during this period. The Pequot War, that began in 1638, is one such example of a conflict that drastically reduced the members of this compact. English colonists from the Massachusetts Bay, Plymouth, and Saybrook colonies fought with the Narrangansett and Mohegan tribes to massacre the Pequot tribe. After four long and bloody years, the war finally ended and the Pequot lost. The survivors either fled into neighboring tribes or were sold into slavery and shipped off to the West Indies. This single battle all but eliminated the Pequot, which meant that the Keepers of the Weave in this tribe were almost completely destroyed. At the conclusion of this battle and other conflicts like this, the Keepers of the Weave recruited other hunters in greater numbers in order to preserve the fabric of their knowledge and traditions.

Status

Status amongst these native hunters is not earned through achievements in storytelling during this era, but through the services performed in order to preserve the compact's knowledge. The best way to continue the traditions of the Keepers of the Weave is to perfect the art of oral storytelling and remember the tales told by other hunters and members of your tribe.

- Your eyes have been opened and you are brand new to the Vigil. You have been invited to join the Keepers of the Weave to help spread the word about monsters to hunters and non-hunters alike. You are partnered with an experienced lorekeeper who teaches you how to interview other hunters and how to tell stories in the way that makes sense for your tribe. Gain a 3-dot Mentor who is also a Keeper of the Weave, or a 1-dot Language Merit and a 2-dot Mentor. This Mentor is either also a member of your tribe, or one of its allies.

••• You are a traveler who visits area tribes to tell stories. You have accumulated knowledge and memorized the deeds of area hunters. Thanks to the guidance of your Mentor, you are able to weave your knowledge of the occult into a tale that is both entertaining and instructional. When you visit an allied tribe, you share information with other Keepers of the Weave and area hunters to increase your knowledge of the occult. Gain 2 dots in Occult, 2 dots in Expression (Storytelling), or 2 dots in Politics to reflect the stories and information you glean from others on your trips.

••••• You are a lorekeeper and know everything there is to know about the monsters in your area. You have earned the respect of your tribe and you spend your time recruiting other hunters and teaching them the stories you've learned. You coordinate with other hunters and guide less-experienced storytellers to help them find their way. Gain 3 dots in Socialize or Occult, or four Allies or Contacts.

Stereotypes

Knights of Saint George: I am afraid of these hunters. We may both uphold the Vigil, but we have nothing in common. What will they do to me if we cross paths? Will they accuse me of being a witch because I am not a colonist? I hope they leave soon, because I do not want to be caught up in their misguided wrath. I wish I knew who (or what) was manipulating them.

The Scarlet Watch: I would be interested to compare notes with these hunters, to understand what a "bloodsucker" is and if it matches any of the monsters we have been dealing with for some time. Too bad they stick to the city. I don't feel welcome in Boston, and I'm not sure they would open their doors to greet me as an ally.

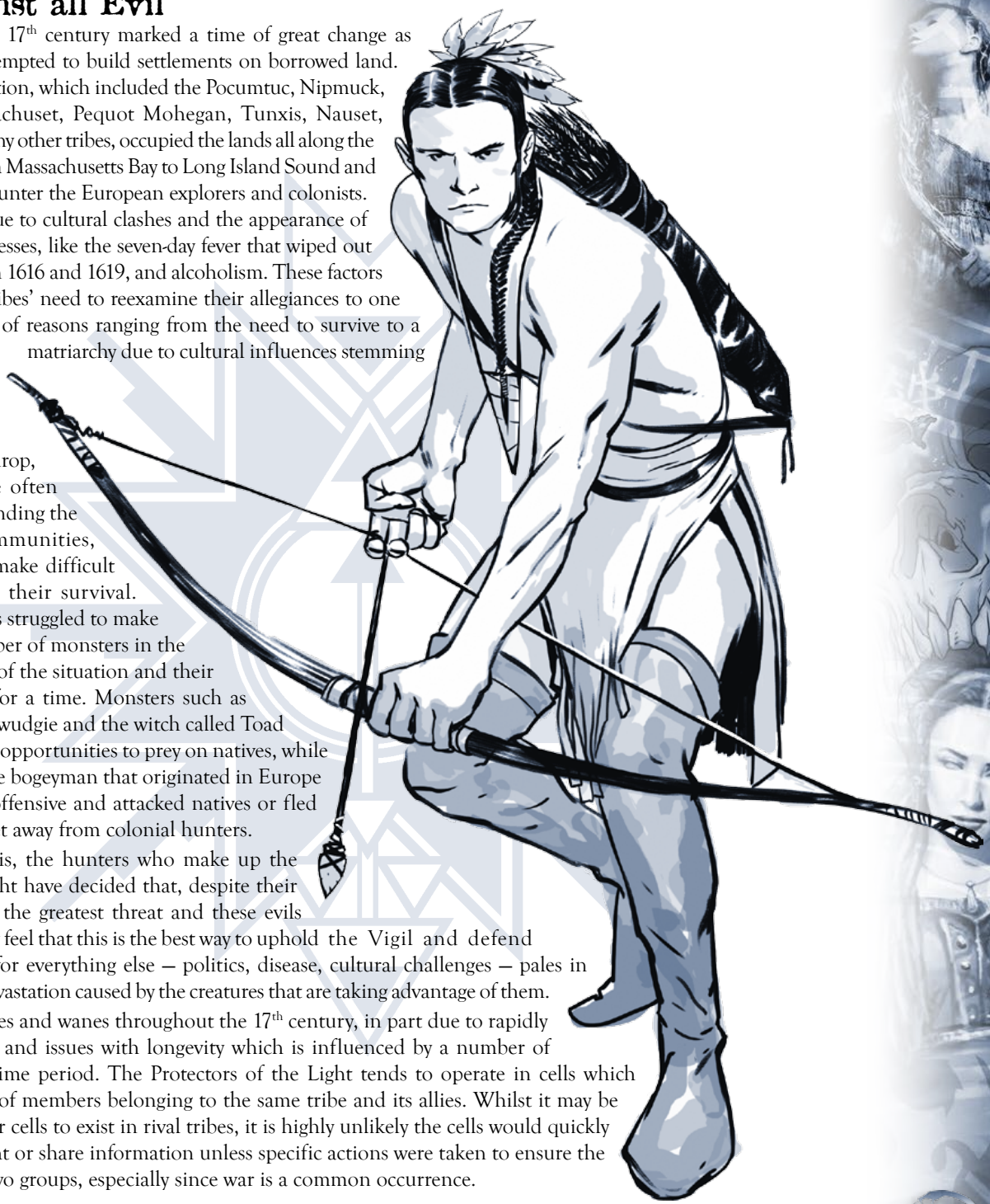
Protectors of the Light: Of all the hunters I have met recently, the Protectors of the Light seem to have their priorities straight. These hunters understand what evil awaits us in the dark, and they are smarter than most give them credit for. I'm afraid we'll share the same fate, eventually, but it fills me with joy that the Vigil will not be completely abandoned despite our suffering.

Les Voyageurs: It seems foolish to me that these hunters run off into the forests searching for trouble. Don't they know what's out there? Apparently not. I'll be there to warn them or help if they ask, but I don't expect they'll live very long. Still, I am curious to know if they have any information on the new monsters that their European members brought to my land....

Protectors of the Light

Guard against all Evil

The dawn of the 17th century marked a time of great change as English colonists attempted to build settlements on borrowed land. The Wampanoag Nation, which included the Pocumtuc, Nipmuck, Narragansett, Massachuset, Pequot Mohegan, Tunxis, Nauset, Wampanoag, and many other tribes, occupied the lands all along the eastern seaboard from Massachusetts Bay to Long Island Sound and were the first to encounter the European explorers and colonists. Tensions ran deep due to cultural clashes and the appearance of never-before-seen illnesses, like the seven-day fever that wiped out many natives between 1616 and 1619, and alcoholism. These factors contributed to the tribes' need to reexamine their allegiances to one another for a variety of reasons ranging from the need to survive to a breakdown in the matriarchy due to cultural influences stemming from the colonists' patriarchal Christian ways.



Against this backdrop, native hunters were often caught between defending the Vigil and their communities, and were forced to make difficult decisions to ensure their survival. While native hunters struggled to make hard choices, a number of monsters in the area took advantage of the situation and their numbers increased for a time. Monsters such as the mischievous Pukwudgie and the witch called Toad Woman found more opportunities to prey on natives, while new creatures like the bogeyman that originated in Europe either went on the offensive and attacked natives or fled into their lands to get away from colonial hunters.

Despite all of this, the hunters who make up the Protectors of the Light have decided that, despite their issues, monsters are the greatest threat and these evils must be fought. They feel that this is the best way to uphold the Vigil and defend their communities, for everything else — politics, disease, cultural challenges — pales in comparison to the devastation caused by the creatures that are taking advantage of them.

Membership waxes and wanes throughout the 17th century, in part due to rapidly changing allegiances and issues with longevity which is influenced by a number of factors during this time period. The Protectors of the Light tends to operate in cells which are often composed of members belonging to the same tribe and its allies. Whilst it may be possible, however, for cells to exist in rival tribes, it is highly unlikely the cells would quickly band together to fight or share information unless specific actions were taken to ensure the peace between the two groups, especially since war is a common occurrence.



The Enemy

The Protectors of the Light are found in plain sight, operating amongst the other members of their tribes in the lands occupied by the Wampanoag Nation. Though the boundaries of the territories change drastically during this period, native hunters continue to venture wherever monsters may be found, and often conduct reconnaissance missions to gather information. The Protectors actively fight a broader range of monsters than the other compacts active during this time period, and are highly skilled in the art of warfare.

Since many monsters have animalistic qualities, the Protectors of the Light favor working with other hunters and trappers who have successfully taken down big game like bear or elk. From time to time, the Protectors of the Light may even work with native hunters in Les Voyageurs to bring down a particular monster that has been attacking the community, or may listen to a Keeper of the Weave in order to glean valuable information about the target.

While the native hunters are dedicated to the Vigil, they are not blind to the changes happening around them. To guard themselves and their communities against new invaders, they avoid European settlers and colonists as much as possible. They will, when their tribal leaders request it, fight on the front lines. However, they'd much rather spend their time tracking down monsters because they feel they are a greater evil.

Candidates are carefully selected based on an individual's prowess in the hunt for game or in battle. The Protectors of the Light rarely seeks out untested recruits and its members are reluctant to talk about the Vigil as openly as Les Voyageurs. Despite being careful, the group is already on the decline as war, disease, and colonial expansion claims the lives of the hunters and their communities on many fronts.

Status

The Protectors of the Light doesn't regard status in the same way as Les Voyageurs, in part because the group's members refuse to celebrate even the smallest victory. Ever vigilant, native hunters are keenly aware that their numbers are dwindling, and they feel that it's more important to remain focused on their task to eliminate evil. As such, the Protectors of the Light bases status on longevity as opposed to accomplishments. Older native hunters are given more resources which are, in turn, shared with the younger members in order to increase the group's success on the hunt and better their chances for survival.

- You are a new recruit who has proven yourself on the hunt. You are now an honored member of the Protectors of the Light and will undergo training to hunt monsters. Depending upon your background prior to taking up the Vigil, you may be tasked with studying your enemy, learning how to set traps, or acquiring the skills necessary to use multiple types of weapons. Gain 1 dot in Occult, Survival, or Weaponry.

••• You have either successfully killed a monster or have been directly tied to its demise. In honor of your prowess in battle, you may now recommend a new recruit to join the Protectors of the Light and you may also coordinate your own hunts. In recognition of your dedication to the Vigil, you are given more supplies that you may distribute at your discretion. Gain 2 dots in Resources (Weapons), Resources (Survival Gear), or create two additional Contacts that will help you track down your prey.

••••• You have proven yourself in such a way that other hunters speak your name honorably. You have coordinated many hunts and your efforts are so successful that you have ensured your tribe will not be plagued by monsters for weeks to come. Because of your prowess, you have earned the respect of your fellow hunters and are looked upon as a trusted guide and valued leader. Gain 3 dots in Resources (Tradeable Goods), two Allies and one Contact, or 3 dots in the Safe Place Merit.

Stereotypes

Keepers of the Weave: I understand their purpose and respect the need to gather stories about monsters, but they do not go far enough to uphold the Vigil. Warning a tribe is not the same as protecting the people within it, and I fear we are all running out of time. Unless they are willing to take up arms, I have little time for stories.

Les Voyageurs: I trust the native hunters who understand the difference between Lox and a werewolf over the French. What do they know about dealing with evil spirits of the wolverine? I do not know and have little time to teach them. If I find myself tracking a werewolf, however, I may ask them for help — if they're still alive.

Malleus Maleficarum: The Church this and the Church that. Why should I listen to a European hunter who cannot respect my ways? We are both hunters, and yet I feel we are looked down upon because we are not upholding the Vigil according to their beliefs. Unless they give me a reason to think otherwise, I will stick to protecting my community from the monsters that prey upon us.

The Lucifuge: I do not know what to make of hunters who are descended from evil. Are they monsters? Should they be killed to protect us all? I will not trust any hunter with the blood of demons running through her veins. I think I would rather kill these hunters after I am done with the monsters than work with them.

New Tactics

These tactics address two limitations hunters might have during this time period. The first is to give hunters a way to sort fact from fiction through cross-examining their witnesses — an important technique in a world filled with so much grey. The second focuses on a weapons-based tactic appropriate for the time period.

Cross-Examine

Prerequisites: All: Manipulation 2, Investigation 1. Partial: Enigmas 2 or Occult 2 (secondary actor). Partial: Subterfuge 2 (secondary actor). Partial: Intimidation 2 (primary actor)

Requires: 3 or more

Dice Pool: Primary: Manipulation + Intimidation. Secondary: Presence + Investigation, Manipulation + Subterfuge or Occult

Action: Extended and contested

Description: This is a variation on the Interrogation Tactic found in **Witch Finders** (pg. 122). It is used when the cell is investigating someone accused of witchcraft to assess the likelihood of the accused having used supernatural abilities on the victim. The afflicted often claim to have seen or felt the presence of the witch before they became sick or injured, and the cell needs to find out as much evidence as possible.

A hunter cell uses this tactic to gather as much information on the target as possible. Steps to be taken include: Interviewing witnesses for clues as to the illness or bad fortune, and how the victim was able to point out the accused; talking to neighbors to discover habits and, if possible, local gossip; and investigating the accused's home or work to look for physical evidence of witchcraft including strange plants, books on spirits or spellcraft, hex symbols, and the like.

The primary actor can use this tactic in a private setting, where the cell has locked the accused away, or more often, in a courtroom where the accused is on trial. The primary actor questions the accused, using the evidence gathered by the secondary actors, showcasing any and all evidence of witchcraft and pushing for a confession from the target.

The primary actor rolls once per round of questioning. The accused subject resists with Composure + Subterfuge. The primary actor must gain a number of successes equal to the subject's Resolve + Composure, while the subject must score more successes than the primary actor's Composure + Empathy. If the subject reaches her target before the primary actor, it is likely the court (and possibly the cell) begins to question the authenticity of the victim's accusations.

Organizations: Originally used by the Malleus Maleficarum in the European trials, this Tactic quickly spread to other hunter groups involved in investigating witchcraft.

Potential Modifiers

Primary actor is a Priest, Magistrate, or other profession with experience interviewing people (+1 to primary actor); hunters uncovered boring or un-useful gossip (–1 to primary actor); the accused is someone of high standing in the local community (–2 to all primary and secondary actors); accused subject honestly has no idea about any questions asked (–4 to all primary and secondary actors).

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: If the subject suffers a dramatic failure at any point in the proceedings, she believes she has cleared her name but has actually convinced everyone of her status as a witch. If the primary actor rolls a dramatic failure, he believes the subject has no connection to witchcraft and is innocent of the charges.

Failure: No successes are gained toward the total.

Success: If the interviewer's player rolls more successes than the target's Resolve + Composure, then the interviewer can ask a number of questions equal to his Investigation dots which the subject will answer truthfully. If the Storyteller rolls more successes for the subject than the interviewer's Composure + Empathy, the Tactic fails and cannot be used on the subject again.

Exceptional Success: If the subject achieves an exceptional success, she's cleared her name and will be released by the court. The primary actor suffers a –2 modifier to all Social rolls for a day. If the interviewer achieves an exceptional success, the subject loses a point of Willpower in the face of extreme questioning.

To Purchase: 13 Practical Experience, 10 for the Knights of St. George, 8 for the Malleus Maleficarum.

Flintlock Reload

Prerequisites: All Dexterity 2, Firearms 2. Partial: Crafts 2 (secondary actor) Partial: Survival 2 (primary actor)

Dice Pool: Primary: Dexterity + Firearms. Secondary: Wits + Firearms or Crafts

Action: Instant

Description: Flintlock muskets and pistols were the firearms of choice for most hunters in the era. Most militia members, game hunters, and farmers had at least a passing familiarity with these weapons. They quickly became the preferred weapon to uphold the Vigil, allowing hunters to hit targets at range and often do much more damage than melee combat. However, flintlocks were not without their drawbacks. Misfires, wet powder, and long reload times all reduced their effectiveness, and against monsters there is no room for error. This tactic relies heavily on teamwork to overcome some of those challenges during a hunt.

The primary actor is the shooter, while the secondary actors handle reloading and sighting the target. An expert marksman may be able to reload on his own in 15 seconds, but that can increasingly cut into accuracy and at times place



UNCHOSEN, UNBIDDEN, UNLOVED

Beneath Salem Town's Church lie three glass coffins containing the perfectly preserved corpses of two 16-year-old boys and one girl. Their heads have all been shaved, their eyes have been sewn shut, and their mouths stuffed with asphodel. All three are clothed in linen and leather sandals; each wears a gold pendant around the neck and has a unique name engraved upon the flat disc: Unchosen, Unbidden, Unloved.

No human, alive or dead, knows what's buried beneath the Church or why....

the shooter in a position of vulnerability. This tactic allows the shooter to stay in place with all attention focused directly on the target. The primary actor aims, fires, and hands the musket backwards to someone who trades the spent musket for a loaded and ready-to-fire weapon. This allows the primary actor to fire again quickly without moving from a set position.

The primary actor is focused solely on shooting the intended target, relying completely on the secondary actors to have loaded weapons available and watching for signs of counter-attack. The secondary actors are keeping the weapons at the ready, as well as protecting the shooter from ambush or other hazards. The secondary actors can substitute Crafts for Firearms when loading the muskets.

Organizations: Often used by hunters with military or animal-hunting backgrounds, this tactic is especially useful in the field against combat-capable foes.

Potential Modifiers

Primary actor has cover and/or a secure firing location (+1 to primary actor); target has considerable cover or is out of range of the musket (–2 to the shooter); target is able to return fire (–1 to all primary and secondary actors).

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: If the shooter suffers a dramatic failure the musket misfires and is destroyed. If the secondary actor suffers a dramatic failure, the follow-up musket is mishandled (jammed, wet or spilled black powder) and the shooter misses an opportunity to get another shot off before the target is out of range.

Failure: The shooter misses the opportunity to get a second shot at the target.

Success: The shooter can fire again without penalty (limit 3 per round).

Exceptional Success: The shooter gains a +1 per rifle (limit 3 per round) as if they have had the opportunity to Aim.

To Purchase: 14 Practical Experience, 10 for Les Voyageurs.

Wandering Monsters

Before you identify which monsters you'd like to use in this era, figure out what type of game you'd like to run. Determine where the monster's lair is, who her victims are likely to be, and who'll be the most likely to identify her. For example, if you want an accused monster to get caught up in the trials, you might consider a shape-shifter who is taking the place of a dead child at a farmhouse. If you opt for a more physical game, utilize the natural environment and offer players the chance to enter an ancient cave or forest. Alternately, if you prefer a more political theme, introduce a witch or a changeling who's using her powers to *help* local hunters find werewolves.

Bloodsuckers, ghosts, and witches are fairly common in the region but, depending upon where they originated from or what Dread Powers they have, may go by an Algonquin, French, Dutch, Gaelic, Latin, or other name. Misidentification is very common during this time period — not because hunters aren't intelligent, but because there's a marked lack of information and resources during this century. As many monsters flock to the New World, carried in the bellies of vast ships, superstitions and rumors follow in kind. Use those to enrich the mystery of these monsters as opposed to tricking your players.

These monsters are examples of antagonists that are flexible enough to use in a chronicle or in a straight-up hunt. The rules provided for them tie to the **Hunter: The Vigil** rules update and new Dread Powers found in **Mortal Remains**.

PIERRE BADEAUX

When I could no longer howl out in the open, I sailed to a new land. I will do anything to be free.

Pierre Badeaux grew up as a street urchin on the streets of Paris. He is a half-wolf, half-human hybrid orphan unsure of his parentage. When he began to change, Badeaux took to the sewers and lived beneath the city for a time until he could grasp his condition. Was he a spirit slayer? Shapeshifter? Unfortunately, Badeaux didn't have the opportunity to test the limits of his abilities, for a vampire faction moved in and took over his sewers. Forced back onto the streets, Badeaux practiced his shapeshifting techniques to mimic the faces of passersby. His skills only got him so far, though, and as his hunger grew he resorted to large and ever more elaborate cons.

Eventually, Badeaux found the perfect mark — an old French grandmother grieving for the loss of her grandson. He kept up the ruse until he could legally assume the dead grandson's identity and become the primary beneficiary of Grandmere Badeaux's will. Pierre's grandmother did pass of natural causes, and the shapeshifter grieved for her loss,



as was proper. His appearances kept, Pierre booked passage to the Americas.

Once he arrived in the Colonies, Badeaux took up the life of a frontiersman and became enamored with the idea of living off the land. There, he learned he could communicate with wolves and decided to try communing with the beasts. Badeaux lived like a natural predator for less than a fortnight; as before, he ran into creatures much scarier and fiercer than him.

Now, Badeaux has moved back to Boston and is attempting to climb the social ladder. His newfound status has given him access to the books he needs to sort out his "condition." He has abandoned his natural tendencies and aims to taste what life is like in high society. Unfortunately for him, in the upper echelon of Boston's elite lurks a different type of predator...one that Badeaux will be hard-pressed to defeat.

Description: Badeaux is rail-thin, tall, and has a full head of dark hair and brown eyes. He cannot change the shape of his body — only his face — and often uses cosmetics and other trickery to alter his appearance. He is hard to physically detect because he seeks to blend in, look ordinary, not stand out. For a man like Badeaux, the only way he knows how to survive is to not draw attention to himself.

Hunters who catch Badeaux in between guises will find he'll do *anything* he can to keep his secret. No matter how long it takes, anyone who's wise to Badeaux's schemes will find herself accused of murder, witchcraft, or worse.

Storytelling Hints: Badeaux is an interesting antagonist to introduce depending upon *when* Hunters encounter him. In the forests, his primal nature takes over as he vies for dominance, the easiest marks being the local wildlife. The longer he's pushed by something stronger than him, the more desperate Badeaux will become. In his own mind, he's not quite human and he's not quite monster, either. One foot is in the world of the supernatural and the other in the mortal world, which is more conflicted than ever.

Unlike a Jekyll and Hyde creature, Badeaux is in full control of his faculties. He is seeking for a place where he'll fit in — once he finds his pack, there's no telling what he'll do to protect his own.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Investigation 2, Medicine (First Aid) 3, Occult 2 (French folk traditions), Science 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Stealth 3, Survival (City Streets) 4

Social Skills: Animal Ken 3, Streetwise 4, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 1

Merits: Brawling Dodge, Contacts (Locals) 1, Language (Wolf), Resources 4, Tactics 4

Potency: 4

Willpower: 7

Morality: 5

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Pride

Initiative: 7

Defense: 3

Speed: 14

Health: 10

Dread Powers: Dread Attack (Claws, Teeth) 2, Totemic Form 2, The Primal Dirt 1

OLD MAN BY THE BAY

The icy pit in my belly can only be warmed by your warm heart's blood.

The Old Man by the Bay is a mysterious figure that preys upon travelers in the forests that stretch from Salem to Arcadia. The Old Man was recently discovered by a member of Les Voyageurs, a hunter from New France named Marie Langlois, who captured a glimpse of him shortly after the Old Man killed a member of Marie's group in a cave.

While the Canadien members of Les Voyageurs do not know much about the evil cannibal that rips hearts out of the chests of its victims, the native hunters believe that the Old Man by the Bay may be a monster from their own legends that goes by many names. To the native Les Voyageurs, the Old Man by the Bay is also called Tsi-noo the Soul Eater. As they continue to hunt the creature, they've discovered it has



many names, like Djenu and Chinu, and have begun to piece together the possible clues of its past.

Monsters like Tsi-Noo the Soul Eater are known to many tribes including the Micmac, Maliseet, and Passamaquoddy along with the Abenaki, Anishinabe, and Cree. Native hunters believe the Old Man by the Bay was once human, but has since been transformed into a malevolent, soulless creature with a heart that has turned to ice because of the terrible crimes he committed in life. To sustain himself, the Old Man by the Bay must feed off the flesh of the living.

Now, the Old Man by the Bay wanders up and down the Eastern Seaboard, attacking victims with greater and greater frequency. Whilst some hunters believe that the Old Man by the Bay is a lost soul waiting to be redeemed, others want to put him down — permanently. After all, even if he could be saved, who could return to normal life after murdering so many and feasting on their hearts?

Description: The Old Man by the Bay is a haggard, thin man who can never get warm. His hair is long and stringy, his skin is as cold as ice, and he's cloaked in animal skins and furs. At first glance, the Old Man seems to be a wanderer or a lost soul who cannot find his way home. By the light of a fire or in broad daylight, however, other details of the Old Man's physical appearance clearly show how inhuman he is. His flesh has a bluish-grey tinge, his eyes are white, and his teeth are rotten. Forced to survive off the blood, skin, and organs of the living, the Old Man is neither dead nor alive — and will do anything he can to survive.

The Old Man by the Bay is an intelligent predator who knows how to isolate his victims when needed. In order to survive, he has to feed on a steady diet of fresh meat. The longer he goes between feedings, the more desperate he becomes.

Storytelling Hints: In the forests or in fields, the Old Man by the Bay is best revealed slowly as the potential serial killer in a larger chronicle. He could be the reason why the townsfolk are disappearing, or why whole hunter cells are dying. He is also a good candidate to shroud with misdirection, as the Old Man by the Bay is not the only type of monster that eats human flesh.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 4, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Investigation 4, Medicine (Anatomy) 3, Crafts (Animal Skins) 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Larceny 2, Stealth 4, Survival (Forests) 3

Social Skills: Intimidation 2, Persuasion 4, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 4

Merits: Fast Reflexes, Patient, Direction Sense, Cursed, Tactics 2

Curse: To stay alive, you must feed on human flesh once a fortnight.

Potency: 5

Willpower: 8

Morality: 2

Virtue: Prudence

Vice: Gluttony

Initiative: 8

Defense: 4

Speed: 15

Health: 12

Dread Powers: Dead Flesh 3, The Oldest Temptation 2, Uncanny Reflexes 1

FRAU ELSA

The Devil you know. The Devil you don't. The Devil you cannot understand.

Frau Elsa is a female demon who goes by many names. She was summoned into being by a German farmer's wife to exact vengeance on the robbers who killed her husband. The wife did not know what she was calling; she wanted revenge, and fell back on the old ways in her moment of need. The robbers went unpunished. Before Frau Elsa could get to them, they sought absolution from a priest and turned themselves in to the police.

For her failure, the Devil punished Frau Elsa by exacting a heavy price: Instead of torture, she was to use her malice and conscript 666 willing, living souls into His service. She began in Germany. Unfortunately, her less-than-subtle arts



were noticed by the townsfolk, already enflamed by centuries of belief in witchcraft.

From Germany she moved across Europe, spreading the seeds of dissent not through witchcraft, but through the guise of righteousness. Eventually, she reached the British Isles and hitched a ride on a boat to the Colonies. When she reached the Boston Harbor, Frau Elsa traveled up the coast following those who were so prideful that they couldn't see how close they were to the Devil. Once she reached Salem Village, however, she had found her new home amongst those who spotted the Devil hiding in plain sight.

Description: In her human guise, Frau Elsa appears as a blurry reflection of the individual she is targeting. Her demonic forms vary; her targets often see what they want to see. In many cases, Frau Elsa is often mistaken for the Devil.

Storytelling Hints: Frau Elsa wants nothing more than to be free from her current contract so she can wreak havoc on her own terms. She is desperate to fulfill her end of the bargain and is single-minded in her goal. As an antagonist, Frau Elsa is a complex character to introduce. To some hunters, she may not seem like a threat at first. She is a whisper in the shadows, a pair of glowing eyes in the dark, a chill on the back of a hunter's neck. The hunters may be looking for "an" antagonist that's the cause of all their troubles, but a demon like Frau Elsa can point fingers at so many different antagonists. She can be everyone, and nowhere, all at once.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 6, Wits 4, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 5, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Investigation (Rumors) 4, Medicine (Anatomy) 2, Occult 4, Politics (Local) 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Crafts (Ritual Tools) 2, Stealth (Shadows) 3, Survival (Forests) 3

Social Skills: Subterfuge 5, Persuasion 3, Intimidation 4

Merits: Retainer (Imps) 5, Resources 3, Fleet of Foot 3

Potency: 5

Willpower: 13

Morality: None

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Envy

Initiative: 6

Defense: 4

Speed: 12

Health: 12

Dread Powers: Blackout 2, Fluid Lessons 1, The Oldest Temptation 3, Mixed Blessings 1, Terrify 2

Story Hooks

There are a lot of opportunities in this specific era to hunt monsters with naught but a musket or axe. This time of uncertainty can also introduce an element of fear and paranoia. To hone that feeling of hysteria, these stories test hunters in the political, social, and physical spheres by highlighting the potential impact the witch trials might have on them.

Hunter Civil War

Summary: Certain groups enjoy massive amounts of religious and secular power as the common citizen follows Church leaders, believing he is living under constant threat. Unaffiliated hunters who do not enjoy the protection of a unified compact or conspiracy live under constant scrutiny from their neighbors by day, and face careful study by their fellow hunters at night. On the run, these hunters may be captured, interrogated, and exiled. The purity of a hunter, as seen through the eyes of the Shadow Court, puts everyone at risk.

Setup: To facilitate an internal war between hunters, it'll be important to determine the scope of the conflict. Does this battle take place within the boundaries of Salem Town or Boston? Will non-hunters be involved, or is this strictly a "witch hunt" to root out suspected magick-users? Once the boundaries are set, then figure out the key players in the Shadow Court. Who is testing whom and, more importantly, *how*? Provide some rules related to the witch hunt. Will there be a physical test where an accused hunter must capture as



many vampires as possible within a fortnight? What does a guilty hunter stand to lose? Friends? Family? Her life? Is this a single bout of hysteria or a more systemic problem rooted in self-righteousness?

Tier One: The internal witch hunt is localized to the characters' immediate vicinity. Maybe the Knights of St. George blame the hunters for letting the witch craze get out of hand, or the Scarlet Watch has sent a few representatives to hunt local vampires in the area, and condemns any hunter who won't cooperate. Or, maybe hunters are caught up in the local hysteria and accuse one another of witchcraft to avoid being arrested themselves. Regardless, the full extent of this event will be better felt by hunters who know all the players involved.

Tier Two: The arrival of fresh European immigrants, frontier settlers to the west, and native tribes migrating to the north shakes up the status quo in the midst of the witch craze. Characters are presented with multiple options to take sides in their hometown and the surrounding area. Strangers to the area with unknown allegiances present a challenge for the characters, especially when trying to discern friend from foe, hunter from witch. What supernatural creatures will take advantage of the chaos? The fear of an attack? Here, a war between hunters will take place over a larger area as characters sort out the mess.

Tier Three: The scope of the Shadow Court's jurisdiction is not only known to the hunters, each has a part to play in an internal investigation. The physical scope of this type of game is the entirety of the Northeast's coastline as the Shadow Court attempts to erase witches from Colonial soil, freeing the colonists and natives from the taint of the supernatural. Some characters may act as inquisitors, targeting any who fall suspect, others as strategists, torturers, or jailers. As the tension heats up, hunters may find themselves accused if they don't fulfill the Shadow Court's aims. This type of story involves multiple styles of play ranging from political to adventuresome. Consider how to balance the varying aspects of the Shadow Court by giving the hunters shared goals within the hierarchy — even go so far as to suggest the characters infiltrate the Court and take it down.

Truth on Trial

Summary: The characters hold key positions in the civil court system. Together, the group passes judgment over accused witches and other criminals by collecting evidence, hearing testimony, and listening to the villagers.

Setup: Since this is a battle that takes place in a court, the characters will be relying on their investigative skills to save the townspeople from themselves. Trials that take place in smaller towns, like Salem Village, will mean that the characters likely know the accused. These hunters are the highest form of authority in the area and can conduct the trials as they see fit. Their decisions impact many lives — do they use that power responsibly? Or do they abuse it?

Tier One: The characters are familiar with the accused witch on some level, either as an acquaintance or close friend. The victim has material evidence that the supernatural exists and she can tie that back to the hunters in some way. Maybe she witnessed a hunt and believes the characters are in league with the Devil. Maybe the hunters rescued her, and she confided in the wrong person. Do the characters condemn the accused for knowing too much?

Tier Two: Over the course of the trials, another group of hunters intervenes and attempts to take over as judges. At this point in the story, the characters have already judged and dealt with several cases. The rival group has different plans for the accused, however, and their goals directly conflict with the characters'. Maybe the Shadow Court is making a move. Maybe the Cheiron Group, in the guise of Hygieia & Sons, seeks to dispose of and harvest the accused's bodies in a specific way. Maybe the rival group is looking for a specific supernatural creature and think they found it.

Tier Three: The accused is guilty of "witchcraft" but represents a much bigger threat than the hunters realize. Maybe the prisoner is a werewolf or vampire who's acting as a scout, or who allowed herself to be caught. The prisoner cannot be disposed of by public hanging and isn't fazed by torture. Can the characters sort fact from fiction and appropriately contain the real threat? How do the hunters save the townspeople when the accused triggers a deadly trap?

Suffering Innocents

Summary: The vast majority of the accusers and victims of witchcraft are children under the age of 13. What creature or demonic servant is afflicting the young? How do the hunters stop it before the mass hysteria spreads throughout the Colonies?

Setup: This type of story is flexible and can be introduced as the primary concept or a sub-plot. It works well regardless of whether the hunters are brand new to the area or not. Here, the characters will determine how much (or how little) they want to get involved with the townsfolk as they attempt to track down the creature that plagues the children.

Tier One: The creature plaguing the children is active in a particular area. All other reports are false trails leading to dead ends. Through careful investigation, the hunters may be able to track and trap the creature — but will they be able to convince the townsfolk only one witch is to blame? How will the characters isolate the threat and, at the same time, stop hysteria from spreading? What happens if one of the kids claims that one of the hunters is a witch?

Tier Two: A member of the Lucifuge suffers from "witch fever" and is convinced one of the kids is a dire threat to the town. The characters either know this hunter on a personal level — fellow farmer, merchant, trapper — or have heard about her many deeds. When the hunters investigate, consider balancing how frequently clues are revealed. By leading the characters to believe there is a real threat, how will they react

when they find out a hunter is so afraid of being accused, she's succumbed to hysteria?

Tier Three: The supernatural threat is a respected resident of the town and is acting as a Judge. Gauge the threat level depending upon how new the characters are to the area. Hunters who stroll through Salem Town for the first time will feel like they're intruding. Characters who've lived in Salem Village all their lives may not realize *who* the threat is until they're swept up in the conspiracy. The children are pawns for a larger game, one that involves the hunters on a personal level. This creature knows the characters inside and out and will use innocent people to enact its revenge and make the hunters suffer.

Inspirations

Period-era films range from serious movies like *The Crucible* (1966) to sillier takes like *Hocus Pocus* (1993). *The Scarlet Letter* (1995), which is an adaptation of Nathaniel Hawthorne's book by the same name, offers a good perspective on the life of a Puritan and the idea of public humiliation. That mindset is crucial to understand for any **Hunter** game set in this era, especially from a legal perspective. For a supernatural feel, watch films like *Season of the Witch* (2011), *Solomon Kane* (2009), *Practical Magic* (1998), and *ParaNorman* (2012).

Roleplaying games written in this vein include **Colonial Record**, **Witch Hunter: The Invisible World**, and **The Savage World of Solomon Kane**. Comics include *Salem: Queen of Thorns* and *Revere: Revolution in Silver*. Both are useful for a different take on witch-hunting and the time period.

By far, however, the richest source of information can be found in documentaries like *Witch Hunt* (2008) and non-fiction books. There are quite a few titles ranging from historical era books like *Discourse on Witchcraft* (1689) and *Wonders of the Invisible World* (1693) to analytical tomes like *Witch-Hunt: Mysteries of the Salem Witch Trials* and *The Salem Witch Trials: a Day-by-Day Chronicle of a Community Under Siege*. The best and most accurate view of the time period can be discovered in historical tomes like *Social and Economic Networks in Early Massachusetts: Atlantic Connections*, *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, Volume 14*, and *Writing the Past: Teaching Reading in Colonial America and the United States 1640–1940*.

While there are many resources available regarding colonialism, materials regarding the First Nations tend to be written from the Western perspective and, as such, don't always depict the depth and breadth of tribal cultures. Part of this is due to the fact that the First Nations did not record information in the same way that the colonists did and, additionally, it's unknown how many cultures actually existed. Though there were hundreds of tribes that once occupied the eastern seaboard, today some states either no longer have any tribes or, if they do, they aren't federally recognized as many of the tribes were displaced due to colonial expansion.

Resources that would be useful for the purposes of playing a game during this era incorporate geographical information like *The Historical Atlas of Native Americans*. *Indians & English: Facing Off in Early America* is a good book that clearly shows the Western view of the First Nations, and *American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World* seeks to shatter many stereotypes that have only recently been addressed in a historical context. While this period is often thought to have been romanticized by the 1756 narrative titled *Last of the Mohicans* (1826), this era in particular has little to do with that work told from a Eurocentric perspective.

To begin to understand the tribal perspective, there are some first-hand accounts found in books like *The Voice of the Dawn: An Autohistory of the Abenaki Nation*, *Our Stories Remember: American Indian History, Culture, and Values through Storytelling*, and *Native American Testimony: A Chronicle of Indian-White Relations from Prophecy to the Present (1492-1992)*. If you are looking to avoid stereotypical and harmful views, visit *indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com* to find a wealth of articles and information that underline the First Nations from a modern and historical perspective. Additionally, there is some data on *www.blackpast.org* that helps put the history of American slavery, which was a large part of this era, into perspective. The website *www.native-languages.org* offers more insight into native culture and languages.



What moonlight broke through the trees was a brilliant silver, painting the forest black and white. It was not yet winter, and though the night was cold, it had not yet become bitter. This was Dade's favorite time of year. The cold felt clean and honest, and he was safe under leather and fur. The limbs of the trees, sometimes nude and sometimes spiked with needles, were longer, twisted, and reaching at night. He did not bother with a lantern or torch, as it would only give his presence away.

For the last three months, two of the children of Gengenbach had gone missing on the night of the full moon, and the folk got together enough money to pay for Dade's professional assistance. As a hexenjäger, a witch-hunter, he'd had his share of hoaxes and domestic murders blamed on monsters in the shadows. This felt different.

He spoke to the families. He spoke to the priest as the man packed a bag and abandoned the village. He visited the wood during the day, and he felt something. Nothing he could be sure of, exactly, but a feeling of the strange he rarely felt when on these tasks.

For half an hour, he walked, following a path he'd walked in the daylight, a path the children were said to follow during the day quite often in happier times. A witness a month before described seeing a pair of beautiful girls walking in their night shirts along the path in the wake of a tall, shadowy figure. By the time she got outside to shout for the girls, they were gone into the woods. But the path was different now, not just in mood, but also in location. Dade had a direction sense more common in animals than man, and he was certain he was now headed dead north, when in the daylight, the path went northeast gradually. More, the path became more and more steep, and if he weren't a practiced hiker, he likely could have slipped. Looking back along the path, it was not at such a pitch that it appeared impossible to return that way. Dawn, he thought, would return sanity to the woods, but for now, there was only the way forward. He imagined, for a moment, the terror children alone in these woods would feel. Their little hearts racing, skin clammy, with no solid knowledge of death or what happens when the scary thing gets you, just an overwhelming mindless dread of the unknown.

He'd known the feeling, once, what seemed like a hundred years ago or more, when he himself had been a child lost in the wood. On the night when a witch stole his sister from his arms and left him bleeding and weeping on the ground to be blamed for the disappearance for years. Not a hundred years, though, only fifteen. He gritted his teeth and broke into a jog, his heartbeat pounding too hard to allow him to merely walk thru these impossible woods.

"Go no farther…" He heard a hushed and terrified whisper from behind him, as if from nowhere. Dade turned, skittering to stop himself from running into a tree.

A woman, tall and thin, with fair skin and hair that faded into the shadows of the night, spoke to him, her face behind a white veil. In her hair, the moonlight caught the glitter of a small silver crown adorned with gems he could not place by color in the dark. "Go no farther, that way lies the realm of monsters and nightmares." She spoke, her accent strange and at the same time warm and familiar. When he pulled his eyes from the glimmer of her crown, he saw at her feet the skulls of children.

"You are a liar and a witch, and you will pay for what you did to these children."

Shocked, she took a step back, as if unaware of the bones scattered about her. "I would never harm a child! I love children! Love them too much to let them near me."

His brow knit; he'd heard more than his share of denials in his days on the hunt, but never anything quite like that. Still, the evidence was there. He took a step forward to close the gap. "You deny that you have abducted the children of Gengenbach? You deny that you have done dark magic to them, or perhaps eaten them? Would you stand before a court and swear to God that you are innocent?!" He grabbed her wrist, pulling her toward him and pointing to the bones at her feet. "You would deny it here and now?!"

"I do!" She wept and pulled at his hand on her wrist. "The bones are not my doing! I know no dark magic! All I am is a faded memory and a story from a book. I come here to warn those who would venture too far into disaster, though I know the Wild Hunt could be upon me at any moment!"

"You are not a witch? Your appearance is…"

"Whatever you expected to see when you came here on your search, witch-hunter. I am just a reflection, anymore. Though once I was a child like those laid ingloriously here in the leaves and dirt."

"Madness!" He pulled at her wrist again, to drag her back to the village.

"We cannot go that way, the beast has changed the woods to suit him. We are on the border of the Hedge, and three steps in the wrong direction means we're lost forever."

Dade opened his mouth to answer when he heard the howl of a great beast. As if a wolf howled through the body of a lion and the beak of a raptor. "By God, what was that?" Dade had seen his share of witches, real witches, but great beasts were another matter.

"Not by God," she wept. "But by the Keepers of Nightmares, it is the Huntsman, and it has our scent now. Don't you see, you fool? He stole and ate all these children to bring you here. He had your scent, all these years, and now, he's brought you to him."

"I don't…understand." Surreal familiarity washed over him. "Are you she? My long lost sister? Stolen by a witch all those years ago?"

"No," said the witch in her crown. "But I knew her, and your story, we have to go now. Run. I can tell you more when we are safe."

"When we escape," he ventured to correct her.

"No, not that. Never that."



A Grimm Dark Era

Evil is also not anything small or close to home, and not the worst; otherwise one could grow accustomed to it.

– Jacob Grimm

By the second decade of the 19th century, the old was making way for the new. The American and French revolutions were over, the Napoleonic Wars were ending and the changes wrought by these momentous events continued to affect all of Western Europe. The rulers of cities all across Germany were tearing down the medieval walls and other fortifications that had protected and isolated these cities for almost a millennium. Equally profound changes were taking place for the Lost. In 1812, the mysterious Brothers Grimm published a collection of tales innocuously called *Children's and Household Tales* or simply *Grimms' Fairy Tales*. The authors had collected and written down versions of more than five dozen widely known stories about adults and children dealing with evil stepmothers, clever faeries, dumb but powerful giants, heroic children and peasants, and numerous enchantments.

When the Brothers Grimm first published this work, some of the Lost found these stories troubling to read because they reminded them of their own dealings with the Gentry. Less fearful members of the fae claimed that the stories contained useful lessons for both changelings and humans that could help protect them from the Gentry. However, these stories had far more profound effects that shocked, baffled, and occasionally horrified many of the Lost.

Prior to their publication, every city, town, and province in Germany had its own slightly different versions of these ancient tales and legends. Because of these many small differences, the magical rules governing the Lost, the Huntsmen, and the Gentry were slightly different in each of these regions. Changelings who traveled from one region to another found their various supernatural abilities were less powerful and reliable than those of fae who understood the local rules. However, the Brothers Grimm distilled different tales from many parts of Germany into single stories containing elements of several versions of each story. The resulting stories are supernaturally powerful. As the book became popular, fae magic and faerie rules began to change in regions where many humans read it. The initial changes were highly disruptive, but also relatively brief. After a month, the new fae rules were fully established. These new magical rules are now identical everywhere these books were known and read, causing a spreading unification of everything associated with the fae.

These changes are currently spreading across Germany, and some of the Lost believe they will eventually engulf all of Western Europe. For the residents of the freeholds in cities and towns already affected by these magical transformations, centuries of isolated stability were shaken by chaotic change. These changelings must learn to understand and work with the new rules. Some fae have attempted to stop these changes, while others embrace them; but none truly knows what they will mean for the Lost – or their foes, the Huntsmen and the Gentry. However, most changelings understand that their world is changing in profound and lasting ways.

Both in the mundane world surrounding them and inside the Courts and freeholds of the Lost, the old ways are being overtaken by the first traces of modernity. This is an era of both uncontrolled and unexpected change, and deliberate, sometimes violent revolution. Some changelings wish to replace the old social order with a new one of their own devising. Others are attempting to preserve the old ways in the face of the ongoing changes, but all of the fae understand that change is possible in a way that it was not in previous decades, and that their lives and customs may alter in unknown ways regardless of their best efforts to control, direct, or prevent these ongoing changes.

Children of the Black Forest

It is impossible, or at least very difficult, to tell a story set in and around Grimms' fairy tales and not involve children in the story. Misusing child characters in your game can be difficult, hurtful for players, or at the very least, destroy the mood of the game. But, with a little forethought, the subject matter is not impossible to use in smart, clever ways that make the game better. Here's some suggestions.

Children are not stupid. They are inexperienced. When thinking about roleplaying, as a Storyteller or as a player, the child character is not just an adult but stupider. Children do not behave in chaotic, idiotic ways that make no sense. Even in the depths of an emotional melt-down, children have reasons for the things they do. It may be that the premise is poorly thought out, or illogical because the child simply hasn't had enough ideas to bounce their thoughts against. When a child melts down, it's most likely because she has a need or desire and no idea how to communicate it. An inability to communicate, when the child's head is growing rapidly, constantly full of new ideas and dreams, is the most common reason for a child to react badly. "I am terrified of an inescapable monster that only I can see and I don't have the cunning or language to make you believe me"; this could even reduce an adult to tears.

Talk to your players. Childhood trauma or trauma related to having and losing children is a very real thing more people experience than you might guess. If you're planning on using these ideas in your game, talk to your players. Feel them out. Do you need to set trigger warnings on some scenes? Do you need to exclude direct reference to the deaths of children and keep it off screen? Negotiating these ideas with your players makes your game better, not worse. Don't feel as if you're censoring your own creativity if you need to adjust your story for the players, because it isn't just your story. It's theirs too.

If a player wants to play a child, discuss it with the group first. How will you manage the difference in mechanics? Will you limit Attributes, and give them to the character over time? Or will you simply skip all that and let the child be a child in terms of narrative (maybe with some appropriate Merits) instead of messing around with the character's stats directly? This is a valid approach. Talk to the would-be child's player about limits you need to place on his play. A story about a budding romance between young characters may be okay, but more than that may not be a story to explore at every table. Is the player prepared for adult characters, Storyteller- or player-driven, treating him like a child? Is everyone at the table okay with the possibility that a child character run by a player may die if things go poorly?

Ironically, the most difficult task for a child to overcome — communicating complicated or scary ideas — is probably your most important tool when having child characters in your Lost campaign. Good luck. Talk to your players. Tell some wicked fun fairy tales.

Theme & Mood

The theme of this era is change and transformation. The Brothers Grimm published a book that continues to spread, and as it does changelings, Huntsmen, Courts, freeholds, the Hedge and even the Gentry and Arcadia itself are transformed. Some believe that even the meaning of being one of the Lost may become different and, at minimum, the Lost and their foes can both now travel all across Germany without risk of suddenly finding their abilities hindered because of local differences in the rules that govern the fae.

This era's mood is fear of the unknown. Even the most radical changelings understand that much of what is happening is far beyond their control and no one knows what the final result of these changes will be. How will the Hedge alter in response to these new rules? Will the Huntsmen and the Gentry become more or less powerful than they were before? What will it mean for changelings, Huntsmen, and the Gentry to all be able to operate with equal ease anywhere in Germany — or perhaps anywhere in Europe?

In some freeholds, radicals are using these changes as an opportunity to promote various reforms. Even many changelings who support these reforms remember the horrors of the French Revolution and the subsequent Terror and worry that some freeholds may descend into demagogue-driven hatred and violence. Meanwhile, a few clever loyalists and privateers hope to create this sort of lethal infighting in several freeholds to weaken them and allow the Huntsmen free rein.

Inspirational Media

Here are some great sources to mine for story ideas.

Literature

Grimm's Fairy Tales (1812 and 1815) by Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm: Our source material of collected fairy tales, mostly of Germanic origin.

Songs of Innocence and of Experience (1789) by William Blake: These poems are reinterpretations of the nature of consciousness and its roots in religion, with a focus on the nature of time. Many of the *Songs of Experience* are more perverted and dark retellings of the *Songs of Innocence*. Themes include fear, corruption of innocence, and the disposition of oppression.

The works of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, especially *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) and *The Science of Logic* (released in parts from 1812 to 1816): In these essential German romantic texts (that would have been read by the Brothers Grimm), Hegel asserts that reality is shaped by the mind and questions the nature of perception, reality, and consciousness. Hegel's philosophy originated the concept of romantic nationalism and inspired the works of Karl Marx, Jacques Derrida, and others.

The Picture of Dorian Gray (1891) by Oscar Wilde: A young man's portrait twists to a grotesque physical representation of the moral and conscious crimes he commits as he pursues a hedonistic lifestyle. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a novel on the corruption of decadence and wealth, and the harm of obsession with beauty and physical perfection at the expense of all else. This book led to Wilde's arrest, conviction, and imprisonment for gross indecency.

The works of D. W. Winnicott, especially *Playing and Reality (1971)*: Essential texts on human child development, objective reality, and recovery from trauma wherein Winnicott established himself in the psychoanalytic field, poststructuralism, and object relations theory while distancing himself from the likes of Freud, Lacan, and others. These texts are especially relevant given the focus of the Brothers Grimm on cautionary tales for the benefit of children, and given the displacement of children that took place during our setting.

Requiem for a Dream (1978) by Hubert Selby, Jr.: In *Requiem for a Dream*, drug addiction irreparably damages the lives of four people pursuing their own ideas of perfection. The book is structurally minimalistic and reads like a trance. The tone and mood are perfect for a game of **Changeling: The Lost**, and the structure of the text mirrors the sensation of a loss of Clarity. This novel was also adapted into a 2000 film by Darren Aronofsky.

Film

Eraserhead (1977) by David Lynch: In an unidentifiable place and time that may or may not be post-apocalyptic, a man cares for his inhuman child after his girlfriend flees, leaving him with the baby. *Eraserhead* utilizes body horror and surrealism with obvious otherworldly influences to paint its landscape. "In Heaven, everything is fine."

Television

The 4400 (2004-2007): Forty-four hundred people from different times and different places disappear in their own presents, and then reappear in Seattle, Washington with no time lost and no memory of where they have been. Some develop supernatural abilities. The show examines the natures of reality, time, and self-discovery.

Video Games

Rule of Rose (2006): A small boy leads a 19-year-old woman into an abandoned orphanage. The Red Crayon Aristocrats, a secret society run by children, kidnaps her and forces her to participate in their hierarchy. *Rule of Rose* is a bizarre game about interaction with alien personalities.

The Path (2009): A retelling of the Little Red Riding Hood tale through the perspectives of six sisters. The player's instruction is to go to Grandmother's House and to not stray off the path. Visually beautiful, foreboding, and surreal, the game is more of an exploration, with a tone and mood that embody the bittersweet, frightening dissonance essential for a game of **Changeling: The Lost**. And should you break the one rule and leave the path, it is quite easy to lose yourself in the woods.

What Has Come Before

This setting begins in 1812, amidst Napoleon's dominance in Germany and close to the beginning of the end of his empire. Here, we lay out a starting guide on the immediate history before, during, and after the French occupation of Germany. We follow this with ideas on changeling outlooks on the occupation and a proto-German question based more on German identity than on fear of the Other.

The French Revolution led to an era of fear throughout Europe, with neighboring countries and regions fearing a spillover revolutionary effect. After Napoleon's coup led to the fall of the Directory, the third stage of the French Revolution, he set up a government called the Consulate. In 1803, the Holy Roman Empire passed a law to secularize and mediatize German land that the French took during the French Revolution. In 1806, Napoleon compelled the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire. He reformed most of this German land into the Confederation of the Rhine, under the control of the Napoleonic Empire. From this point until the dissolution of Napoleon's Empire in 1815, the French invaded nearby countries, forcing conscription, demanding lodging for soldiers, and taking material resources and foodstuffs from civilian populations.

Dissent took many forms, including physical resistance and the dissemination of anti-French propaganda following the initial installment of Napoleon's press controls in 1810. This led to mass self-policing in occupied territories, especially when it came to information distributed through print. The French military responded to dissent with brutality, massacring populations with no regard for age, gender, or societal role. Stories of these atrocities were too numerous to count, like the rape of women in churches during the sacking of Cordoba in 1808 and the burning of Austrian soldiers in Ebersberg in 1809. These stories would have been shared in pubs, spreading awareness of the willingness of the French to do what it took to force submission and spread fear. All of this was an attempt to establish French dominance, display French power, and to force complicity in French Imperial goals.

The early 1800s in Europe represented the beginning of the late modern period. In Germany in particular, this was characterized by a shift to romantic nationalism, or the concept of the nation as defined by German identity. Language, parentage, and customs were essential to German identity. Sexual violence perpetrated by the French military, and military conscription, led to identity crises — especially if children resulted from these

forced sexual encounters. These attacks on German culture spurred the philosophical movement of the Romantics, and German identity came to be defined in opposition to French identity, and, in fact, as anti-French identity. In 1815, after Napoleon's defeat, the Congress of Vienna established the German Confederation to act as a buffer between Austria and Prussia. This would go on to conflict with the idea of pan-Germanism, which sought to unite German-speaking Europe behind one nation-state called Greater Germany, which was an essential concept during the unification of Germany in the 1870s, in World War I, and in World War II.

The Napoleonic Wars are the background for the first edition of *Grimm's Fairy Tales* in 1812, which was more influenced by fear of non-German identity, and the second edition in 1815 which was more motivated by fear of a specific *lack* of German identity among Germans.

How Might Changelings React?

In the midst of French occupation, how would changelings born in or living in Germany react to an act of violence by civilians against the occupying French, by the French against German civilians, or to a revolt in a locality trying to resist occupation? All of these things generate enormous amounts of emotional energy, on which changelings may feed for Glamour. But this would draw the True Fae's attention as well. Each of these things runs the risk of drawing more attention than most changelings would like. The True Fae prey on the Napoleonic Wars, using the opportunity to try to find changelings who have escaped Arcadia, and to kidnap new, displaced civilians. Human concepts of German identity and pan-Germanism necessarily bring changelings closer together. Increasing literacy accompanies the Brothers Grimm as a changeling and fetch pair recording their fae-occult knowledge to hopefully keep others from their fate.

As we see it, changelings align with one of two opinions regarding the proper response to the Napoleonic Wars — younger changelings live in fear that the wars might draw even more attention from the True Fae and other undesirables, and older changelings try to take advantage of all of the emotions circulating from soldiers and civilians alike in occupied space.

Story Hooks

You have decided to set your **Changeling: The Lost** chronicle amidst Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's publishing of *Children's Tales*. We hope these ideas will get you started on brainstorming the best ways to utilize the context we have laid out, combining the Napoleonic Wars and the brothers' folkloric texts into a chronicle that fits the theme and mood you would like to explore.

Cat and Mouse in Partnership

The players' characters are residents of a town in Germany that watches as the French pillage through surrounding towns, cities, and regions. Other towns near and far have tried to resist, with disastrous results. The French use resistance and alleged harm to their forces as a justification to rape, torture, and murder their way through localities which have chosen not to submit. This knowledge has spread through the German states, as well as through the rest of Europe, as the French work to expand the Napoleonic sphere of influence. As the French forces approach town, another resident, a banker, meets with the French captain and agrees to convince the town to submit and organize a small feast for the invading army. In exchange, the French agree to position the banker as a civilian liaison between the town's residents and the occupying French forces. The banker so convinces the town, and the French invasion of the town goes smoothly. But the banker is a changeling, plotting to use the French to eliminate the influence of the other Courts that threaten his standing in the changeling community and solidify the control of his own Court. When the other Courts behave counter to his Court's will, he reports their leadership to the French for plotting revolt, attempting to publish anti-Napoleonic propaganda, or whatever you choose. How do the players' characters, changelings in the town, respond to this? Do they overhear a fight between the banker and another prominent changeling when in a soldier's dream, or through some other means? Do the players' characters learn of it at all? How do the True Fae react to this conflict, when elder changelings in the community have other concerns — finding the source of these reports — to distract them from caring for younger, newly escaped members of the changeling community? Does the motley take the initiative to act?

The Wolf and the Seven Young Kids

The players' characters are young changelings under the guardianship of an older changeling in one of the many German coastal cities. These cities were often attacked because they allowed the French to exercise economic and territorial control even more than land occupied in the interior. The French military, like all militaries, could not afford to lose port cities, and so sought housing for their soldiers among the civilian population. The mentor has gone to meet with other influential changelings to discuss changeling unity, and increasing literacy rates and physical proximity among the Courts. The player characters' young motley is home alone when a young French private knocks, asking them to lodge some soldiers. They know they are not to allow anyone inside without their guardian there—what if a Keeper manipulates its way into the open door? Their motley tells the private that their mother is out, and would be angry if guests came without her knowledge. A captain kicks the door down, and forces them out into the street, claiming the house for the French military. The motley must wander the conflict-torn streets of their city, finding resources, avoiding exploitation by French soldiers, and avoiding re-abduction by their former Keepers. But what happens when revolt spreads in town, and the French take the player characters hostage? Do they attempt to escape on their own? Do they wait, in hope that the older changeling who has been caring for them comes for them now? How long do they wait? How long can they afford to wait, when they have heard stories of what the French

military is willing to do to hostages, regardless of age, and when the True Fae are lurking in search of new and old abductees? Is it safer to stay? Who makes that decision, and how long are they willing to hold on to their hope that the situation does not get worse?

The Juniper Tree

At the turn of the 18th century, a German man in Alsace marries a French woman, and they have a son. When the mother dies of illness, the father buries her at the foot of a juniper tree in the backyard, and the man remarries a German woman in 1806. As discussed, Napoleon's dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire and the establishment of the Confederation of the Rhine causes the spread of Romantic nationalism, pan-Germanism, and German identity through anti-French rhetoric. This breeds conflict on a regional, local, and interpersonal level. In this story hook, the man's second wife resents her husband's first child's French blood, and this resentment only grows when she gives birth to another baby whom she perceives as wholly German. She worries her daughter will receive nothing of her husband's inheritance upon his death, and, worse, that her daughter's rightful inheritance will fall to the first son, a Frenchman. The players are friends of these two children, growing up with this idea of pan-Germanism and German identity in a region on the border with France. What happens when one of their friends, the son, dies mysteriously? Who do they suspect? What do they do when they have dreams reminding them of his disappearance, and pinning the blame on the stepmother? What do they do when birds twitter the same in their ears during waking hours? And what do they do when their friend reappears, happy and asking his father for dinner?

Hansel and Gretel

The town where your players' mundane characters live has suffered a long year of French occupation. Only now have the French moved most of the regiment on for further conquest, taking most of the food and many of the young men in town with them for forced conscription. With no other option, the characters' mother abandons them and at the edge of the wood, giving each of them one of her last loaves of bread. They wander about, trying to conserve as much food as they can. They progressively notice fruits and plants that look like nothing they have ever seen. They might harvest some, or they might move on, but they are unknowingly wandering the Hedge. A dove leads them further, until they are intercepted by a strange being who promises them food and lodging should they follow. Once in the being's home, it's made progressively clearer that the player's characters are not safe. The siblings have been lured by a Fae Keeper. Do they try to escape? Where would they go if they did? This idea could also work with more siblings.

Rumpelstiltskin

The players' characters are young German brothers who have been conscripted by the French military. An imp-like being approaches them, offering a deal for freedom from the French. He first requests a lock of shed hair in exchange for helping the characters leave their lodgings without interception by superior officers. They accept the deal without thinking, and he then requests three tears from their little sister in exchange for helping them to return home. Though they find this request stranger still, they accept. The imp helps them home, where their sister is crying because the French have abducted their parents following the brothers' desertion. The imp offers to rescue their parents in exchange for their little sister. What do they do? Do they doubt the deals before this point, accept no help from the imp, and attempt to desert the military on their own? Do they reject the offer in exchange for their sister's tears? Do they give him their sister in exchange for their parents? They can't very well request official help once they have deserted, so do they try to negotiate a different deal with the imp, or do they play by his rules? Perhaps there is an out to his described offer....

Crimson Harvest

The player characters are a motley that escaped the same Keeper, and are now living in southern Germany. The French military pillaged their town, which did not submit when the French came. The French quickly squashed the uprising and gained control of the town. They are still deciding how to levy punishment. Unbeknownst to the player characters, the leaders of the Autumn Court plan to manipulate the raw fear and anger still so pervasive in civilians and soldiers alike. They visit the captain through dream-shaping, and from the seeds they plant, the captain decides just what example he wants to set. He takes ten civilians active in the uprising, and, each day, tortures one to death in the square, splits them in pieces, and feeds them to the remaining prisoners. This spectacle serves the role the Autumn Court had wanted, but it serves a much less desirable role as well — drawing the attention of True Fae to the town, including the player characters' own former Keeper. How do they stay safe? How can they stay safe? Can the Autumn Court protect the changelings of this town, or did they reach too high?

What Is to Come

The world of the fae is changing because of the power of stories, and this change begins in Germany. While Germany remains a loose collection of principalities, the accompanying mythic disunity, where each principality, and sometimes each city or town, had its own stories, legends, and supernatural rules, is coming to an end. As the popularity of *Grimms' Fairy Tales* spreads across Germany, the details of the various rules and pacts which the Gentry, Huntsmen, and Lost must abide by have begun to shift in small but noticeable ways. These changes began in the largest cities, where literacy is highest and people have the fastest and easiest access to new books. However, knowledge of the book and its stories is slowly spreading to small cities, towns, and even into a few rural farming villages. Many changelings believe that in less than 20 years all of Germany and perhaps most of Western Europe will all be governed by the same set of fae rules.

As these tales spread and the magical rules governing the fae shift, a growing number of changelings realize that they can

now more easily move from one city or town to another, because the same magical laws apply in each location. Previously, many changelings did not wish to risk moving to a new city or town because they would arrive in their new location weaker and less able than either the local Lost or the local Huntsmen. This lack of mobility also helped reinforce the stability of the local Courts, because most changelings found it easier to accept their rulers rather than risk their lives traveling to a new city, which might be no better. As a result, the rulers of a freehold rarely had to fear their subjects leaving or calling in allies from other cities to overthrow them. In the past few years, both events have happened in more than one freehold, and traditionally minded changelings all across Germany have begun to fear reform and possibly even revolution.

The Nature of the Story Changes

Many fae from regions not yet affected by the magical changes produced by the popularity of *Grimms' Fairy Tales* expect these changes to be vast and obvious. Changelings all across Germany talk with a mixture of dread and anticipation about the spread of the so-called *märchen* änderungen (German for "story changes"), and many expect massive transformations. Some fae even speak of the story changes like they would talk of a deadly plague sweeping across the land. One of the most surprising facts about these story changes is how small most of the changes actually are. The differences between the local fairytales and faerie rules that governed different regions in Germany were all relatively minor. However, even small differences could have profound effects. Previously, any changeling, Huntsmen, or Gentry traveling from one section of Germany to another would need to learn the small differences in the local rules and stories to avoid penalties to their abilities. After a few weeks in a location, they could learn the new rules and adjust their Pledges and Contracts to work with the local rules rather than against them.

The on-going story changes have not completely rewritten the rules of the fae. Instead, they have started a process that is subtler but also more profound — they are unifying both the fae and the Hedge. In addition to Contracts, Pledges, and lore all being identical wherever the story changes have taken place, changelings can also use long-range Contracts, like the Contracts of Mirrors, to observe or affect distant regions without penalty. Also, the Hedge becomes considerably more uniform. Changelings who are familiar with the Hedge near a location that has undergone the story changes find that portions of the Hedge near other regions that have undergone the story changes are quite similar and no more difficult to navigate. However, while the changes themselves are relatively minor, the process of changing from the older fae rules to those from *Grimms' Fairy Tales* causes brief but significant disruptions in all forms of fae magic.

The Great Escape

One of the most unexpected results of the spread of these stories and their accompanying changes is that considerably more changelings have recently been escaping from Arcadia. In this era, most Gentry were associated with particular cities, towns, or regions of the mundane world. They abducted most of their victims from this region and occasionally made appearances in local legends. When a region experienced the story changes, these changes also affected all of the Gentry connected to the region.

The initial changes sometimes caused Contracts and Pledges to spontaneously fail, and often seriously weakened the wards and defenses the Gentry placed on their realms. In the midst of these disruptions, some changeling captives saw a chance to escape. Many of these changelings, and especially members of the Grimm seeming, had either read *Grimm's Fairy Tales* shortly before their durances and were able to use the knowledge they gained from these stories against their Keepers, or they were simply able to escape during the confusion caused by their Keepers not knowing Arcadia's new rules. However, the Gentry learn the new rules with frightening speed.

Changelings who have investigated these escapes noticed that the number of escapes begins to fall a week or two after the local stories have changed. The rash of escapes caused by the story changes seems to be a temporary phenomenon. Most changelings expect escapes from Arcadia to eventually return to their previous low numbers. However, for a short while portions of Arcadia are in flux.

The Heroes of Story

The disruption in Arcadia has also spurred a few small groups of changelings into making daring plans to storm Arcadia and rescue people they left behind or perhaps even attempt to slay their Keepers. Most changelings have little interest in such obviously dangerous plans, but also wish those who wish to try them well. However, some among the fae see these plans as terribly dangerous, because they will cause the Gentry to feel threatened, making them retaliate by sending out more and deadlier Huntsmen.

As changelings begin to travel more widely in the human world, discussions about these so-called *märchen helden* (German for "fairy tale heroes") are commonplace, with passionate and well-spoken fae both supporting and denouncing them. Several groups of *märchen helden* have already traveled to Arcadia, but none have yet returned. Some take hope in the time differences between Arcadia and the mundane world, while others believe that these ventures are doomed and that those *märchen helden* are now either captives or dead. Currently, one group of *märchen helden* is waiting for another city or town to begin undergoing the story changes. These changelings plan to enter the Hedge from that location while the town's magical rules are in flux and travel to Arcadia, hopeful that the disruptions will extend there and will prove more debilitating for the Gentry and Huntsmen than for them.

Court Reactions

In both Berlin and Hamburg, *Grimms' Fairy Tales* have been sufficiently popular and easily accessible that fae rules have already



Arguments Against the Books

Even in the human world, *Grimms' Fairy Tales* was not devoid of controversy. The first edition (1812 and 1815) was considered somewhat scandalous to some prudish and puritanical readers, especially since the books were popular with children. Several of the tales feature references to sex and children out of wedlock, and while impressively tame by 21st-century standards, they were considered sufficiently racy that the Brothers Grimm published a second edition in 1819, where such references were removed or changed, which further increased their popularity. Some of the Lost who oppose the spread of the story changes have begun to champion these arguments in order to discourage people from buying these books and reading them to children.

changed in both cities, but elsewhere in Germany the transition is either ongoing or it has not yet occurred. As a result, talk about these stories and the effects they are having or will have is exceedingly common and reactions are exceptionally diverse. Even changelings who believe the story change will assist them in their battles with Huntsmen and struggles against the Gentry remain nervous about the social disruption the changes are causing.

In Hamburg, the local Summer and Autumn Courts were both sufficiently strict and hierarchical that when the story changes came there, some of the Lost traveled through the Hedge to Berlin. Shortly after they returned safely, almost a fifth of the lower-ranking changelings in these two Hamburg Courts moved to Berlin. Since that happened, the rulers of both of these Courts have forbidden members of the freehold from openly reading or discussing *Grimms' Fairy Tales*.

The book has only recently reached towns and smaller cities like Dusseldorf, and for now the old ways remain. However, as ever-growing numbers of mortals read the book, most changelings in these cities wait nervously for the day that their Pledges and Contracts begin feeling "different," and they know that the changes are at last upon them. Some Courts and motleys in the smaller cities are attempting to stop the spread of *Grimms' Fairy Tales* by stealing or destroying shipments of the books before they can be sold. Some of the Lost go as far as to give children of rich and powerful townspeople terrifying or lewd nightmares related to these stories, in an effort to get their parents to denounce the books. At most, these efforts seem to have slowed people's access to this book in a few areas, but changelings have been unable to stop the spread of these books, and any efforts made by the Gentry or their Huntsmen have proven similarly ineffective.

A Call to Revolution

This era is also a time of revolution. As the medieval walls of the changelings' cities are being demolished, some of the Lost call for their Courts' traditions to also be destroyed and remade into a more modern and equal form. Stories of how a brave peasant or a clever shopkeeper is the equal of any noble only serve to reinforce the urge to overturn the old order that a growing number of the fae feel. Leaders of freeholds all across Germany fear these sentiments. Some wish to cling to their power at any cost. Others understand that reform may be unavoidable or may even welcome it, but fear that murderous excesses like those seen in the Terror that followed the French Revolution could easily take root among the Lost, as fae turned upon fae, while the Huntsmen wait to snatch up the survivors.

Some powerful changelings understand that they may not be able to stop the story changes, but hope to reduce the influence the stories have among the Lost. In Hamburg, some of the older well-born changelings in the Spring and Winter Courts have begun a campaign of ridiculing the stories as fit only for dim-witted children. The two recent seasonal festivals in Hamburg's freehold both included short bawdy plays, each of which was very loosely based on one of *Grimms' Fairy Tales*. Instead of humble heroes, the alleged protagonists of these plays were foolish bumpkins or lewd and vulgar thugs who either set out on an obviously foolhardy and stupid quest or use lies and fake heroism to take advantage of honest people until their deceptions are discovered.

To further reinforce this, the jester in Hamburg's Spring Court now dresses as a bawdy version of the hero of "The Brave Little Tailor," complete with an overstuffed codpiece and a lewdly decorated banner proclaiming "Seven in One Night."

The leaders of these two Hamburg Courts are using this continuing program of ridicule as a way to turn the members of the local freehold against new ideas in general. While some changelings within these two Courts oppose these tactics, the leaders have other allies who actively dislike *Grimms' Fairy Tales* because they find them unrealistic and see the Gentry and their Huntsmen as far more dangerous and difficult to defeat than the foes found in these stories.

Rural Fear & The Black Forest

In much the same way that the ongoing removal of the fortifications surrounding most German cities has been reducing the distinction between cities and the surrounding countryside, the ongoing unification of fae rules has made it easier for changelings born in villages or towns to move to the city. The few changelings who previously lived in rural areas are beginning to move to cities and towns, where they can join a Court, become part of a substantial freehold, and gain considerably more protection from the Huntsmen.

The only exceptions to this increased mobility are the more remote rural areas. While the spread of *Grimms' Fairy Tales* has made magic the same in a growing number of cities and towns, most of the remote rural areas have so far remained unaffected. While almost all changelings live in cities and towns, those who dwell in places which have already been affected by the story changes are now reluctant to venture into rural areas, because they wish to avoid experiencing the

disruption in their magics. Instead, more changelings are using the Hedge as a way to travel between cities.

In addition, even more than in some older stories, the forests in *Grimms' Fairy Tales* are dangerous and alien realms inhabited by witches, faerie creatures, and monsters. This is especially true of Germany's Black Forest. Unlike most of the rest of rural Germany, the story changes have already affected the Black Forest. The story changes transformed this region in strange and terrible ways. It has become considerably more dangerous for changelings than it was before the story changes. Changelings who leave the roads or stray too far outside of the small towns and villages in this region sometimes enter sections of the forest that seem to meld seamlessly into the Hedge.

In this forest, spontaneous gateways into the Hedge open regularly. Mortals occasionally stumble through them and become lost, and both Hedge Beasts and hobgoblins sometimes make their way into the mundane world. Such gateways are rarely constant. Some open briefly at random intervals, often seeming to do so when someone wanders near them. Others only open at twilight or midnight and a few only open on the solstices or equinoxes, during a solar or lunar eclipse, or during some other unusual time. However, even when these gateways are closed, Hedge Beasts now haunt the Black Forest. Clever changelings and unwary mortals can now occasionally find goblin fruit growing here, including various sorts of goblin fruit that have dramatic effects upon mortals. Of course, Huntsmen and even the Gentry now occasionally stalk the Black Forest. One of the most unusual characteristics of the Black Forest since the story changes is that the denser portions of the forest permit natives of Arcadia and the Hedge to comfortably remain there considerably longer than they could stay in most of the mundane world.

The Robbers' Den

A group of changelings recently established a small freehold in the Black Forest. These changelings are a group of outcastes and outlaws who have decided to live as monsters and bandits, emulating the monsters found in *Grimms' Fairy Tales*. They use their abilities to provoke terror in the mortals who live nearby and to operate as a band of highwaymen who rob and attack travelers. A few changelings traveling through the Black Forest have even heard rumors of cannibalism among the members of this freehold. Some changelings also believe that this bandit freehold, which other changelings have taken to calling the Robber's Den, is an enclave of privateers who ensure their freedom by regularly turning over other changelings to the Huntsmen. A group of *märchen helden* are currently discussing traveling to the Black Forest in order to slay these fae or perhaps bring them to justice.

Preparation And Training

A few of the Lost were kidnapped from their beds and have no memories of even the most fleeting previous encounters with their Keepers. However, most changelings were





Literacy & The Story Changes

Half of the general population and slightly less than half of all changelings in Germany are literate. In addition to young changelings being both more likely to be literate and more inclined to embrace the changes the stories by the Brothers Grimm are making, illiterate changelings cannot understand or study these stories without help and are far more likely to resent the changes they are starting to cause.

lured or tricked into their bondage and look back upon the day when they made a seemingly harmless bargain, broke a promise, or wandered off a path through the forest with a mixture of self-loathing and rage.

Some find that reading *Grimms' Fairy Tales* bring back these feelings, but others see hope in these stories. While the older stories were widely known, not everyone told them to their children; and as more people moved to cities and gave up their rural traditions, some forgot the ancient warnings and clever tricks hidden within tales of brave children and young adults defeating monsters and witches with guile and cleverness. More than a few of the Lost look back on their childhoods and wish that they had heard the sorts of stories that might have allowed them to either avoid being tricked into captivity by their Keepers, or to have learned how to escape earlier.

These changelings see the publication of *Grimms' Fairy Tales* as a beacon of hope and attempt to convince mortals they know to buy the book and read these tales to their children. These fae look forward to a day when all children grow up knowing never to stray from the path, that dire curses can often be negated with cleverness, and that wishes usually come with a terrible price. While all but the most foolish and desperate acknowledge that these stories cannot rid the world of the Gentry, many hope that helping to popularize these stories and encouraging others to publish similar works might make the Gentry's hunts considerably more difficult and reduce the number of people captured.

Fear & Learning

Although this book brings comfort to some fae, it fills others with lingering terror. Terms like "PTSD" and "flashbacks" won't exist for more than a century and a half, but the experiences these terms describe were perfectly familiar to the Lost of this era. Although many changelings understand that studying *Grimms' Fairy Tales* can be useful, some find it difficult and painful to read. Even though most of the Lost escaped their durances well before the changes produced by *Grimms' Fairy Tales*, the Brothers Grimm recorded and codified traditional stories, which sometimes resemble their experiences far too closely. These stories vividly recall the moment a changeling wandered off the path, or when a wolf-like Gentry devoured her and carried her off to Arcadia in its stomach. However, other changelings experienced durances which had little resemblance to any of these stories and earn their comrades' ire when they argue that all changelings need to read these tales.

Experiments

The story changes and the temporary disruptions they produce have caused some of the fae to call for a wholesale abandonment of their old social order. While the value of freeholds and Courts are apparent to all changelings, some now question the necessity of these institutions being geographically limited. Now that fae rules work exactly the same in all cities which have undergone the story changes, some changelings in cities that have undergone this transformation have called for the creation of huge multi-city freeholds. Building on the same nationalist urges that are driving the popularity of *Grimms' Fairy Tales*, these changelings see no reason that residents of Berlin, Munich, and Kessel can't all be part of the same freehold. Pathways through the Hedge allow easy and swift movement from one city to the next, and a few changelings are working on creating enchanted gateways between specific locations in these cities that bypass the need for travel through the Hedge.

The overall tone of *Grimms' Fairy Tales* is that ordinary people with clever minds and good character are often superior to wealthy people and hereditary nobles, which is a truly radical idea. Inspired by these stories and the recent revolutions in the United States and France, changelings in a growing number of freeholds are calling for radical changes in the structure of Courts. Arguments about voting and democracy are currently raging in several cities, including Berlin. However, in other cities, some changelings who seek change but are suspicious of the power of demagogues look in horror at the French Terror. Fearful of the possibility of violent uprisings, the leaders of some freeholds are proposing more moderate reforms. A few Courts are now considering assigning leaders by drawing lots, while others are taking inspiration from *Grimms' Fairy Tales* and instead of elections are holding contests of skill or cleverness, with the winner becoming the Court's ruler for the next season.

Some of the most extreme radicals advocate abandoning traditional seasonal Courts altogether and replacing them with Courts based upon different types of stories — the Court of the clever young man, the Court of the brave and virtuous princess, or the Court of the wanderer are three of several possible Courts currently being proposed in Munich. Most changelings reject these sorts of massive changes, but the most fervent adherents claim that because the rules of the fae are now different, all of the Lost now live in a new age. They claim that to continue to protect themselves from the Gentry and Huntsmen, changelings need to develop new and different tactics and begin living under different rules.

Kessel: The Freehold of Names

One of the strangest, and to many of the Lost, the most disturbing experiments have been the changelings who look to *Grimms' Fairy Tales* not as a source of freedom or even of

power, but of stability and order. A few Courts in relatively small cities have decreed that these tales provide the perfect and ideal framework for changeling life. Because the characters in the tales triumph over foes who are obviously more powerful than them, the fae who support this idea claim that all changelings should pattern their lives and behavior after characters in these stories. They believe that by doing so, the Lost will gain access to the luck that aided these characters.

In Kessel, members of the local freehold have all taken the names and identities of heroines and heroes in these stories. There is a short changeling going by the name of Tom Thumb, pair of changelings who claim to be brother and sister and go by Hansel and Gretel, a woman wearing a red cap, and another named Rapunzel with long blonde hair. Because the size of the freehold is slightly larger than the total number of protagonists in these stories, several of the fae have adopted the identities of minor characters, like the huntsman from *Little Red-Cap*.

The residents of this freehold decided to pursue this experiment while the story changes were overtaking their town. Several members of the freehold discussed this idea with the leaders of the four seasonal Courts and then these leaders called for the radical step of having all members vote on this idea. The vote passed by a wide margin. To decide on which character they would become, all literate changelings read the tales and held public readings for the illiterate members of the freehold. Then, the members gathered to discuss who would portray and take on the name of which character. Once decided, several of the Lost worked to create appropriate hedgespun accoutrements for every member of the freehold. If more changelings join this freehold in the future, the leaders have declared that more than one fae can live as the same character, as long as each expresses a different aspect of the character. For example, one fae might be the clever tailor and another the brave tailor.

All members of the Freehold of Names are expected to use these names and identities anytime they are dealing with others of their kind, or with Gentry or Huntsmen. These changelings also do their best to exemplify the traits from their chosen characters. Some members of the freehold have even attempted to change their names or otherwise have mortals they interact with refer to them as their chosen characters, which has caused the friends and loved ones of several changelings to wonder about their sense or their sanity. So far, the Kessel Freehold seems to have roughly the same level of trouble with Huntsmen as other freeholds, but for now most of the members seem satisfied living as Brothers Grimm characters.

The Lost

One of the first things to consider when making a character for this setting is that Germany in this era was very different from either the modern day or the late Victorian Age. The industrial revolution was still several decades in the future. Weapons consisted of black powder firearms, melee weapons, and bows or crossbows. Transport was by horse, carriage, boat, or foot. Lacking telephones, telegraphs, or even trains, the fastest way to send a message was by horseback. Also, unless she was an especially idealistic radical, your character didn't think of herself as German, but as a citizen of whatever principality or free city she lived in, and moving to a new city or principality was a major change.

Your character's social class is even more important in this era than today. More than 90% of the population lived in rural areas, and most of them farmed. Most rural people were illiterate and rarely ventured more than a few miles from their homes. Your character might have been abducted from a rural village, but you must decide how he ended up in a city or town and what he does there. Even in cities, the vast majority of the population could not vote or own their homes or shops. Although most wealthy urban families lacked noble status, they did their best to separate themselves from the ordinary mass of commoners and were usually the only people in a city to have a voice in its government.

In addition to social class being a very important decision about an individual character, it's also an important consideration when creating a motley. There's no problem if the characters are all of roughly the same social and economic class. However, unless they are in Berlin or maybe Hamburg, a group of three to five upper-middle-class merchants, scholars, professionals, or independently wealthy individuals will automatically attract considerable notice. In many towns and small cities, this motley might represent a substantial fraction of the town's elite.

No one particularly cares about the gatherings and interests of the poor, but a group of poor characters is quite limited in this era. Such characters might regularly need to resort to using Contracts to steal the funds to purchase a book and will be unable to gain admittance to any location reserved for their social superiors. However, a simpler and more flexible alternative is to have the motley consist of a one or two wealthy or middle-class changelings and their servants or assistants. The limitation on this motley structure is that if

Playing German Nobility

With your Storyteller's permission, you are free to make your character a noble, but less than one in 1,000 Germans was a noble. Also, while nobles all gain a wide variety of special rights and privileges, they also all own land and are forbidden from engaging in most professions or they risk losing their titles and their lands. Being a noble requires a minimum of Fame • , Resources • • (for an impoverished member of the nobility), and Status • • • . Unless the people they are around are servants or advisors, nobles will also need an explanation for associating extensively with non-nobles.



the servants and assistant do not display proper deference to their "master" in public, then both they and their master will face consequences ranging from unfriendly gossip to some degree of exclusion from their own social class.

Female characters also present a challenge. Given the clothing of the time and the German climate, it's relatively easy for a woman to convincingly dress and pass as a man. Also, few people cared what poor women were doing, as long as they weren't in the company of wealthy and powerful people. However, middle-class and wealthy women had considerably less freedom than their male counterparts. Changelings playing such characters should either make certain that their characters are accompanied by a husband, an older male relative, or a female companion, who could be another female changeling of similar social class. Also, women who were widows had considerably more freedom than single or married women, and in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, widows were fairly abundant, since more than 100,000 German men died in that war.

Deciding On Kith & Contracts

This is an era before the creation of most of the newer kiths, like greys or makers, that owe their origins to science fiction or dreams of industry. Also, even more than in later times, many of the Lost consider the more attractive kiths to be inherently superior to the more brutish, animalistic, or warped kiths. In addition, Contracts that relate to technology have far less use in an era when the pocket watch and the flintlock pistol were the peak of modern technology. However, Contracts which allow rapid long distance communication or movement, like Contracts of Mirrors, are considerably more useful, since the mundane world travels at the speed of horses.

Timing And Allegiances

One of the most important parts of creating a changeling in this era is deciding when she escaped from Arcadia. Is your character someone who escaped before the publication of *Grimms' Fairy Tales* began disrupting ancient pacts and rules in Arcadia, or is he one of the relatively large number of changelings who recently escaped when the story changes affected the portion of Faerie he was in? Does your character support the old established structures that govern the life of the fae? Is she a radical who wishes to import ideas of democracy, cultural identity, and freedom into the changeling Courts? Or is she attempting to find a way to combine the old and established ways with the new experiments?

Democracy and self-determination are new and radical ideas in this era. Wealthy and high-status changelings dominate most changeling Courts and freeholds, and those few of the Lost who possess noble blood typically rule their freeholds. To the vast majority of changelings, and especially older changelings, these sorts of hierarchies are both natural and inevitable. To many any attempt to modify these traditions inevitably leads to anarchy and provides an opening for the Gentry and their Huntsmen to drag all changelings in the Court back to Arcadia.

The wonders of the American revolution and the horrors of the French revolution are both recent news and were popular topics of discussion well before the publication of *Grimms' Fairy Tales*. However, the story changes and the disruption they cause have given radicals opportunities they previously lacked. Also, many Courts are now dealing with an influx of new changelings who escaped due to the disruptions in Arcadia.

As relatively recent escapees from Arcadia, both sides of any such dispute will be eager to gain your character's support. A motley could have interesting internal tensions if members disagreed about the growing movements for reform and democracy. Alternately, a motley where all members were active radicals or devoted traditionalists could be an excellent start to a campaign about changeling politics and the transformation of a freehold.

Issues of Identity

In this era of slow travel and limited paperwork, often all you needed to create a false identity was a believable story and no one around to contradict you. Lower the cost of all three versions of the Alternate Identity Merit by one dot, meaning that the one-dot version of this Merit is free. Usually, impersonating a wealthy merchant, lawyer, or other high-status professional only requires someone to be able to convincingly portray being such a person and effectively perform his duties. Of course, doing so also requires the character to understand how to dress and act like a member of the proper social class.

In contrast, pretending to be a noble is exceptionally difficult. In addition to the fact that all noble births were carefully recorded, there were only a few thousand nobles in Germany and both other nobles and the various German governments paid careful attention to them. Using Alternate Identity to become a noble has the listed cost and requires purchasing the three-dot version of the Merit, if you wish for your character to successfully impersonate a noble around other nobles.

The only major limitation on any sort of impersonation is that your character needs to either claim to be from one of the nation's few large cities or to be from a city or town that is sufficiently far away that they are unlikely to meet anyone from there. Impersonating a wealthy or important figure from a city of 8,000 people is difficult if someone relatively well off who is from that city either does not recognize you or recognizes you as someone else entirely.

The Freehold Of Golden Creation

The city of Mannheim is renowned as a small but important center of creativity and learning. Mortals here take pride in their city's contributions to the arts and sciences, and changelings who embraced this aspect of their city founded the Freehold of the Golden Creation. Although the city walls were demolished a decade ago, the Court still largely ignores the surrounding countryside and instead focuses all its attention on the city and its creative achievements. The freehold's central story is about how creativity is the singular gift that separates humanity and the Lost from the Gentry and their Huntsmen.

The Freehold of Golden Creation is divided into two Courts, the Court of Arts and the Court of Sciences. The freehold's Bulwark ritual is held twice a year, on the equinoxes. Known as the Golden Contest, it consists of a competition that, in theory, all members of the freehold may enter. Every participant must create a work of art or music, develop and attempt to prove a new scientific theory, or build a new invention. The previous winners and the heads of both Courts judge this contest and must first swear an oath to only choose the finest creation. The winner becomes the freehold's ruler for the next half year, and their Court is the dominant Court. Also, the individual from the losing Court whose work was judged the best in that Court becomes the ruler of the less-dominant Court. If any of the judges break their oaths, or if none of the creations are sufficiently good to qualify as the finest, then the Bulwark is broken and no one rules the freehold until the next equinox.

One of the most unusual features of the Court is that the Golden Contest is open to the public. The actual judging is done in private and any inventions involving goblin fruit or any work directly related to the Hedge or associated with the fae is kept in a private viewing area. Instead, mortals believe that they are simply coming to see a private art and science exhibition. Several changelings who have entered this contest have gained significant wealth and fame when a wealthy mortal purchased their artworks or inventions.

The Courts

The Court of Arts and the Court of Sciences reflect the city's overall interest in learning and also encompass two different fields of endeavor that are completely alien to the Gentry. All members of the Freehold of Golden Creation are required have at least some talent and interest in either the arts or the sciences. New members are expected to join the Court that best fits their talents.

Both Courts were originally extremely hierarchical, and while in theory any changeling could enter the Golden Contest, in practice, every changeling who was not either highly experienced and widely respected by her fellows or of relatively high social class was assigned a "mentor," who was one of the Court's higher-status members. Changelings who entered this competition worked in collaboration with their mentors, and in all cases, the mentor was judged to have won the contest. Winning the contest allowed a member of either Court the opportunity to enter at a later time without a mentor. Also, even changelings of relatively low social status who did moderately well several times could earn the right to enter without a mentor and eventually to become one. The higher a changeling's mortal social status, the sooner she was permitted to became a mentor.

The freehold's structure was recently transformed in the wake of the story changes that came to Mannheim a little over a year ago. The Court of Arts was the dominant Court when the story changes came to Mannheim, and a popular uprising within the Court has made this Court considerably more democratic, while also expanding the arts that it regarded as legitimate and abolishing the practice of mentorship in the Golden Contest.

The Court of Sciences

The Clockwork Court, The Court of Wonder

The Court of Sciences is the traditional Court for scientists, inventors, watchmakers, physicians, apothecaries, brewers, gunsmiths, and anyone else who had an interest or talent at either understanding the physical world or in creating useful devices, medicines, or similar items. Before the story changes, this Court was regarded as being lower class than the Court of Arts. The ruling members of both Courts considered it to be a mixture of a few scholars and a large number of tradespeople, physicians, and other individuals who worked with their hands and lacked the elevated sensibilities found in the Court of Arts.

Traditional practices like mentorship are still in place in the Court of Sciences. In addition to assigning "mentors" to any newer or lower-status members participating in the Golden Contest, joining the Court of Sciences requires a lengthy apprenticeship, where most new members spend between six months and three years acting as servants to the Court's ruling council. The length of time someone spends as an apprentice is usually based on the new changeling's social status. However, this Court does work to benefit all members. Apprentices are paid a meager but living wage and are also provided with lessons in a trade from more experienced members of the Court. Also, there is a strong sense of noblesse oblige among the Court's wealthiest and highest-status members. They are expected provide for any impoverished members, regardless of the reason for their poverty. Wealthy members who attempt to shirk this duty are scorned by their equals and may be stripped of the right to be a mentor or take on apprentices.

After the changes in the Court of Arts, there are now growing tensions between the well-off and well-educated scientists and naturalists in the Court and the apothecaries, physicians, lens grinders, tinkerers, and inventors. The latter are almost all working-class individuals who make their living with their hands. The scientists and naturalists in this Court spend most of their time studying or growing faerie fruit, attempting to understand the geography of the local Hedge, and working to describe and categorize the local creatures dwelling in the Hedge. In contrast, many of the poorer members of



the Court of Sciences must spend at least part of their time working ordinary jobs. Many of these fae use their free time to attempt to perfect weapons, telescopes, cold-iron-based poisons, or even mechanisms involving galvanism that are all designed to help the local freehold defeat Huntsmen and perhaps even Gentry who venture into this city.

To the mortals of Mannheim, the Court of Sciences seems to be two organizations, a private club run by and for a small group of the city's amateur scientists, and a private craft guild which is regularly hired to provide various tools and assistance to the members of the private club. The social separation between most well-off and working-class members of this Court make this deception remarkably easy.

Approach

Creating new inventions or proving new scientific theories are how members of the Court of Sciences gain prestige, and this can create an Approach for Huntsmen. A Huntsman who sabotages a courtier's invention so that it discourages or discredits the inventor or alters data or equipment to disprove a courtier's theories gains a point of Yearning.

Trappings of Nobility

The symbols of the Court of Sciences are stars and planets, as well as elegant images of devices like clocks, watches, astronomical instruments, or laboratory glassware. Gold and polished steel are the preferred metals for jewelry worn by members of this Court.

Titles

Genius (Mantle 5): The ruler of the Court of Sciences and the most recent winner of the Golden Contest in this Court.

Scholar (Mantle 4+, 4+ dots in either Crafts or Science): One of the respected individuals who helps judge entries in the Golden Contest.

Mentor (Mantle 3+, 3+ dots in either Crafts or Science): Skilled and experienced individuals who are expected to teach and advise younger or newer members.

Journeyman (Mantle 2+, 3+ dots in either Crafts or Science): A member in good standing who is considered worthy of at least modest respect.

Apprentice (Mantle 1+): A recent or unambitious member who has yet to prove herself.

Contracts

Affinity Contracts for the Court of Sciences include Contracts of Talespinning, Contracts of Emotion (Wonder), and The Blessing of Perfection.

Science Mantle

- Courtiers gain limited personal access to the Court's funds, providing them with 1 dot of the Resources Merit.
- •• Courtiers gain a dot of the Goblin Vow Merit related to clockwork, metal, light, or something else related to their particular inventing or scientific fortes.
- ••• Courtiers can complete these extended actions in 1/8 the time normally required: performing science experiments; developing new scientific theories; or designing, building, or modifying new inventions.
- •••• A courtier gains a Personal Approach related to how she fulfills the ideals and story of the Court.
- ••••• A courtier only requires 3 successes to obtain an exceptional success with either Crafts of Science rolls.

The Court of Arts

The Folk Court (previously the Court of Beauty), The Court of Longing

The Court of Arts was previously the smaller of the two Courts, since it was limited to individuals with an interest and talent in music, painting, sculpture, theatre, and writing plays, literary fiction, or essays. Many members of this Court looked down upon the members of the Court of Sciences as tinkers, artisans, and quacks. Tensions between the two Courts could sometimes become heated. Also, joining the Court of Arts was considerably more difficult than joining the Court of Sciences, since at least some formal training in one or more arts was required, unless the individual demonstrated significant natural talent or had an influential patron within the Court.

While the story changes were disrupting changeling life in Mannheim, a group of young and ambitious fae in the Court of Arts seized control of the Court and abolished the mentorship system. The transfer of power happened relatively peacefully, after the group of young changelings challenged the Court's senior mentors to a debate. The debate was judged by the Court as a whole and the rebels barely won.

Reaching the point where the Court's leaders agreed to the debate required the rebels to build support among the Court's lower-status members, culminating in a threat that most members would refuse to participate in the Golden Contest until the debate was held. This threat, combined with the danger of open rioting, convinced the Court's leaders to capitulate. The individuals who took over the Court have instituted yearly elections for all internal offices. Also, any fae in this Court who enters the Golden Contest may do so under his own name, and will rule the Court if his work is judged superior.

In addition, the Court changed the rules of its charter so that popular songs, folk art, folklore, and various similar works that were not regarded as "high art" are now acceptable forms of art within this Court and are given the same status as oil paintings, novels, bronze sculptures, or symphonies. In additional to allowing existing members to teach one another these arts and to enter such works in the Golden Contest, the Court of Arts also now admits new members whose only training and skill is in these arts. Almost a dozen members of the Court of Sciences immediately petitioned for entry into the Court of Arts, and all were admitted. Also, since the story changes, new members have been joining each Court in roughly equal numbers.

A Note On Location

This freehold and its Courts are based in the city of Mannheim, on the Rhine river (population 18,000). However, this Court would work in any of the many small German cities and large towns, with populations between 5,000 & 20,000.

The Court's new regime also abolished the old apprenticeship system. New members are free to work as apprentices to established members, in return for both teaching and a small wage, but none are required to do so. New members who successfully demonstrate substantial skills in any of the arts are permitted to take on apprentices after they have belonged to the Court for a year and a day.

One downside of these new policies is that poor or infirm members of the Court must now rely upon charity. The Court's official policy is that all members are expected to be able to take care of themselves as free and independent changelings. Also, there is a much stronger sense that members of a motley are expected to care for their fellows, but that outside of motleys, bonds between apprentices and masters, and similar sworn ties, all that members of the Court owe to one another is their loyalty.

Before the story changes, the Court of Arts was known to mortals as a small and somewhat snooty and eccentric art appreciation society. Members were seen as having eccentric tastes and so most mortals ignored its existence. Now, even the Court's appearance in the human world has changed, because it openly embraces folk art and popular music. These changes have caused more middle- and upper-class members of Mannheim society to scoff somewhat more loudly at this society, but it has drawn the interest of a few of Mannheim's working-class citizens.

Approach

Members of the Court of Arts base much of their reputation on how others view their work and this creates an Approach. Huntsmen gain a point of Yearning if they can turn public opinion against one of the changeling's works.

Trappings of Nobility

The symbols of the Court of Arts are musical scores or instruments, and images of either famous works of art or particularly impressive works created by the wearer. Members often initially adorn themselves with images of great works of art which inspire them and eventually replace these with images from their own works. Gold is the preferred metal for jewelry worn by members of this Court.

Titles

Like the Court of Sciences, the Court of Arts previously had many titles, but after the recent reforms, it retains only two.

Grandmaster (Leader of the Court): The Grandmaster is the Court's ruler and the most recent winner of the Golden Contest in this Court.

Master (Mantle 3+, 3+ dots in their chosen art): Masters have proven their skill and talent and now regularly teach and advise new or prospective members of the Court.

Contracts

Affinity Contracts for the Court of Arts include Contracts of Talespinning, Contracts of Emotion (Longing), and Hidden Reality.

Arts Mantle

•	Courtiers gain a dot of Crafts, Expression, or Performance
••	Courtiers gain a dot of the Goblin Vow Merit related to their chosen art.
•••	Courtiers gain two dots of the Fame Merit due to public notice of their artistic talent.
••••	A courtier gains a Personal Approach related to how she fulfills the ideals and story of the Court.
•••••	A courtier can spend a Willpower point to gain the rote action quality to either Crafts, Expression, or Performance rolls when creating or performing her own work. This bonus only applies to a single one of these three skills, which the courtier must choose when purchasing this dot of Mantle.

Court Politics

The recent revolution within the Court of Arts shocked the Court of Sciences' ruling council. They initially worried that the other Court's new policies would greatly deplete their own membership. However, further defections from the Court of Sciences to the Court of Arts have ceased. Instead, the leaders of the Court of Sciences now fear the growing resentment of the lower-ranking members and are working to prevent a similar popular uprising. So far, their response to calls for reform have involved both speeches celebrating the worth of the Court's traditions, as well as shortening the periods for apprenticeship and loosening the rules regarding members requiring mentors to compete in the Golden Contest. Unrest and resentment still exist, but revolution within the Court does not seem immanent, unless something changes.

The Stuff of Stories

Changelings who escaped from Arcadia during the story changes may well have escaped in ways that resonated with one or more particular stories. Your character may have used cleverness and trickery to win free from Arcadia and done so in a way that also means that her former Keeper now owes a debt to your character. Alternately, your characters may have escaped carrying a token reminiscent of one of these stories, such as a pocket full of magic beans, a magic sword, or perhaps a pair of magic boots.

Grimms' Fairy Tales are also filled with incidents where the protagonists befriend or are befriended by minor fairies, grumpy dwarfs, and other odd beings. Your character might

have spent time among creatures from the Hedge. She could have a magic Hedge Beast steed or one or more hobgoblins who are Allies, Contacts, or perhaps even Retainers or Staff. Of course, you could also give your Storyteller all manner of interesting opportunities to create adventures for your character by describing one or more malicious and dim-witted Hedge creatures who your character outwitted during her escape from Arcadia. These beings may come seeking vengeance or redress from your character when she returns to the Hedge.

New Trifles

The following trifles can occasionally be found in the Hedge near portions of the mundane world that are currently undergoing the story changes. These items can also be found in regions of the Hedge adjacent to locations that have already undergone story changes, but are considerably rarer. Also, most of them are available in Goblin Markets, but so are numerous fakes.

Blue Tobacco

If someone smokes this faintly blue-tinted tobacco in either the mundane world or the Hedge, the blue smoke glows faintly and summons a Hob. Some other varieties of faerie tobacco summon other types of intelligent hobgoblins. Once summoned, the hobgoblin is willing to perform one service that requires less than one full day to complete. This service can include leading the character through the Hedge to some destination, answering questions, stealing a small object, or even providing prophetic, but typically enigmatic advice. The Hob can only perform actions typical members of its kind can perform, and it will not directly harm any other intelligent being. However, asking it to slay all of a noble's guard dogs or make all of a farmer's horses lame are both reasonable requests. Blue tobacco and other related types of faerie tobacco can occasionally be found growing in the Hedge, but the character must be instructed how to specially dry and prepare it. These items can also sometimes be found already prepared for purchase at Goblin Markets. Each pipefull of blue tobacco allows the smoker to summon one Hob.

Magic Beans

Most often found in Goblin Markets, changelings can on very rare occasions find the plants that produce these beans growing in the Hedge. Each bean can be planted and watered, and after a full day of care, it sprouts into a beanstalk as thick around as an old oak and easy to climb (+2 to all rolls to climb it). Beanstalks require a second full day to grow to their full size. Once fully grown, each beanstalk grows roughly 100 feet high, at which point it vanishes in a low-hanging cloud that permanently drifts over it. This cloud is a magical gateway to another realm.

Each beanstalk leads to a single magical realm, but the nature of the realm varies depending upon the exact type of bean. Beans with different destinations have different colors and patterns, and various occult tomes can provide information about what realm each type of beans leads to. However, no one can tell in advance where in any particular realm this gateway will appear.

Some beanstalks create gateways leading to a Gentry's realm in Arcadia; others lead to the Underworld, Twilight, the Shadow Realm, or even the Astral Realm. Both sides of the gateway the beanstalk creates are completely invisible to anyone who did not help plant and tend the bean. Anyone can go through the gateway if she can find it, but the only reliable way to find the gateway is to see someone come through it. Cutting down the beanstalk instantly closes the gateway, and although the beanstalk can support the weight of climbers, it is considerably softer than wood and relatively easy to cut. Even if it remains undisturbed, the beanstalk withers and dies after one lunar month, and the gateway closes.

The Water of Life

Found in wells in the Hedge that are either concealed or guarded, and also in a few springs and pools in Arcadia, the water of life is a universal cure-all. Drinking it instantly cures any disease, including both lethal diseases like consumption and congenital problems like withered limbs. The same dose of the water of life also instantly heals all of the target's bashing and lethal wounds and up to four levels of aggravated damage, and adds a decade onto the drinker's lifespan. An average canteen or bottle holds a single dose of this water. While it can sometimes be found at Goblin Markets, the price is always exceptionally high.

Wishing Ring

These plain gold rings are one of the rarest and most valuable items that anyone can find in the Hedge. The origin of these items is unknown, but some suspect they were made in Arcadia. They can be found in both the Hedge and the human world, and a few changelings have stolen them from Arcadia when they escaped. Anyone who sees one, who can also see through the Mask, instantly recognizes the ring as an item of great power; and many fae have heard stories of the gold wishing rings. The wearer, who can be a mortal or a changeling, must state in her native language "I wish," followed by a single clear statement. However, the ring has strict limits. It can transport the wearer (or someone the wearer can see clearly) anywhere in the mundane world or the Hedge that the wearer has seen before; it can cure any disease or heal any injury. It can also provide the wearer with sufficient wealth to live very comfortably for a year, or frugally for up to five, and can repair any object up to the size of a castle or large mansion. The wearer can also use it to slay one human, Huntsmen, fetch, or changeling, or to permanently dispel one ghost or spirit. It can send one of the Gentry back to Arcadia, but cannot kill them. This wish cannot be used to acquire a token or any other sort of permanent enchantment. Also, the ring's most important limit is that it can only be used once. After it has been used, it becomes an old, worn, and tarnished ring of pot metal. Anyone who finds a wishing ring by chance will never find another, although they may discover a way to steal or buy another one.

New Tokens

These items can be found in Goblin Markets in regions that have undergone the story changes. A handful of

changelings have learned to create these items, and some of the Lost who escaped from Arcadia during the story changes took some of these items with them.

Enchanted Locket (•)

A simple silver locket suitable for wearing on a watch fob or as a pendant. The interior of the locket has a clip capable of holding a single small lock of hair that can be coiled within the locket. This item is of a sort that can be exchanged between lovers, spouses, or parents and children, and is sometimes found in sets of two. When the owner opens the locket and touches the hair, anything she says can be heard by the person the hair came from, regardless of where either person is. Each time the locket is activated, the user can speak to the hair's owner for up to five minutes.

Action: Standard

Mien: The front of the locket has a small enamel-work painting of the person the lock of hair came from.

Drawback: Anyone who possesses the locket can use it to talk to the person the hair came from. Also, all communication is one way, unless both people each have a locket containing a lock of the others' hair.

Catch: The user has the option of letting the hair's owner pay the price. The hair's owner understands that the person with the locket wishes to speak to her and can choose to pay the price. However, doing this causes the hair to have a 10% chance of slipping free from the clip and crumbling to dust. If neither pays Glamour to activate the locket, then after the conversation is finished the hair automatically slips free and crumbles to dust, and the person sending the message is rendered mute until the next sunrise.

Gilded Raiment (••)

This suit of gossamer clothing is attractive, well-made, and comfortable, and changes size to fit the wearer. If the wearer adjusts his clothing and clearly states how he wants it to change, it transforms into the desired clothing. Commands can be anything from "become a military uniform" to "help me hide." The clothing can even become outdoor gear to offer protection from the elements, but cannot become armor of any sort. This clothing can provide a +1 bonus to Disguise, Intimidation, Socialize, Stealth or Survival rolls, depending upon how the user wishes the clothing to change. Also, all damage to the clothing can be repaired in the Hedge by soaking it in the wearer's blood, but this requires using sufficient blood to cause the wearer one point of lethal damage.

Action: Standard

Mien: The cloth sometimes appears to move on its own, sliding and swaying in ways that have little to do with its wearer's movements.

Drawback: This clothing unravels at the touch of iron.

Catch: The clothing drinks the user's blood as it changes, causing the user one point of lethal damage. The clothing also automatically bandages the wound and stops all bleeding, once it has fed.



Path Stones (•••)

A small cloth bag with a drawstring. When opened, it contains three or four small, rounded, roughly coin-shaped white stones. If the character opens the bag, takes out a stone and names a destination, she can toss the stone and it lands in the direction of this destination. The bag never runs out of stones, and never gets lighter or heavier. The path provided by the stones automatically leads the character away from obvious and avoidable dangers and problems like guards, dangerous animals, or difficult terrain, and can even lead her towards unguarded secret passages if she asks to find an unseen entrance or exit. However, it cannot make safe or easy paths where none exist. Also, the stones cannot be used in this fashion in the Hedge.

The character can also whisper "leave a path" while touching the bag, and it will leave white stones behind it in a path — even if the character does not or cannot open the bag, or is tied up and blindfolded. Normally, only the person holding the bag can see either path. The stones can be used in this latter fashion in the Hedge.

Action: Standard

Mien: When the bag is opened, the stones glow faintly.

Drawback: Anyone who can see through the Mask and is looking carefully can make a successful Wits + Resolve roll can see the trail of stones. Subtract the user's Wyrd from this roll. Huntsmen and the Gentry know that following these stones often leads to a changeling.

Catch: The stones and the path they create are obvious to anyone who looks carefully, even mortals.

Seven League Boots (•••••)

These boots appear somewhat worn and relatively plain, but exceedingly well made. They are comfortable, sturdy, and are a perfect fit on anyone who puts them on. If the wearer stamps one foot and clearly says the name of a location where he has spent at least half a day, he immediately appears near that location. The boots cannot be used to visit locations that the wearer is not familiar with.

Action: Standard

Mien: Out of the corner of the viewer's eye, the boots shift color and pattern, often depicting renderings in tooled leather of various places the boots have been.

Drawback: When activated, the boots always transport the wearer somewhere. If the roll succeeds, the wearer arrives within 50 yards of his desired location. If this roll fails, the boots transport him to a location somewhere within 25 miles of his desired location; and if the roll botches, the boots transport the wearer to some location he definitely wishes to avoid, like an enemy's living room. Even on a botch, the boots will not transport the wearer to Arcadia unless the wearer wishes to go there. However, a botch might strand the wearer deep in the Hedge, relatively near Arcadia. The wearer can only use these boots once a day.

Catch: For an hour after using the boots, the wearer's feet hurt and she walks with a limp, reducing her speed by one-half (round down).

Contracts

As survivors of trauma, changelings have personal, regrettable knowledge of recovery from extreme distress. The Contracts below affect comfort objects, or transitional objects that provide human children and adults with psychological and emotional aid through play and during periods of recovery from trauma. They may be dolls, stuffed animals, blankets, or any other object that aids in a child's feeling of security. They are essential for periods like our setting, when the Napoleonic wars lend to the displacement and trauma of many human children. Here are some Contracts by which changelings can help these children in their emotional and psychological recoveries.

Contract of Provisional Aid (•)

The changeling may assist a child in his attempt to resist a psychological break. Through physical contact with a comfort object affected by this Contract, the changeling may add her Wyrd to any Resolve + Composure roll made by the child to resist a breaking point.

Cost: 2 Glamour

Dice Pool: Composure + Wyrd

Action: Instant

Catch: The child was in possession of the comfort object for a period of a month, or the object was given by a lost parent or loved one.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The child's worldview cracks. He loses a dot of Integrity, gains one of the Broken, Fugue, Madness, or Obsession Conditions, and takes a Beat.

Failure: The child receives no help from the changeling in his Resolve + Composure roll to resist losing a dot of Integrity. He must roll Resolve + Composure with no aid from the changeling's Wyrd.

Success: The child may add the changeling's Wyrd to his Resolve + Composure roll to resist losing a dot of Integrity, and the changeling restores points in Glamour equal to the number of successes above the child's Resolve.

Contract of Real and False Self (•)

The changeling can see though the comfort object, and may interact with the child through such means.

Cost: 2 Glamour

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Wyrd

Action: Instant

Catch: The changeling has watched the child sleep through a full night.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The child feels unsafe around his comfort object for a period of three days and nights.

Failure: The changeling cannot see through the comfort object, nor may she interact through it.

Success: The changeling may successfully see through the comfort object. She may speak with the child and use any Contracts that require the use of touch.

Contract of Heartwarming Comfort (•)

The object provides the child with physical warmth, allowing him to withstand frigid temperatures. This applies to dolls and stuffed animals as well as blankets.

Cost: 2 Glamour

Dice Pool: Stamina + Wyrd

Action: Instant

Catch: The changeling touches or has touched the child's hair.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The changeling becomes particularly weak against the cold as his heart freezes over temporarily. For one week, all cold-based extreme environments are one level worse. Any cold-based attacks the changeling suffers cause one additional health point of damage.

Failure: The child gains no benefit from this Contract.

Success: Through the use of his comfort object, the child may withstand extreme cold as defined in the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 97 for a period of days equal to twice the number of successes the changeling reaches on this roll.

Contract of Transference (•)

The child feels satiated, and can go longer without eating. After the child does eat, the changeling can make a request of him, and if it would not trigger a breaking point, the child feels he should complete it without protest.

Cost: 3 Glamour

Dice Pool: Stamina + Wyrd

Action: Instant

Catch: The changeling knows the child's name.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The changeling suffers an uncontrollable hunger. For one week, he must eat food amounting to his Size or he suffers a -5 to all actions.

Failure: The child gains no benefit from this Contract.

Success: Through the use of his comfort object, the child is satiated for a period of days equal to twice the number of successes the changeling reaches on this roll.

Contract of Objective Idealism (•)

By providing companionship to a child through his comfort object, the changeling can add her Wyrd to the child's next roll to resist the formation of a Persistent mental health Condition. If the child's roll is successful, the changeling may add one die to her next attempt to resist a drop in Clarity or to resist the formation of a mental health Condition. She must designate which use she intends when this Contract is used. As this is a mental benefit, it affects the Broken, Fugue, Madness, and Obsession Conditions.

Cost: 4 Glamour

Dice Pool: Composure + Wyrd

Action: Instant, based on a long-term relationship with the child, as defined as a period days equal to 10 □ the changeling's Wyrd.

Catch: The changeling knows the name that the child has given to the comfort object, and has made a small physical change to the object, fixing, damaging, or altering it in a small enough way that the child would not notice.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The child suffers a breaking point and takes a Beat.

Failure: The child gains no benefit from this Contract.

Success: The child receives aid on resisting the formation of the Broken, Fugue, Madness, and Obsession Conditions.

Contract of the Good (•)

The changeling bonds emotionally with the child through his comfort object. The child adds +5 to all checks for Persistent Conditions following unsuccessful Resolve + Composure rolls following breaking points, and he treats rolls to resist the effects of triggering those Conditions as rote actions for as long as he has access to his comfort object. Every time the mental health Condition might be triggered, the changeling must make any necessary rolls with the additional bonus of her Wyrd on behalf of the child, to prevent the child's mental health Condition from affecting him for the rest of the scene (regardless of the physical distance between the changeling and the child). Every time the child succeeds on this roll, the changeling may invest one Beat towards an increase in Clarity. As this is a mental benefit, it affects the Broken, Fugue, Madness, and Obsession Conditions.

Cost: 4 Glamour

Dice Pool: Composure + Wyrd

Action: Extended

Catch: Whether they brought a panicking child down from a panic attack or they removed a source of anxiety, the changeling must have helped the child when their comfort object was lost.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The child suffers a breaking point and takes a Beat.

Failure: The child gains no benefit from this Contract.

Success: The changeling successfully bonds with the child, and the child feels her comforting presence through the comfort object whether he recognizes the source of that comfort or not.

The Grimms

That's it, my love, call me it again. Call me your princess just one more time. Your love will make it true, and we, you and I, we'll live happily ever after. Won't we?



According to the Grimms, a nickname only recently given to the seeming, there is nothing that the Hedge loves more than a story pressed in ink. The Hedge, they say, loves any story told, whispered from human lips to human ears, but that as soon as humanity began to write its stories down, in pictographs, crude wall paintings, or with the printing press, the Hedge grew and flourished. There is no way to verify this story, but any Grimm encountered in the dark woods of Germany, or anywhere else in the world, will tell you this identical story. They believe it, all of it, and there's more to it that they simply won't tell you. That's not their part to play.

Appearance: You know a Grimm because she carries a book with her, carries the tools to illuminate a manuscript, or somehow wears ink and illustrations in her skin. She might smell like paper. And no matter how her kith has changed her, somewhere about her is the preservation of stories in print or paint. Beyond this, and beyond the way that her kith has changed her, she will take on roles from local stories, indirectly or directly, as is necessary for survival. To mundane eyes, this is theatrical, subtle, but all the while artificial. There is nothing especially fantastic in her appearance to most people, just hints at her fairytale role.

The changeling sees her, between roles, as a swirl of words and pages in human shape, or a book of blood bound by human flesh and outline. Every inch of her is covered in these words. It's suggested that the heart of the Grimm is carved with the story that the Hedge told them about the truth of the Fae. But it's just a story. When a Grimm is playing a role, other changelings will see him in the role that he has taken on. He may appear as the essence of any popular character in myth and story within the area. If he is a princess in a tower in need of aid, so he will be a beautiful maid with long silky hair. His skin will still crawl with words, but the role is prominent enough that the words may be forgotten. This role does not change the character's Attributes, Merits, or Skills, but at least in the time that the role is active, it is not a lie — for a time, it is who he truly is. Cinderella is Cinderella whether or not she can clean. Sinbad is Sinbad even if he doesn't know how to sail. Other changelings are capable of understanding that the character the Grimm, but no magic or skill can pry away the role.

Background: Before his durance, the Grimm was a bland and uncreative sort, tending to live his life in quiet anonymity. His dreams were small, and in his pragmatic way, he didn't have much time for fancy stories and make-believe. Something happened early, maybe, that robbed him of his spark, or possibly he simply never had it to begin with. Most commonly, the individual dismisses the boogey man standing right in front of him, as he clings to his mundane life. And so in his desire to not see the potential all around him, he walked blindly into the Hedge with his hands over his eyes and his fingers in his ears.

The Escape: Each Grimm tells a version of the same story. In parts, even the specific words chosen will match from one Grimm to the next, though they are infrequently found and unlikely to run into each other very often, save for the Court of Bremen, where Grimm congregate. The story is this: His durance was horrible (details vary for each Grimm). But at some point, he pulled away, finally paying attention to the tells and clues manifest in his fantastically terrible existence. All at once, he realized the clues, the beats, in the story of his life, and what he was meant to do in order to escape. As he fled, using the clues all around him, the Hedge itself whispered, making him a promise. A way out, a path back, but only if he swore to become a part of the stories that humankind told over and over. And so the Grimm agreed, and the path lay before him, and

What Happened to the Grimm?

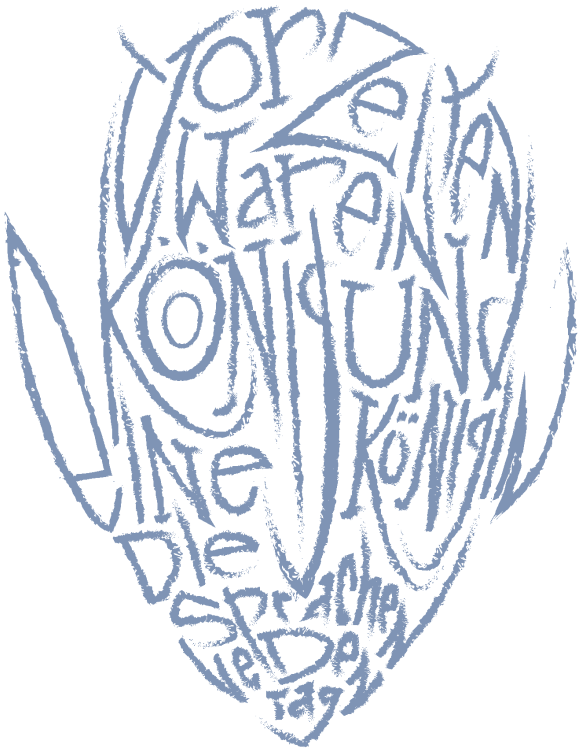
Theoretically, nothing. Dull and uninteresting people rarely end up in the Hedge, and as a result, Grimm are fairly rare. When they do show up, they can easily be mistaken for other seemings or focus on their kith. They may not know there is anything special or unique about their situation. Fairy tales never faded in popularity, not really, and so there's an argument that if the Grimm once were, they likely always will be. In the modern, post-Internet era, with the rapid-fire ability to share fairy tales and urban legends, could the Grimm become more prevalent? Can one stumble into the Hedge through a website? No one knows yet, but if so, what would a modern Grimm look like, based on the fairy tales of modern, Internet-obsessed children?

he fled — but with him, he carried that promise to the Hedge, unaware of what it could mean to humankind.

Character Creation: Before the durance, the Grimm was painfully dull and practical as well as pragmatic. She likely had a skilled or labor-based job and that was her focus entirely. Since her escape, though, most Grimms grow obsessed with either collecting stories, or living her chosen role to the fullest. A Grimm who desires to change her role frequently may study local lore, read books, or seduce and manipulate writers. A Grimm who wants to dedicate herself to one role will seek skills and abilities to mimic her role.

Blessing: Clarity of the Story. A Grimm takes on a role, and finds comfort in the beats and patterns of behavior expected of that role. No matter how chaotic or damaging the life that swirls around her, so long as she clings to a role she will be safe. She must keep her promise to the Hedge, or her promise to herself, and everything will be okay. Once per story, if a character other than the Grimm treats the Grimm as he would anyone in her role, without being directly asked to do so, the Grimm regains a point of Clarity for free. If the Grimm is not currently playing a role, she cannot gain Clarity in this way.

Curse: So It Has Been Written. A Grimm needs a role to maintain and regain Clarity, to fulfill her promise. Without a role, she is dull, sad, lifeless — and worse, easy prey for the Huntsmen. Within her role, though, she is limited by the story from which the role sprang. Any time a Grimm playing a role chooses an action that benefits her, but is opposite her role, she suffers a Clarity breaking point. If she is not in a role, she suffers the reverse of the rote action quality on rolls to elude Huntsmen and the Gentry. This is to say, reroll all successful dice. Only dice that succeed twice count.



Companions of the Resigned

I will befriend those without friendship.

Changelings understand what it is to be alone. All have felt it at one time or another. Some associate the feeling with their lives before they wandered or were abducted into Faerie, growing up on streets torn by war, chaos, or revolution, or in houses where parents favored other children. Others associate loneliness with their experiences serving True Fae who not only kept them isolated but also degraded them whenever around others. Others still associate loneliness with their days since their return to the mundane world, fearing rediscovery by their Keepers or rejection should they try to return to their families or make new friends with similar experiences.

Changelings who have joined the Companions of the Resigned recognize the constant struggle inherent in overcoming loneliness. While they associate it with tremendous personal strength, courage, and fortitude, who better than changelings to recognize that sometimes, personal effort is not enough to reconcile with lost family when they have moved on, or when your fetch has convinced them that nothing has changed? Whether they feel loneliness because of trauma, loss, or simply because they feel alone, often those who suffer require external contact to overcome these feelings.



The Companions seek to aid those who feel alone, whether a child making sense of the world around him or herself for the first time, or an adolescent or adult recovering from a violent attack or from loss in the midst of war. They provide companionship, through comfort objects the human already utilizes, or in the human's mind. They feel an intrinsic connection to humans who feel detached from the world around them that extends beyond their desire to feed from the emotions of these humans for the sake of Glamour. To the Companions, these connections are as real, deep, and concrete as anything they have ever felt. To the humans they aid and any other humans who hear of them, they may be perceived as imaginary friends.

Changelings who follow this noble order utilize dream-shaping to speak with and gain the trust of older humans in need of companionship. Older people have more formed concepts of objective reality and make-believe than children, to whom the Companions may appear in their waking hours. While most of the Companions do not seek Glamour as motivation for helping the isolated, the powerful connections forged between them and the humans they help elicit vast amounts of emotion that the Companions can and do channel into Glamour.

Ultimately, the motivation of the Companions is to befriend, accompany, and bond with the lost with a lowercase "l." These connections are essential, whether to an adult who feels forsaken by the world around him, or to a child who has lost her home and parents during wartime.

Titles: The Companions (same for all genders)

Prerequisites: Wyrd 3, Empathy 3, Expression 2, Stealth 2

Joining and Organization: Changelings who join the Companions tend to have been approached by Companions themselves following their escapes from Arcadia. The Companions chaperone changelings who are younger than most, who are experience a temporal shock, or who suffered subjectively worse trauma in Faerie. This arrangement stays informal, and breaks when the newer changeling concludes that she is ready to serve as a Companion to another.

A new Companion who does not choose to focus on guiding other changelings instead shepherds a human child or adult in the same informal fashion, though this bond may prove deeper than the relationship she maintained with her own changeling guide. A Companion monitors a human child or adult, waits for the opportune time to

approach, and, if the human is receptive, forges a stable relationship that she maintains for as long as is necessary. The length of this period very much depends on the needs of the Companion's charge. When another needs the Companion more, she departs.

There is no overall organization for the Companions of the Resigned.

Mien: The informal nature of the Companions' assembly contributes to the lack of a uniform or standard of dress for those who subscribe to the Entitlement. However, there are noticeable changes to the miens of members. In close proximity, other humans and supernatural creatures alike can feel warmth emanating from the skin of the Companions. Their skin is also softer to the touch. They appear physically approachable to those nearby, especially to those in distress, with whom they receive a +1 to influence in Social rolls involving Manipulation, Persuasion, Expression, or Empathy, and in Social maneuvering. To a child, the Companion may appear shorter and closer to his age. To an adult, she may appear softer and more dependable. This appearance changes depending on a subject's disposition.

Background: The Companions primarily draw three types of changelings. These are those who suffered serious trauma during their time in Arcadia, those who are more nurturing and protective of children for other reasons, and those who want to bond with children towards some other, perhaps more selfish end. Above all else, the Companions promote selflessness in trying to prevent loneliness in human children and adults, especially during periods of war or discord. This is true regardless of the scale of the conflict. Companions seek out humans undergoing personal, family trauma as well as those being affected by a regional or countrywide war.

Concepts: School teacher, cognitive philosopher, midwife, doctor.

Privileges

Below is a privilege available to all Companions of the Resigned upon joining the order.

Hide-And-Go-Seek

Changelings place great importance on concealment. This is particularly the case for the Companions, who interact with human children and adults, sometimes in more detectable ways than others. The changelings of the order gain a +3 bonus to Stealth rolls when called attention to, as long as they have interacted with their human charge within in the past day. This benefit takes on the rote quality if their charge has given them a name.



The Order of the Story Heroes

Created in 1813, in honor of the many characters in *Grimms' Fairy Tales* who survived and prospered due to their cleverness, this Entitlement was founded to encourage and reward changelings who used their cleverness to defeat or protect others from the Huntsmen and the Gentry. Shortly after changelings began learning of *Grimms' Fairy Tales* and the story changes, an informal group of changelings calling themselves the *märchen helden* (German for fairy tale heroes) began attempting to battle the Huntsmen and defend their kind.

In Berlin, a group of these *märchen helden* founded the Order of Story Heroes. This Order is quite new, but at least in Germany it is growing rapidly as various brave but humble members of the Lost rush to join. Currently, a group is planning to travel to the Black Forest to defeat the rogue freehold of changeling privateers and bandits who have recently moved there. Other members of the Order are seeking to storm portions of Arcadia in the grip of the story changes and rescue changelings imprisoned there.

Titles: Knights of Story, The Order of Clever Commoners, Tricksters

Prerequisites: Wits 3, Investigation 1, Subterfuge 2

Joining: The Order of Story Heroes seeks out changelings who have distinguished themselves by overcoming powerful or dangerous foes though wits and trickery. They approach Lost who are known to have performed such deeds and offer them membership. Also, changelings who believe they deserve membership are free to petition for entry.

In all cases, a team of members investigates and verifies the changeling's story, and admits fae whose claims prove accurate and who have a sincere desire to join and wish to continue defeating dangerous foes using clever trickery. Of course, given the nature of this Order and those seeking to join, occasionally someone is admitted who later reveals that they fabricated the story of their previous triumph. Unlike some Entitlements, deceiving your way into this Order is not grounds for dismissal. Instead, other members congratulate the individual on her clever lies, but then expect her to prove her worth by taking on and defeating actual foes. Proof of cowardice is immediate grounds for dismissal.

One unofficial but important limitation on membership is that nobles, mortal officials, and others in positions of wealth and power must demonstrate considerably greater prowess and dedication than more humble fae. Most members are from rural, poor, or working-class backgrounds, and they openly celebrate their birth; several make claims that a humble birth is what gave them both wisdom and luck. Currently, two members of this order are from wealthy urban backgrounds, but both proved that they were willing to treat lower-class fae as their equals. The Order has an official policy requiring all members to treat each other as equals, regardless of the circumstances of their birth. These policies and attitudes have upset and alienated several wealthy and powerful changelings, but have also increased the Order's popularity. A few of the most traditional freeholds have considered banning membership in this Order, but none has yet taken this drastic step.

Mein: Tricksters all bear some badge, banner, or other adornment depicting or honoring the deed that permitted them to join. Over time, members also accumulate new adornments for each additional heroic deed they undertake. New adornments appear automatically within a few days of performing a truly heroic deed. All of these adornments are relatively clear and easy to understand, and any words are written in the trickster's native language.

However, the slogans or statements in these adornments are often overstated or understated,

usually depending upon how boastful or modest the trickster typically is. Someone who saved three children from a burning building or perhaps even from the Gentry might gain a sash embroidered with the faces of three smiling children or even with "I saved, Gretel, Hans, and Elsie." Someone who slew one of the Huntsmen might gain a badge with a somewhat simplified picture of them slaying the Huntsmen, an image of a dead Huntsmen, or even "Huntsmen Slain: One."

Background: Most of this Order's membership are composed of Darklings, Fairest, and Wizened, but there are members belonging to all seemings. Despite being a somewhat martial Order, combat-focused kiths, like Ifrits or Razorhands, are slightly less common than any other kiths. Stealthy or deceptive kiths like Mirrorskins or Palewraiths are somewhat more common than others, but members of almost any kith can be found in this order.

Concept: Clever peasant, good-hearted con artist, lucky boaster, commoner disguised as a noble.

Organization: This Order is both new and inherently non-hierarchical. Most members are happy to work with other members whose abilities they respect, but are not inclined to follow orders, especially ones given by someone they do not know well. As a result, the Order's organizational structure is exceedingly loose and variable. In some cities, the members of this Order are all part of the same motley, and cooperate on most deeds. Other members are dedicated loners who help fellow members of this Order is asked, but prefer to avoid all long-term associations.

Their adornments make members of this Order fairly obvious, and the relatively small size of most German freeholds means that members typically know if anyone else from their Order is in their city or town. All members are expected to aid other members who seek help, and to attempt to help any changeling who asks their aid for a good cause.

The Order has a headquarters in Berlin, where the Order began. The founding members have asked that new members send word when they move to a different city or town, so that the leaders have at least some idea where the various members are. A member who wishes help and does not know of other tricksters in her town can ask the founders for the city or town where the nearest fellow member lives.

Privilege

Cleverness is vital for members of this Order, but good luck is equally important. Tricksters definitely have luck on their side, especially when faced with particularly difficult situations. Whenever a trickster is faced with a with a penalty (after all modifiers have been accounted for), she can focus on her luck, reflexively spend one Glamour and remove the penalty. The Trickster cannot benefit from bonuses above her normal dice pool on such a roll, but rolls her unpenalized dice pool. This advantage does not apply to Defense, but would apply to other combat penalties, such as called shots. To anyone observing her, a trickster using this ability who succeeds at the roll appears unusually lucky, not impressively talented or well trained. All members of this Order also gain one dot of the Fame Merit (among the Lost).





Mechanical Effects of Different Fae Rules

Unless both regions have undergone story changes, characters who move from one city, town, or village in Germany to another usually move to an area where fae rules work slightly differently. Different German states always operate under slightly different fae rules, as do settlements that are more than 100 miles apart. All attempts to make Pledges, use Contracts, navigate the Hedge or make any rolls to learn or understand anything about the local fae, Gentry, or Huntsmen suffer a –1 penalty in the new location. In addition, any rolls that involve two different locations at the same time, such attempting to travel through the Hedge to a location governed by different rules or using a Contract to observe or affect anything in a different region, suffer a –2 penalty, because the character is attempting to work with two different sets of faerie rules simultaneously. All of these penalties vanish when traveling to or using long-distance Contracts between regions that have both been affected by the story changes. However, the above penalties still occur when traveling from a location that has undergone story changes to a location that has not.

Playing the Game

Stories about changelings in this time and place are stories about the Lost dealing with their world changing in profound ways. The last vestiges of the Middle Ages are vanishing. At the same time that ancient city walls are being demolished, the many different tales and magical rules are also being unified. The old order that these rules supported is also being disrupted.

One of the central issues in most chronicles set in this era will be transformation. Some fae, especially those in positions of power, cling to the old ways, while others embrace change, and wish to use these changes to gain greater freedom and opportunity. These struggles are happening in fae Courts all across Germany. Some Courts reject any changes in the status quo, while others face popular uprisings, including highly effective ones lead by younger, literate changelings who have proved to be more than a match for the older, sometimes illiterate changelings who previously held power.

A campaign involving an attempted revolution in a Court or perhaps an entire freehold would work perfectly in this era, especially if shortly after the campaign began the story changes arrived in the city and began destabilizing the freehold. Of course, all revolutions are not created equal. The freehold might contain members who use the rhetoric of the recent French Revolution and advocate the swift execution of all of the local Courts' previous leaders and perhaps even their most loyal supporters. Like in revolutionary France, the desire to fight for freedom can all too easily be replaced by the lust for vengeance, and an attempt to create a new government can easily descend into deadly political infighting.

Some of the advocates for destructive and murderous excesses may actually be loyalists eager to destroy the Court in order to win back their Keeper's favor. In addition, sufficiently dedicated revolutionaries or counter revolutionaries may be approached by loyalists, privateers, Gentry, or particularly clever Huntsmen who offer to help them eliminate their opponents, if the changeling will arrange to lead these opponents into a trap. This type of situation provides an excellent way to see if the characters are more dedicated to their immediate goals, or to protecting even their rivals or enemies from the Gentry. In a campaign focused on revolution, the characters might be some of the revolutions' leaders, devoted supporters of the old regime, or perhaps simply newly escaped changelings who find that tensions are rising and violence seems about to break out in the freehold they joined a few weeks or months before.

Regardless of the overall focus of the campaign, having the characters deal with the story changes coming to their city is an excellent opportunity for exciting roleplaying. In addition to Contacts, Pledges, and navigating the Hedge temporarily becoming much more difficult, Storytellers should consider introducing a series of random events during the lunar month of the story change. Pledges of all sorts may suddenly and spontaneously break, a changeling's Mask could suddenly drop for a turn or two, and the local geography of the Hedge might shift dramatically. The Hedge could even spontaneously open one or more gateways, allowing various Hedge Beasts and hobgoblins to sneak or stumble into the mundane world.

These creatures might run amuck, attempting to steal items or kidnap or devour humans and animals, or they might panic. The characters could hunt down monsters lurking in alleys, or they might be approached by desperate hobgoblins seeking protection and help getting back to the Hedge. The latter service might result the hobgoblin owing the characters a favor, or perhaps simply a bond of friendship. Storytellers who wish to play up the chaos caused by the arrival of the story changes might even require characters to roll one die for every point of Wyrd whenever they attempt to open a gateway to or from the Hedge. If this roll does not achieve at least one success, the changelings cannot open a gateway in that location and must go elsewhere if they wish to try again.

While characters should only suffer the standard –3 penalty for areas undergoing the story changes, Huntsmen or Gentry could occasionally face much greater difficulty. A motley might find themselves cornered by several Huntsmen, until one Huntsman botches a Contract and destroys or badly injures one of its fellows, allowing the changelings to either escape or overwhelm the other Huntsmen. However, all of these extreme and chaotic events should cease once the lunar month of the story changes ends, and even during this time period, the most extreme events should be erratic rather than constant.

Undergoing Story Changes

In a region where much of the populace has been buying and reading *Grimms' Fairy Tales* for at least six months, the local fae rules eventually shift to better fit with these stories. Once started, this change always begins on a new moon and ends on the following new moon. This change is most obvious in the Hedge. where the landscape shifts and changes every time someone looks away and paths through it appear and vanish with equal frequency, imposing a –3 penalty to all rolls to navigate the Hedge. Also, Pledges may spontaneously break, and changelings, Huntsmen, or Gentry may perform a Contract, only to find that it mysteriously did not work because magic shifted while it was being performed. All Pledges and Contracts performed in this time suffer a –3 penalty for everyone attempting them. All of these penalties affect the mortal region undergoing the story changes as well as the sections of both the Hedge and Arcadia that are associated with this portion of the human world.

After the next new moon, the changes stabilize. Individuals unfamiliar with the new rules by which fae magic works suffer a –1 penalty to rolls for Pledges, Contracts, and navigating the Hedge. Lore rolls regarding anything associated with the fae also suffer a –1 penalty. Becoming familiar with the new rules only requires a few days of careful study or several weeks of casual observation. Changelings who are unwilling to either study *Grimms' Fairy Tales* or experiment with Contracts and other abilities may take many months to internalize the new rules.

One interesting campaign option would be a battle for a town's faerie rules. If the characters are in favor of the story changes, they could travel to a major city like Berlin, where the books are less expensive and easily available, buy a large number of books, and transport them to their home, either in a cart or via the Hedge. Then, they could either attempt to sell the books to local merchants or sell the book themselves, perhaps using Contracts and other unusual abilities.

Of course, some changelings, including many powerful members of the local Court, might well oppose the story changes coming to their town, or at least wish to postpone the change for as long as possible. These changelings might attempt to steal or destroy the books, hijack shipments of the books coming to the town by road or Hedge, and stir up popular opinion either against the books or against the changelings selling the books. The characters might instead work against the story changes coming to their town, either because of personal loyalty to the rulers of the local Courts or because they have positions of power and influence and do not wish to risk losing them.

Setting

Another important fact to consider is precisely where the campaign is set. Berlin and Hamburg are both large cities whose walls were removed a decade or more ago, with populations well over 100,000. Even a large freehold can easily remain unknown and unnoticed in such a city. However, most German cities and towns were far smaller. Germany only had 10 other cities of more than 20,000 people, and only three of those had populations of more than 40,000.

If the characters are part of a freehold of any size and significance, rather than simply being four or five of the dozen or so changelings in a city, the freehold can easily attract mortal attention. Even a freehold with only 30 or 40 changelings can draw considerable notice in a city of 12,000 or a town of 5,000. Changelings are often active at all hours of the day, freeholds consist of people from all social classes who speak of strange creatures, and many members have no local family or publically known history. In a small city or town, the freehold will need to rely on either secrecy or some sort of cover story to avoid awkward questions that might attract the attention of loyalists, privateers, or Huntsmen.

In German towns and small cities, there are sufficient numbers of people that everyone does not know everyone else, but unless the changelings hold all of their meetings in the Hedge, people will definitely notice their gatherings. However, in this era private clubs and societies were quite common. The freehold could pretend to be a private club, with all of the middle- and upper-class changelings as members, and the lower-class changelings either acting as servants, or possibly working as servants. Alternately, the freehold might be organized around some common interest, which could be anything from the study of folklore to relatively non-controversial religious, political, or academic interests, like performing works of charity or listening to lectures about history or distant lands. Of course, one problem with any of these cover stories is that some mortals might be sincerely interested in these topics or wish to join the club.

Even if few mortals are interesting in joining, if the members of the freehold are too secretive, others may wonder if they are anarchists, criminals, revolutionaries, or some form of diabolical heretics. These suspicions become even stronger if wealthy or middle-class changelings and lower-class changelings visibly interact as equals. Many people in this era would assume that any such situation must involve crime or radical politics.

Regardless of what cover story they use, unless all members are poor and thus beneath most notice, or all of the well-off members disguise themselves as members of the lower class when they meet with other Lost, the local freehold will also need a meeting place. Private libraries, clubs, or similar buildings all work well, but any such building also needs at least minimal security to keep out curious mortals who might threaten the members' social standing or perhaps even dream about the oddities they



have seen and so alert the Gentry. When you create the local freehold, consider their meeting hall and cover story, and what place the well-off changelings occupy in the mortal community.

One possibility would be for the most important changelings to actually be important people in the town, like a judge, a member of one of the town's ruling families, or perhaps an exceedingly wealthy and influential burgher. A freehold where several of the members were part of the town's ruling council would be able to offer extensive protection to the freehold and its members. However, this type of freehold is also one where reform would be very difficult, because few members would be willing to accept any change that removed this protection, and the changelings who served on the town's ruling council might be strongly opposed to any changes that would reduce their power and influence in the freehold.

Dual Lives & Divided Loyalties

One potentially interesting consequence of setting a campaign in a town or a small city is that the characters will be more connected to their community. In a town of 8,000, most residents are likely to know someone who knows any particular individual, even if only distantly. This type of setting immerses the characters in their community in a way a campaign set in a 21st century city rarely can. Neighborhoods were also far more important in an era where life moved at the speed of walking or horses. Everyone within a block or two of a character would at least know her name and face. Having the characters' motley all live in the same neighborhood only makes sense in this era, and this allows Storytellers to introduce a wealth of mortal characters and perhaps even make the neighborhood as a whole a sort of character.

The interactions between the characters and their neighborhood can be exceedingly complex. Without televisions or radios, far more of people's lives occurred on porches and in the local streets, shops, and taverns. If the characters are acting suspiciously, someone is bound to notice. The characters may face curious children or concerned or upset adults asking them to explain some odd behavior. Alternately, they might later hear snatches of local gossip, where someone caught a glimpse of their odd activities, assumed that the explanation involved the everyday mysteries of adultery, secret drunkenness, or petty crime, and proceeded to construct an exciting story along these lines. Regardless of whether they wish to have one or not, the characters will have a reputation among the mortals living near them.

Also, if some of the locals see one of the Huntsmen, they might also gossip about this odd individual and thus warn the characters. If the characters can construct a plausible story about why they are interested in such individuals, they might gain a valuable network of allies to warn them about Huntsmen, privateers, or loyalists. Also, the Gentry continue to abduct people, and sometimes first appear to possible victims in dreams or strange meetings. If one of the characters hears that someone had a strange and disturbingly familiar dream or some other curious incident, she might be able to save this person from the fate she suffered.

If the characters are willing to embrace the sort of heroism found in *Grimms' Fairy Tales*, they might also be willing to aid residents with trouble unrelated to the Gentry. Bankers foreclosing on loans, thieves, abusive spouses, corrupt officials threatening people to gain bribes, press gangs forcibly or deceptively recruiting poor and working-class young men, are all local threats that ordinary people of this era periodically faced. So are accusations (either true or false) of expressing illegal religious or political sentiments, or business rivals who are willing to use violence to improve their profits. In addition, residents might also face larger and somewhat more distant problems like bad harvests, poor fishing, corrupt tax collectors extorting money from everyone in the neighborhood, or highwaymen stealing goods and robbing or killing travelers. The Lost have abilities that can allow them to alter thoughts and perceptions, locate stolen goods, acquire blackmail information, or otherwise solve mundane problems that ordinary mortals might have no way to deal with. While they couldn't safely reveal how they accomplished these tasks, the characters might either be secret heroes or even mysterious champions — as long as they don't get so famous that the Huntsmen come looking.

Creating the Faerie Tale Mood

The stories in *Grimms' Fairy Tales* are mostly about ordinary unassuming individuals triumphing over adversity and gaining wealth and happiness, although some are about foolish wealthy and powerful people getting their comeuppance. The heroes and heroines of these stories usually succeed through some mixture of cleverness, luck and perseverance. Another major factor in these tales is that most of these heroes and heroines are unfailingly polite and helpful to those in need, even if the people in need are ragged or even hideous-looking individuals, when most in this era would ignore or actively reject them. In return for their consideration or aid, these individuals often provide invaluable information or magical aid that allows the protagonists to triumph.

To run a chronicle with the feel of *Grimms' Fairy Tales*, the character should mostly or exclusively be middle class, working class or poor. The campaign should also involve frequent trips to the Hedge, and particularly interactions with hobgoblins and Goblin Markets. The characters should all have the chance to help Hedge dwellers in need, to be threatened by menacing Hedge Beasts, and to be swindled or get lucky at a Goblin Market. They should also have the chance to build up relationships with hobgoblins and either owe them favors, or have the Hedge dwellers owe the characters favors.

However, the characters should spend at least as much time in the human world as they spend in the Hedge. They should have ordinary lives, and people they know and regularly interact with. The characters should have the chance to do favors for or otherwise aid both their neighbors and also beggars and wanderers. As in the Hedge, the characters should be able to build lasting relationships with the mortals around them.

The Chronicles of Darkness

What of the other creatures in the Chronicles of Darkness in this time, in this place?

Vampires mostly kept to their cities. They closed their doors for fear of wolves, just like everyone else. In Berlin, in Hamburg, in Munich, vampires built their knightly feudal courts under Invictus rule. Populations and roles were strictly regimented; Princes ruled the night. They used the threat of werewolves to keep their vassals in line. Each Prince sold his or her citizens on collective defense.

Werewolves considered the entire region their unchallenged territory. Vampires were but nuisances, cockroaches that scramble into their petty cities when threatened. Packs roam the fields, mountains, and woods with few both willing and capable of stopping them. One pack of Blood Talons, called Gotterdammerung, claimed the Black Forest, and ruled over all other werewolf packs in the region.

Mages, like vampires, clung to cities for fear of the big, bad wolves. The cities enjoyed newfound interest in the occult, so this kept many sorcerers busy researching and trying to understand these trends.

Prometheans are never very common, but this period saw some Tammuz, and would soon burst with Frankensteins. With the release of Shelley's renowned novel, hidden labs deep in the forested mountains would be the perfect place for would-be gods amongst men to bring forth the fire of life.

Sin-Eaters are increasingly common, as urbanization and population density brings new diseases and complications. One particular krewe has dedicated itself to rooting out just why so many people are disappearing now, only to return completely unaware of what happened some time later. Further, why do some return with traces of death dripping off their forms?

Demons thrive in this time, in this place. Since the people have very strict ideas of what constitutes normalcy and what constitutes the supernatural, they can play the part and blend in with relative ease. Some clever demons have used this knowledge to amass cults, believing the demon the biblical Adversary. By and large, the God-Machine seems to be avoiding this region. The couple of demons aware of the changeling plight wonder if the abundance of Gentry might just be pushing back the Machine.

Hunters are very common in this area, particularly disorganized peasants looking to end the many threats in the shadows. Few compacts and conspiracies have taken hold here, although some cells are close to becoming compacts in their own right. One group, the Knightly Order of the Knecht Ruprecht, roots out werewolves by wandering the countryside in dedicated cells, testing the populace for common tells and signs of lycanthropy.

Beasts, while uncommon, are a source of disproportionate fascination. This is a time of heroes, and further, a time of Heroes. The Heroes of this era stand in stark contrast to many changeling stories. In fact, more than a couple changelings have run afoul of overzealous Heroes.

You might also include wealthy and powerful people who have some desperate problem, like someone who is ill whom doctors can't help, someone who has been cursed or had a valuable treasure stolen, or faced similar problems. If one or more of the characters can solve this problem, they should earn some impressive reward. However, they might also earn the jealousy and disdain of some powerful person who believes that he should have been given the reward.

As befits a good faerie tale, the chronicle also requires antagonists, and having two sets can be useful. In addition to the obvious threat of Huntsmen and perhaps even the Gentry, the characters and their mortal friends and allies should also face mortal threats, like greedy bankers, corrupt tax collectors, or vengeful magistrates. A powerful mortal who is jealous of the characters' successes or the rewards they have been given also makes an excellent antagonist. After the characters gain a significant reward, the next segment of the chronicle could involve defending themselves from this powerful rival.

When resolving these conflicts, characters who have aided others should find these people and hobgoblins coming to their aid or offering valuable advice. Characters who ignored people in need should either receive no aid or should be actively hindered in their efforts. However, everyone except the villains should forgive characters who see the error of their ways and sincerely apologize and attempt to redress the wrongs they committed. This type of chronicle would focus on reciprocity, connections with others, solving difficult or seemingly impossible mysteries or problems, and overcoming overwhelming odds through cooperative effort.



The desert dust is little more than an inconvenience to Merew-Tjaw, but to one of her greatness, even an inconvenience is an affront to the divine order. Riding camelback through the desert streets of an unfamiliar city mere hours after her disorienting, cult-sponsored awakening only adds to her considerable irritability, which is further fostered by her traveling companions, a sneering dwarf and a witless cultist.

"I'm losing patience, Annoub," says the undying woman through the gauzy cloth that encircles her still-reforming shell. She runs her thumbs back and forth over the reins of the camel, wondering how they would feel while choking the still-smiling dwarf's life from his own resurrected cadaver. "These towns are always too small. What is it this time? Fifty men? A hundred? I cannot stress how much I am displeased that my cult saw fit to awaken me for a skirmish like this. Towns will change hands with every cycle of locusts. The fact that you pay any heed to the cowardice of mortals is a disservice to all of us."

The dwarf continues to grin, his ever so slightly crooked teeth gleaming white in his coal-dark face. "Your annoyance will be a great service, my compatriot," he says with an exaggerated, formal tone. "No doubt if you are in such a great hurry to return to slumber, you will leverage your considerable power to magnificent effect, and we can all resume our peculiar duties as sponsored by the Judges. Being so distant from my own awakening and thus denuded, you won't begrudge me this bit of assistance. Especially since I've kept that pectoral so safe for you for so long."

A momentary memory pushes in the back of Merew-Tjaw's mind, of a brilliant pectoral of beaten...copper? Brass? She can't be sure, and as fast as it comes the memory subsides once more under the turmoil of her fragmentary mind.

A curse on that dwarf anyway, she thinks, a curse for his collection of relics, a curse for his flouting of the Judges, and most especially a curse for his knack for awakening before me. But she does not speak this aloud, instead muttering formless words under her breath. Her cult has raised her to defend them, and the dwarf is part of that plan; she must see to its fruition, for the moment at least.

"All the king's horses and all the king's men," says the dwarf's sycophantic idiot cultist. Merew-Tjaw almost killed him when she first saw him, but the dwarf interceded, with a claim about the cultist having prophetic visions. Having listened to his mindless babble for over a disorienting hour, Merew-Tjaw finds that she is close to killing him anyway. He's not one of hers.

The cultist, shaking uncontrollably — as he has been since Merew-Tjaw's awakening — raises one arm and points. At first, Merew-Tjaw sees the soldiers, staggered rows of them like in any war, men in the garments of the period. Hundreds of them are charging out of the deep desert to assault the gates of the town. Merew-Tjaw sneers at the force, and then the air fills with strange sounds and smells. Men fall on the sand, their blood welling out from invisible arrows. Merew turns to look for the sorcerers raining this magic down on the invaders, and in the harbor are great beasts, behemoths of metal and smoke, like cities made to float on the water. The sand in the outer defenses bursts upward like a giant hand rising, flinging men into the air.

The attackers clamber over the outer earthworks and the defenders, greatly outnumbered, fall into disarray. The sorcerous citadels in the bay watch ominously. Merew-Tjaw glances over to Annoub. The dwarf says, "They make war like the enemies of Irem."

The idiot cultist speaks in a singsong voice, "Ashes, ashes, they all fall down." He has strangely pale skin, burned by the sun, and Merew-Tjaw notices that his eyes are unfocused, like an addict of strange alchemies. She narrows her eyes against the noonday brightness and utters a strange word whose meaning she cannot remember, but one that strikes him senseless and flings him from his camel. She descends to the sands, her bare feet reveling in the heat, the plain cloth wrappings fluttering despite the lack of a breeze, and tells Annoub, "Time for us to move on."



The Ruins of Empire

Every single empire in its official discourse has said that it is not like all the others, that its circumstances are special; that it has a mission to enlighten, civilize, bring order and democracy, and that it uses force only as a last resort. And, sadder still, there is always a chorus of willing intellectuals to say calming words about benign or altruistic empires, as if one shouldn't trust the evidence of one's eyes, watching the destruction and the misery and death brought by the latest mission civilisatrice.

– Edward Said, Orientalism

The sun is setting upon the old world. Soon the barge of Ra will pass into the Underworld, and then night will fall across the land. The world already feels the tremors of discontent and the coming of a time of great conflict. No empire is eternal — there is no Rite of Return for a society, not for Irem, nor for any of the pale shadows that humanity has erected in the ensuing years.

The great empires in Europe and Asia Minor are on the edge of crumbling. Their competitors and their offspring nip at their heels like jackals. Soon they, too, will collapse into obscurity, becoming mere fragments of their former glory, their mysteries and their greatness lost to time.

This situation is not foreign to the Deathless. After Irem's sudden disappearance, the ancient dead awakened to a world shaped by the influence of their former culture, but with each Sothic Turn that influence became increasingly distant. The destruction of old kingdoms and the rise of new social orders is familiar even to those who have little memory of their past existences.

Even so, this *interruption* comes with startling changes. Interlopers raid the tombs of mummies in unprecedented numbers — pale-skinned thieves from far beyond the boundaries of old Irem. The technology of this world is nothing short of miraculous. At the last Sothic Turn, Roman Ægypt used tools of iron and bronze, leather shoes and stone roads. Now the teeming mortals boast command of lightning from the sky, voices from the ether, fire and explosions from the products of the earth. It is a time in which craven men may command the power once held only by the mighty priests and wizards of a bygone age, yet they feel no sense of awe at the miracles that they grasp. To the philosophers of this era, there may be no gods at all, and this nihilistic idea that both the advances of science and the chaos of warfare serve no master and no Judge is troubling to the Deathless.

Most disturbingly, many of the Deathless find themselves transported to far shores. Away from the familiar river valleys and deserts of North Africa, the lands of distant countries are strange, often humid and cloying. While their social structures are different, for an ancient cultist from the labyrinthine society of Irem, the customs and laws are easily learned. By means of new transportation, though, on rail or on wing, the bodies of the dead — and many of their key relics — are disinterred and moved wholly to far shores. Even the threat of curses and the physical intervention of cults is not always enough to stop the wholesale confiscation of corpses.

At the beginning of this 20th century, the Deathless awaken in unprecedented numbers, a century before the next Sothic Turn. Their brief sojourns are sparked by the many invasions into their tombs, both due to the presence of foreign adventurers and the increased demand for protection by the mummies' cults. With the arrival of the next full Descent nearly upon them, the Deathless of this era increasingly make provisions to spread their influence through the industrialized world.

Theme: Unlife Among the Ruins

The *Ruins of Empire* era spans roughly 1893–1924, a period of great turmoil in the modern age. In Western Europe, the British Empire is contracting, and its

reach will soon wane. The nations of Europe fall into the clutches of the Great War in 1914, and this disaster rapidly drives those nations into near collapse, with long-lasting repercussions that will boil to a head a generation later. In the Middle East, the Ottoman Empire is a paper tiger, and the weight of the Great War will finally sunder it and give rise to new nations with its passing.

Mummies that arise in this era are watching the world collapse around them. To many Deathless, this provides a certain sense of satisfaction: All of the technological toys and so-called "civilization" of the modern world cannot prevent the collapse of humanity back into paroxysms of brutality. Guns, bombs, automobiles, and radios may not have been invented in Irem, but these devices do not seem to make the humans of this age in any way superior to their historical predecessors. Unfortunately, this also means that mummies are increasingly awakened by cultists threatened by the onslaught of war. When soldiers march into the valleys of North Africa once again, the cults in Egypt's modern cities quietly call upon their protectors, who are not so easily dissuaded with bullets. In the midst of this strife, the governments of Britain and France impose their own attempts at rule in Egypt as an attempt to counter the Ottoman alliance with the Central Powers, and nationalists in Egypt who remember older, traditional rites use their Deathless allies to protect themselves from the overreach of foreign imperial powers.

The descent into the Great War mirrors the Descent of the Deathless. At the opening of the 20th century, the promise of the industrial world as a place of bounty and wonder is imprinted upon the consciousness of people from the technologically developed nations. The crushing war that follows drives home the point that from these heights, the fall is precipitous. This similarity is not lost on mummies who find themselves repeatedly awakened during this period, as their cults grow increasingly desperate or ever more relic-hungry Egyptophiles disturb their relics.

While the Deathless are always servants of their Judges, the world at the dawn of the new century challenges this notion, too. The tumult of trench warfare and the imperialist spread of the European powers strains ideas of faith: How could any god permit the massive slaughter of the era, and what does it mean when gods are powerless against the invasion of colonialists who displace their ancient role in society? For mummies, this is not a matter of faith; the cycle of visiting the Underworld confirms essential truths about the mummy's role in the world and the presence of supernatural authority to guide the scions of Irem. Increasingly, though, even the tenets of faith are crumbling, and in these ruins, too, the Deathless see both questions and opportunities.

Mood: Curses Great and Small

For Deathless who awaken into the early 20th century, the arrival of foreign powers, the Great War, and the strife that surrounds Egypt and the Ottoman Empire place a great strain on their personal activities. Although the mummies remain (mostly) faithful servants of the Judges and the cults that protect them, the sheer scope of the political and military conflicts that surround them force the Deathless into new ways of thinking about their world. For some mummies, this means taking advantage of the sudden surge of interest in all things Egyptian, and relocating their cults overseas. For others, these sweeping changes are little more than a backdrop to the personal anguish suffered by those seeking blissful repose or even the elusive hope of Apotheosis.

Mummies in this era watch the world's Descent, as the nations grapple with each other and their lifeblood spills on the fields of war. Countries lose their sense of identity and vanish like an Iremite dream. For the Deathless this is no great change; Irem had its share of military conquests and wars. But it raises the question: Is the world itself trapped in a cycle of Descent? Will civilizations crumble, their fire guttering and slumbering for ages before new ones arise?

Though mummies are used to being outsiders in the societies to which they awaken, in this modern world they are quite a bit less strange than some of the people with whom they associate. Groups like the Theosophical Society, the Rosicrucians, and of course LDI all have roots in this era, pursuing ideas or magics that, to the Deathless, look like distorted afterimages of the magic of Irem.

If Apotheosis exists for the Deathless, does it also exist for the world? And if not, is humanity itself doomed to a constant cycle of self-destruction? In this world, almost certainly.

What This Is...And Is Not

Ruins of Empire is a primer to provide you with useful ideas and new rules to fuel **Mummy: The Curse** games based in this period of empires in decline. The focus here is on how the Deathless interact with the emergence of the modern world from the ashes of war and the collapse of old imperial powers. To that end, this setting focuses on settings as they are of interest to the Deathless, and upon rules useful to building **Mummy** characters who can interact easily with this era, a full century before the next Sothic Turn.

The historical material here touches on high points of the era, and provides an outline of places that may make for interesting chronicles. These ideas can serve as jumping-off points for your own references. You can easily find much more comprehensive historical information through the Internet or the library.

Settings — The Western Empires

The *Ruins of Empire* era focuses predominantly on two world powers: the British Empire and the Ottoman Empire. Both are world-spanning civilizations that, at the opening of the era, appear to be unassailable and mighty, but by the end of the Great War find their power broken.

While mummies can (and do) head to all corners of the world, both before and during this period, the prime areas of importance for most of the Deathless lie in these two centers of proud cultures.

Britain: The Victorian and Edwardian Eras

In 1893, the British Empire is in the tail end of the Victorian era. This is a time of unprecedented stability and prosperity for the British. Industrialization has improved the income of the working class, though it has also brought hazards of pollution and dangerous labor. Much of Britain's wealth comes from its colonial policies: Wars fought against other European powers determine who will control the fate of lucrative gold mines, coal, gems, and spices from Africa and India. The indigenous populations of those continents, of course, find themselves yoked under the influence of the colonizing European powers, often at gunpoint.

At home in Great Britain, the Victorian mores of the age provide a rigid society with a firm adherence to the ideals of industrial and scientific progress, propriety, decorum, and the supremacy of British culture — along with a degree of *noblesse oblige*, in the form of the duty of the civilized world to bring order and civilization, often with Christianization, to the "less developed" parts of the Earth. Naturally, the subjects of the empire have their own ideas about this process.

With the death of Queen Victoria in 1901, the empire enters its brief Edwardian era, which in many ways follows the Victorian trends. This time marks the beginnings of many technologies that are recognizably modern, such as the widespread use of the automobile, the development of the radio, and the pioneering of manned heavier-than-air flight. This summer of the empire ends when Britain is ensnared in the devastation of the Great War, a period of destruction that simultaneously unifies the country with nationalist sentiment, cracks the stability of the empire by increasing calls for independence in British colonies abroad, and overthrows the structured, rigid codes of Victorian society.

To the Deathless, of course, Britain is much like Irem after the Pact of Ubar. While its soldiers fight in wars abroad, the battles in its heart are political struggles between Whigs and Tories, architectural duels between Classical and Gothic Revival. Its sorcerers are certainly no match for the Shan'iatu, but from their hidden laboratories they release killing vapors, exploding shells, and devices that can sense or communicate with outposts many miles distant. Gold and luxuries flow into the coffers of Britain from its subjects abroad. Like Irem, it too must decline, though in this case the Deathless may be present to see the fall.

While few Deathless find themselves in Britain proper upon first awakening in this era — not many had reason to make the trek from Roman Ægypt to the far-flung lands of the Picts during the last Sothic Turn — the gloomy island kingdom is an eventual destination for many mummies whose tombs are invaded or relics stolen away. With British archeologists spiriting away large numbers of relics and mummies for "safekeeping" in museums, Deathless often have little choice but to follow. Worse still, unwitting tomb robbers sometimes destroy relics (or die near them!) without understanding the forces that they command, leading to the creation of many Amkhata. Some of the mummies disinterred

A British Timetable

Just so that you know what to read about for your chronicle, here's a concise table of important dates and events for Britain during this era.

Year	Important Events
VICTORIAN ERA	
1893	
1895	Fourth Ashanti War (Gold Coast)
1896	British victory in Fourth Ashanti War
1898	Battle of Omdurman (British and Egyptian troops take the Sudan)
1899	Second Boer War (British forces vs. southern African nations)
1900	Ashanti Uprising (Gold Coast); formation of Southern and Northern Nigeria Protectorates (beginning of Nigerian colonial era)
EDWARDIAN ERA	
1901	Death of Queen Victoria
1902	End of last Ashanti War; all of Gold Coast becomes a British protectorate
1908	Summer Olympic Games held in London
1910	Death of King Edward VII; Britain establishes Union of South Africa
1911	Parliament Act of 1911 signs shift in power from House of Lords to House of Commons
1914	The Great War begins
1919	Treaty of Versailles signals end to the Great War

by tomb robbers may be Sadikh, and given their value to the Deathless, one may feel compelled to traverse oceans in order to track down a missing companion.

British Africa

Of interest to the Deathless, the British hold significant sway throughout much of Africa. British interests rule directly or indirectly over Sudan, Egypt, and South Africa, as well as several other parts of the continent. At this time, the British have been present in parts of Africa for a century, and several wars have cemented their presence. To the Deathless, this would mostly seem to be a petty series of squabbles between natives and foreigners, but the British engage in a program of raiding the tombs of antiquity and sending vast numbers of vessels (and mummified corpses!) abroad. This program of relocation began, though, with an enemy of the British Empire.

The roots of modern British Egyptology probably lie with Napoleon Bonaparte, who invaded Egypt in 1798. In addition to securing trade routes and thwarting British interests, Napoleon's army acquired a large number of Egyptian artifacts, which were sent to France as curiosities. In 1799, Pierre-François Bouchard uncovered the Rosetta Stone, which provided the key to unlock the hieroglyphic language. In 1801, the Rosetta Stone fell into British hands when their army took Alexandria (then, as now, the home of the Arisen-famed Prince of Glass). Within the next several years scholars managed to translate the inscriptions on the stone, copied in hieroglyphs, demotic, and ancient Greek, and then used this to build the beginnings of a dictionary of the hieroglyphic language.

This ushered in a new study of Egyptian sites and records. In short order, both scientists and thieves plundered the sites of antiquities. In 1822 Claude Lelorrain used explosives to remove the ceiling from the Temple at Dendera; the ceiling fresco subsequently sold to the king for a monumental sum and was placed in the Louvre. This set the tenor for future expeditions of Egyptologists, who often sought wealth as readily as they did knowledge — and even the "enlightened few" hoping to preserve the antiquities often saw the capture and expatriation of artifacts as a duty to bring them into "civilized hands," under the assumption that European cultures and technologies were better stewards of such artifacts. These sorts of daring and damaging exploits accelerated, and in so doing, pressed into the tombs of the Deathless.

Sudan

Situated on the east side of North Africa, with the Sahara as its southern border, Sudan is an African nation that spent much of the 19th century under Ottoman control; but at the opening of the *Ruins of Empire* it is the site of the Battle of Omdurman in 1898. This clash between British forces and





Mahdists (a local group of nationalists who enforced Sharia law) ended with a British victory, after which the British established a governor-general to administer the country, ostensibly under joint British and Egyptian authority but in reality as a British colony. By 1914 Sudan is officially recognized as part of the Kingdom of Egypt and Sudan, rather than a subject province of the Ottoman Empire, a state of affairs that lasts until 1956. Starting in 1924 the British — in a manner similar to the division of India and Pakistan — push to divide Sudan into a predominantly Muslim population in the north and a non-Muslim, English-speaking population in the south.

Mummies will recognize Sudan as a point of interest because its location places it inside or near-to the purported borders of lost Irem. While Sudan may not have the grandiose pyramids and temples for which Egypt is famous, the country was actually a ruling body over Egypt in the 8th century BCE, a time that some Arisen might hazily remember from just after the Sothic Turn of 910 BCE. In this heyday, the Kingdom of Kush took over the Egyptian dynasty, an act that almost certainly had repercussions for cults and mummies still situated in that area.

Sudan is a locale consumed with war, even before the Great War begins. Khalifa Abdallahi ibn Muhammad attempted to expand his territory with attacks on Ethiopia in 1887 and Egypt in 1889, both of which failed; he dies in battle in 1899, paving the way for the takeover of Sudan. When the British take control through their Egyptian governor, the local populace recognizes this as an attack on their sovereignty and a further attempt to erode the Islamic underpinnings of Sudanese law and society. As a result, there are many opportunities for the Arisen to take advantage of unrest, so long as they are careful to fit into the expectations of the populace (or just don't care what mere mortals think of them).

Egyptomania Strikes

Thanks to the exposure from Napoleon's sortie and the subsequent reports from visitors to Egypt, the European populace quickly became enamored with the romance of Egypt. For some, the country represented a proto-civilization, an organizational model of the earliest ideas behind the creation of a society. For many others, Egypt represented a mystical ideal, one that could be interpreted as an alternative to technological civilization. The pervasive belief in mummy's curses, Pharaonic powers, ritual spells, and even Aten worship all drew in people seeking supernatural answers in an increasingly industrialized world. Naturally, very few of those people would ever discover the truths behind such distorted legends; some would go on to form rogue cults and harmless mystical fraternities, while others became somewhat more forbidding groups such as LDI (see **Mummy: The Curse**, p. 204) and the Rosicrucians (see below).

The rise of Egyptomania leads to a patronage system. Wealthy aristocrats seeking vanity treasures employ archeologists — or, sometimes, men of more dubious provenance — to uncover Egyptian treasures, which are smuggled back to Europe for display in private collections. The Egypt Excavation Fund, founded in 1882, raises money for the express purpose of funding European scholars to travel through Egypt and produce scholarly papers, often with a particularly Eurocentric bent; the Society changes its name after the Great War to the Egypt Exploration Society, but its mission remains largely unchanged.

European countries jockeying for influence in Egypt attempt to secure rights to dig sites or collections. Predominant among these competing interests are Britain, France, and Germany. In each case, the countries attempt to puppet the Egyptian government, both for military purposes and for their own cultural cachet.

To the Deathless, this intrusion of European explorers all seems a bit vainglorious and absurd. Most of the European Egyptologists of the period seek out artifacts on the premise of keeping the largest collection for their own national pride, a situation that the Arisen see as looters comparing their illicit hoards for prestige among thieves. The servants from Irem don't care if the patrons behind the looters are wealthy, influential, or educated; their duties require the collection of vessels and the safeguarding of tombs. Stopping the robbers may, however, require going to the source, and so a mummy rising in response to a call from a cult or a violation of his remains might well travel to Europe to track down and subvert or eliminate the aristocrat who had the temerity to finance such an inauspicious venture.

Crossing the Channel

Before the beginning of the Great War, entering Britain is not a particularly difficult feat. The Deathless understand basic principles such as currency and borders; it's just a matter of acquiring *this* currency to cross *those* borders. The largest hindrance is time — traveling from Egypt to Britain in 1893 likely means taking a ship across the Mediterranean Sea, passing through several countries by train, then taking a boat across the Channel to England. (The ferries don't yet have the technology to carry train cars, and the underground channel tunnel is still a century away. Telegraph communication across the Channel, however, is possible.)

Even with money a non-issue, the Arisen will certainly raise some eyebrows in continental Europe: Because none of the Deathless are ethnically Caucasian, they stand out quite a bit from the rest of the populace (see **Mummy,** p. 19). While the servants of Irem may not pay much credence to the issue of ethnicity and skin color, many of the continental Europeans do. Slavery has only been abolished in Britain for a few decades at this point, and issues of race and class distinction are still paramount. Making travel arrangements, securing documents, and in some cases even finding a berth may present frustrating challenges. Naturally, a mummy can confront these with wealth, strength, guile, or magic, but the more blatant the mummy's response, the less likely it is that the trip will be successful — even if a mummy succeeds in securing passage by force or threat of force, each further

step will present more resistance. The best option is for the mummy's cult to help arrange passage.

Travel problems can be particularly eased if the mummy also seeks patronage. Since the explorers from Europe are keen to collect artifacts, legends, and prestige from "mysterious Africa," the Arisen and their cults can pose as local guides, mystics, or historians in order to secure patronage. Naturally, many of the Deathless would chafe at such an arrangement, but this does have the great advantages of subtlety and of opening society doors that would otherwise be closed to a so-called savage.

Once the Great War begins, traveling to England becomes a dicier proposition. Britain takes its borders much more seriously once the war is on, and any traveler must pass a battery of questions, examinations, and background checks. The military can choose to arbitrarily restrict or deny travel to any foreigner, on the basis of war security. Affinities such as Blessed Soul and Divine Countenance can help to push this process along, but rumor holds that Queen Victoria established her own cabinet for matters occult, and if this is true then the use of Affinities and Utterances risks drawing attention. While mortal sorcerers are little more than an annoyance, no mummy needs to waste time dealing with petty would-be rivals, especially when they have the ear of the royal government.

Stories in England

Whether searching for a stolen vessel, pursuing another mummy, or fighting against a rival cult, a mummy in England has much to experience. England is, itself, the site of many ancient supernatural groups; while the Deathless might consider them petty compared to the magnificence of Irem of the Pillars, some of them can still be dangerous for the Arisen. After all, how can a mummy fulfill his purpose if he's trapped in an otherworldly maze beneath a mound deep in the forest?

Some interesting story hooks that present themselves for mummies traveling to England in this period include:

- Several vessels transported back to England are accidentally broken or destroyed, perhaps during a storm, or in a break-in, or during a house fire in a richly appointed manor with a private collection. This in turn creates several lesser Amkhata. The mummy first awakens to track down the stolen vessels, but then must deal with the Amkhata after arriving in England.

- A mummy arises prematurely to discover that enemies are closing in on her; her cult is already badly decimated or wiped out, and her foes (other mummies, Shuankhsen, or some unknown rival) are closing in on her tomb. Recognizing the cultural divide in Europe, the mummy arranges to travel to England as a servant — not an especially glamorous position, but a familiar one. By taking on this humble guise she manages to avoid notice for a time, but she must reconcile this with the burning drive of her Sekhem, pushing her to finally engineer a confrontation with her adversary.

- A mummy in Khartoum (the capital of Sudan) awakens to the call of her cult, who hope to use her power to expel British foreign involvement and to strengthen the Mahdi cause. Much to their dismay, they discover that the mummy is not particularly enamored of the religious fervor of the Mahdi, but is nevertheless bound to their agenda. Does the mummy care enough about this unfamiliar religion to resist the call of the cult and risk a rapid Descent, or does he seek to reconcile the Mahdi faith with his own understanding of Duat? A female mummy in particular would face resentment and anger, at least until she makes her power known.

- In a pastiche of *The Secret Garden*, a trio of lonely children find a hidden garden in a manor house, where the emotionally distant owner of the manor has secured certain vessels that he acquired in his youth. Though he does not realize it, the curses from these objects have led to emotional traumas and deaths in his family; the children, unaware of this, have taken to playing in the garden among the relics, and the magic of the relics has given them a small measure of magical fulfillment — making coincidences seem to happen, causing animals to behave unusually docile, or offering illusionary glimpses of the fantasies that the children play out. When the Deathless arrives to reclaim the relics, it becomes clear that the curses and powers have infected this entire household; does the mummy steal away the relics and leave the children with shattered memories and mundanity, or wipe out the affliction by stooping to murder of the innocent?

- Awakened by her cult after moving to England previously, the mummy learns that one of her most valuable cultists has vanished under strange circumstances. The other members of the cult say that the individual went to a mystic site, hoping to find evidence of a relic, but vanished in the middle of the night. The two other cultists who went along can offer only unusual descriptions of "beings of smoke and fire" or "roiling darkness that seeped out from the ground." With the mummy arisen for the purpose of finding their missing cultist, investigation turns up evidence that the individual was kidnapped by some sort of supernatural entity, perhaps taken beneath the hill. How do the Judges offer guidance to the Deathless when they find themselves in the twisted magical labyrinths of another culture's ancient world of spirits and faeries? (Storytellers might look for inspirations in **Changeling: The Lost** or **Mage: The Awakening**, though it's important to keep an eye toward the mummies' central focus on the quest for memory and identity, in which these are conundrums from another culture rather than supernatural fighting matches.)



FRANCE: A COLONIAL EMPIRE

While England's rulers give names to the historical periods of this era, France is a similarly ambitious player. At the opening of the *Ruins of Empire*, France is a significant colonial power in Africa, and entangled in an ongoing economic and political conflict with neighboring unified Germany. Having recently lost the Franco-Prussian War, France is embroiled in a series of internal conflicts over its identity. Conservative elements early in the era put down attempts at a series of workers' revolutions, and nearly resume the monarchy, but eventually the government stabilizes in the form of the Third Republic. A series of badly failed military endeavors combined with political scandals kept the Republic in a state of internal turmoil, but at the start of the *Ruins of Empire*, France is entering the *belle époque*, a period of new forms of art and prosperity.

The rapid changes making their way across France are the sort that would take the Undying by surprise. Over a period of 30 years, the Catholic Church loses much of its power in France, and in 1905 the French government formally separates Church and State. The Eiffel Tower, built for the 1889 Universal Exposition, showcases a magnificently modern form of construction; it is a monument of steel, made without sorcery, over twice the height of the Great Pyramid. Science and art both find a home in France, with Marie Curie working there, Louis Pasteur having recently spread new vaccinations and a greater acceptance of germ theory, and Henri Poincaré developing significant strides in mathematics and physics. French art of the period moves toward impressionism and art nouveau, and away from the classically structured forms of academic art. Successors of Irem will at least recognize the suburbanization of cities as modern transportation pushes working and servant classes to live in poor neighborhoods while nobles and wealthy elites pursue haute couture from their manses, separated by subways and trains as much as by class rivalries.

While France is moving through this modernizing period, it is also exerting colonial ambitions in Africa, with a hand in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and many other parts of Western and North Africa. As usual, French military and colonial occupation generally ignores the pre-existing nations and cultural identities of the area, and instead establishes its own firm and sometimes ruthless order upon the region.

Later historians will write that France suffers from a cultural malaise, *la décadence*, that manifests in moral degeneracy and weakness of will. While the accuracy of blaming "moral fiber" for a country's success or failure is debatable, the Deathless would see France during the belle époque as a nation given over to hedonistic pleasures, the rise of atheism, and rising ambitions among the working class — all things that the typical Iremite would likely despise. Then again, for a laborer given immortality with only vague direction, sexual openness is hardly a vice and the struggle of the worker may be a familiar one.

FRANCE IN AFRICA

As part of the scramble for Africa, France colonizes and lays claim to large swaths of the northwestern portion of the continent. These territories are summarized as French West Africa (founded 1895) and French Equatorial Africa (founded in 1910). In realistic terms, these territories represent thousands of distinct people and different cultures, all jammed under rule of a French colonial government. Typically, the inhabitants lack many of the rights of French citizens; they cannot vote, have limited property rights, and can't even leave. The goal, of course, is to create new markets, exploit natural resources, and expand prosperity back home.

The French government provides a small group of companies with lucrative land deals in exchange for development of natural resources in the area. The result

The Belle Époque and the Western Front

France has just come out of a turbulent political period, and blooms into a new artistic and scientific era, only to become a major front in the Great War.

Year	Important Events
1894	Captain Alfred Dreyfus wrongly imprisoned as part of a cover-up
1898	Fashoda incident: France forced to retreat from Egypt, gains control of Morocco
1904	Negotiation of Entente Cordiale leads to easing of hostilities between France and England
1905	1801 Concordat revoked, separation of Church and State established
1906	Captain Dreyfus finally exonerated, reinstated; revelations of corruption lead to government shift to reformers and radicals
1914	Balkan crisis leads up to entry of France in Great War
1919	Treaty of Versailles ends the Great War
1920	Battle of Maysalun signals French capture of Damascus and the surrender of Faisal ibn Husayn, who is expelled from Syria as a result. Treaty of Sèvres begins partitioning Ottoman Empire, leading to French Mandate of Syria
1923	French and Belgian occupation of the Ruhr (in Germany)

is predictably brutal: Companies send their agents to force locals into labor under threat of death or maiming. Though the French extract rubber and ivory from the native terrain, the situation is a disaster for the indigenous people, who have their religions suppressed, their families split up, and the enforcement of draconian quotas pressed upon them as they are forced into employment under the new landowners. Many of the companies don't even bother establishing businesses in Africa; they simply create paper shells in order to claim government concessions.

For the Arisen, this presents a particular problem. The French land-grabs mean that local settlements, including those built to support a cult or tomb, all wind up under French control. The colonial administrators start pushing the residents into backbreaking jobs harvesting natural resources, leaving little time or effort for the maintenance of a mummy's home. Workers who don't meet quotas have their hands cut off or their families executed. Naturally, this means that cults in the area will call upon their patron for help, and as mummies from the Congo to the Ivory Coast are awakened, conflict is inevitable. Yet the colonial troops will not hesitate to round up and kill an entire village if even one administrator is harmed, so mummies must employ subtler measures in order to protect their cults; little surprise, then, that among the resistance groups that form, many flee into the jungles and live hidden away from any oversight.

Of particular note to the Deathless is the fact that in 1916 all residents of Dakar, Gorée, Saint-Louis, and Rufisque are granted full French citizenship by an act of the National Assembly, which offers an opportunity for locals to gain the ability to vote, own property, and travel freely through French territories. While prejudice against Africans and Muslims remains high (and vestiges of this snake down into the modern age), this provides mummies with an opportunity to gain direct access to the halls of politics in the French colonial regime.

ALGERIA

Using a diplomatic pretext, the French invade Algeria and assume control of it in 1830, but this slights the country's fabulous history. Previously an Ottoman state, Algeria was home to the Barbary pirates, who famously preyed upon shipping in the Mediterranean and sailed as far abroad as Iceland. Before that, it was part of the expansive Fatimid Caliphate that stretched across North Africa for nearly three hundred years, and before *that*, it was divided between local peoples, Vandals, and Roman colonies (during the third Sothic Turn). Of course, before Rome, it was part of the Carthaginian sphere of influence (which didn't quite exist yet during the second Sothic Turn, but would soon rise thanks to Phoenician immigrants and Berber locals). Naturally, this means that for two Sothic Turns, Algeria is home to a significant amount of culture and development, and mummies will almost certainly have heard of or dealt with Berber peoples from that area in prior lifetimes.

Mummies who dealt with the Mediterranean or Europe in a prior Sothic Turn are likely to have passed through Algeria, as the northern coast served as a major travel hub. While the population and borders of what becomes modern-day Algeria shift markedly over time, when the French arrive they focus their colonial efforts on the coast and on the lucrative shipping trade. As a result, mummies and cultists in the southern parts of Algeria can still find rural communities that pay homage to Islamic tradition, and who deeply resent the French incursions. Eventually, the French co-opt or execute many of the local leaders, but this simply gives mummies more reasons to wake up, see the changes coming in the landscape, and become active in shifting their power bases once more. Mummies who lurk in the southern regions to avoid the invading Europeans may find themselves in the Tassili n'Ajjer, a river valley dominated by windswept sandstone rocks with spectacular vistas and prehistoric rock art that may date to humans who escaped during the diaspora after Irem's fall.

TUNISIA

Located to the east of Algeria, Tunisia is also a part of Berber ethnography, and shares the coastal access that makes Algeria valuable to European traders. Prior to the *Ruins* era, in fact, it spends several centuries as part of the same empires that control Algeria: Carthage, Romans, the Aghlabids, and the Fatimids. Tunisia features a diverse environment, with the Atlas mountains on its eastern edge, the arable Sahel along the eastern Mediterranean shores, and the beginnings of the Sahara to the south. This provides a similar diversity in the agriculture and jobs of the region, running the gamut from olive gardeners in the Mediterranean town of Soussa to mosaics, ceramics, hardwood products, and wine.

Before the French takeover, Tunisia is part of the Ottoman Empire, but even before the French arrive it has a great deal of autonomy. This means that there's significant resentment when the French arrive, and the colonials use lessons learned from the earlier conquest of Algeria. Tunisia is given the appearance of autonomy with its own ruler, but the French administration retains ultimate control. As early as 1907, Tunisian youth start organizing in hopes of fostering a new national unity, which predictably leads to a cycle of crackdowns followed by a broadening political base in response to increasing dissent. The opportunities available to mummies in this time should be obvious: Revolutionaries in need of aid or colonials looking to crush nationalist ambitions can both be played by a cult for recruitment, money, or political favors.

Tunis, the capital city, itself may have been a close neighbor of the historical city of Carthage. Certainly, the city has a history stretching back to the 6th century BCE — only three centuries after the second Sothic Turn. Mummies who were on one side or the other of the infamous war between Carthage and Rome — or who were connected to the other tribal peoples caught in between — will certainly have an opinion about the Punic Wars and the horrifying fact that



Rome's victory in that war means that succeeding cultures will be spawned from southern Europe, instead of mirroring the post-Iremite civilizations of Africa. By the second Sothic Turn, Tunis is taken over by Shi'ite Berbers of the Fatimid Caliphate, which spreads to encompass Egypt and most of Africa, giving local mummy cults more of a taste of the widespread grandeur of sprawling empires — and their eventual fall, as the city then suffers pillaging every few decades for the next century, before stabilizing under the Almohad dynasty and becoming a huge and shining centerpiece. During this period, Tunis can serve as a hub for sprawling city-based adventures, or flashbacks to such times, in the medieval Islamic world.

One oddity that mummies may recall is that during the third Sothic Turn, Tunisia is under Eastern Roman control, but only because it was reconquered recently from the Vandals (in 533–534 BCE). Mummies who were residents of the region may well have memories of being involved in the Germanic invasion of the area and its subsequent reconquest by Belisarius, which would seem an odd reflection of the current invasion of French and Italian migrants — who will similarly become embroiled in war with Germans only a few decades after the *Ruins* era.

THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE: THE SICK MAN OF EUROPE

The Ottoman Empire reigns over much of the Middle East, parts of Africa, and Southeast Europe. The Ottomans have pioneered advances in optics, rocketry, steam engines, and flight, sometimes even earlier than their counterparts in Europe. Their society, having recently gone through several reforms, separates religious law from secular law, affords equality before the law for all people regardless of social class and wealth, decriminalizes homosexuality, and boasts several modern factories and a modernized military service. But much of this will soon be in the past.

When the colonial powers begin their expansion into Africa, the Ottoman Empire is already well established there, but age has taken its toll. The empire is heavy with debt and has suffered disastrous defeats in military campaigns against Austria-Hungary and Russia, which have carved off several independent states. Though the empire is modernized, with progressive civil laws and a standing army, it is unable to prevent the encroachment of other European powers upon its territory. Britain in particular assists the empire, sending troops to conflicts in Cyprus and Egypt, then remaining firmly entrenched in those territories and exerting further control.

At the start of the *Ruins of Empire* era, the Ottoman Empire is considered a weakened but still dangerous territory, like an aging tiger that is slow but still has claws. By the end of the era, the empire is gone, dissolved by the pressures of the Great War, replaced with several splinter states and the newly formed Republic of Turkey.

When the dust settles, the foundations are laid for many countries that we recognize as parts of the modern Middle East — Bosnia, Kosovo, Albania, and Saudi Arabia were all in territories previously controlled by the Ottomans.

An Ottoman Timetable

The Ottoman Empire is in the throes of disintegration in this era; here's how things fall apart.

Year	Important Events
ABDUL HAMID II	
1894	Beginning of Hamidian Massacres (ethnic cleansing of Armenians, until 1896)
1903	Bulgarian insurrection in Macedonia
1908	Young Turk revolution (reformers, Turkish separatists, and European influences) restores earlier version of the constitution, limits power of the sultan; Bulgaria declares independence
MEHMED V	
1909	Countercoup (monarchists and hard-line Islamists) attempts to reverse the Young Turk revolution, but fails
1914	Ottoman Empire enters the Great War as one of the Central Powers, with Germany
1915	Deportation and massacre of ethnic Armenians in the Armenian Genocide (also, brutality against other ethnic minorities, including Greeks); Russian advance during Caucasus campaign
1916	Arab Revolt begins, Arab nationalists attempt to break apart from Ottoman rule, with support from British and French elements looking to destabilize the empire
1918	Turkish war of independence begins; occupation of Constantinople
1922	Sultanate abolished
1923	Republic of Turkey forms
1924	Office of Caliph abolished

CONSTANTINOPLE

The capital city of the Ottoman Empire, Constantinople, lies at the gateway between the Black Sea and the Aegean Sea, which leads to the Mediterranean. The city has been continuously inhabited since antiquity, and served as a center of trade and government for Rome and the Byzantine Empire before its conquest by the Ottomans. For significant portions of the Middle Ages, it was the largest and most cosmopolitan city in Europe, where traders from across the continent converged and Muslims, Christians, and Jews all congregated in relative peace.

By the time of the *Ruins of Empire*, Constantinople is a grand city in the process of modernization. Though the sultan is conservative, the promise of wealth and the benefits of industrialization are a potent lure. The city is a contrasting mix of medieval construction and nouveau architecture. Much of the flat land along the shore is covered in whitewashed square buildings with tiled roofs, and the occasional dome among them. Older or more impressive structures are surrounded by sets of four towers, and a modern bridge for automobiles crosses the inlet. The harbor is regularly choked by ships and sea-trade — large steamers as well as the occasional lateen-rigged boat.

Of interest to the Arisen, Constantinople has been continuously inhabited since before recorded history. It is quite possible, in fact, that a mummy might have made the journey to the city at nearly any point in history before the modern era. At the last Sothic Turn, in 551 CE, Constantinople was the capital of the Byzantine Empire under Justinian I, and any Arisen drawn into the politics of that era would likely have found the trip straightforward. Though the city's population suffered under plagues and invasions, it remained a center of the Mediterranean world, and thus an ideal place from which a mummy could form a cult with significant political reach. For those mummies who remained involved in smaller, more local politics, Constantinople would still be a place known due to its comparative magnificence.

During the *Ruins of Empire*, Constantinople follows the theme of the time. At the outset, it looms as the capital of a once-mighty empire, soon to vanish. By 1918, Ottoman forces have been routed, and British, French, and Italian troops occupy the city. The last sultan leaves in 1922, and shortly thereafter, the sun sets on the Ottoman Empire; the newly formed Republic of Turkey places its capital in Ankara.

These themes make Constantinople a focal point for **Mummy** stories in this time period. Vessels acquired from the northern coast of Africa could easily make their way into the hands of traders or aristocrats in the city. Cults with significant Reach might find that they must bribe, intimidate, or co-opt bureaucrats in the capital in order to proceed with their aims. As the Ottoman Empire crumbles, some provinces like Bulgaria break away, while others like Sudan come under the sway of European powers. In either case, cults may find themselves dislocated or relics removed; cults may also call upon their patron to defend them from invading forces, or engage in brutal sectarian violence against one ethnicity or another, in a war of cultural extermination that the mummy may find puzzling and possibly revolting, yet mandatory. The Karakol Society (or Sentinel Association) secretly works for Turkish independence in the city itself from 1918 up until the society is rooted out by the occupation in 1920; members or allies of that society could easily be cultists hoping to protect their patron from digging by officious invaders who suspect a tomb of being a secret meeting place for revolutionaries.

Although Britain, France, and Italy did send troops to occupy the city, it was not a military occupation in the dramatic "bombs and fires" sense. Rather, the commanders of the occupying forces drafted several treaties in conferences with the aim of removing the sultan and all opposition forces, and dividing the Ottoman Empire into occupation regions under foreign (Christian) governments overseeing the various local (Muslim) governing bodies. The occupying forces

Slavery, Genocide, and Imperialism

During the years leading up to the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, many events transpired that modern readers would consider atrocities. Specific ethnicities were rounded up and deported or executed; slavery persisted until as late as 1908; fundamentalism and nationalism led to extremism. From the outside, colonial ambitions by Western European nations exerted enormous pressure upon the states in and around Ottoman territory and in Africa. Entire countries were carved up arbitrarily, sometimes as a deliberate policy of "divide and conquer," often with the result of inflaming various tribal conflicts or splitting up families. The European interests in the area also resulted in dual or tripartite agreements about how to split up the Middle East with an eye toward colonial conquests and trade routes, often promising specific lands in exchange for allies — Britain promised an Arab homeland in exchange for the aid of Arabs in the Great War, and promised a homeland for Jews in the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and the later British Mandate of Palestine, which naturally led to, shall we say, *problems* later.

These topics are, naturally, quite sensitive to many people. Although the era is a period rife with these difficulties, and they can contribute to a rich tapestry of stories, make sure to discuss such topics with your game group before you introduce them. Some people may have strong feelings on these matters and possibly even find them unsuitable for their entertainment.



rounded up various officials and rebels, many of whom were exiled to Malta, but in large part kept the city intact, with a stated goal of re-opening the Bosporus Strait, protecting the Armenian populace, and denouncing Turkish nationalists. Thus, the city was a dangerous place for its inhabitants, but it avoided the massive destruction visited on other cities in the Great War due to the introduction of artillery.

STORIES IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Although in the modern age the Ottoman Empire is no more, during the *Ruins of Empire* era it is an ancient husk of its former remembered glory, much like mummies themselves. Ottoman territory historically ranged across southeast Europe, parts of north and east Africa, and throughout the Middle East, making it a pervasive influence even for mummies who never traveled far from the lands of the Nameless Empire. The proto-Arabic, Islamic, post-Byzantine flavor of the empire can provide a striking contrast to games set in Britain or Egypt, which might feel more familiar to players used to Victorian settings or adventures in Cairo and the surrounding deserts. The empire's political structure plays very well for **Mummy** games, as local towns handle their own politics, overseen by a loose civil structure leading up to the sultan; so a mummy's cult could easily co-opt an entire town without drawing too much attention from the national level. Arisen whose cults become engrossed in the schemes of Topkapi Palace will find it a rich haven of intrigue, with the sultan and his conservative advisors, the influence of the sultan's harem from one wing of the palace, and a parade of foreign advisors sent to modernize the army but whose suggestions are dismissed by military generals interested in maintaining the status quo. Even as the Great War turns against the Ottomans, the sultan remains insulated by his advisors, and does not seem to understand that his empire is about to be dissolved. Naturally, this is a wonderful backdrop for Arisen activities, such as:

- The mummy arises in Constantinople, only to discover that his cult has converted to Islam. While the mummy may not care about this relatively new religion, the cult has other ideas — alternatively terrified and fawning — because they've come into contact with a competing cult of traditional Iremites. The character's cult has awakened the mummy with instructions to destroy the other cult, including their mummy patron, a directive that pits the Arisen's duty to obey the cult against the sacred reverence for the duty of Irem.

- A member of the Karakol Society who is also an initiate of the cult awakens the mummy in 1918, demanding aid in the secret Turkish resistance. When the mummy asks for more specific instructions, the cultist insists that the mummy stop the British invaders. Killing British soldiers is ultimately a fruitless endeavor; the mummy will run out of Sekhem before destroying enough of the army to halt the advance, and will only draw suspicion. The player must find some way to fulfill the demands of the cult while remaining unobtrusive enough to avoid becoming the center of a full-scale military effort by European forces.

- The mummy arises near Ankara, as Turkish forces fight for a free Republic, but also while the Ottoman Empire attempts to suppress or exterminate other ethnicities. The cult is riven between members who see the protection of a new Republic of Turkey as paramount, and those who believe that they must carry out a pogrom to ensure a pure heritage. Now the mummy must navigate the treacherous backstabbing of her own cult, with some members working to purge undesirables while others constantly dive into revolutionary battles.

- The mummy is observed by a young writer in Constantinople, who is trying to write a novel to convey the intricacies of his characters' emotions while mirroring what he sees as the stagnation and decline of Ottoman society. The writer is part of the Servet-i Fünun, or Scientific Literature movement, a group of writers working to establish a pan-Turkish identity through modernized writing with the goal of jolting social sensibilities into reform. Shocked by the effect of Sybaris, the writer is unable to conceptualize the reality of the Arisen, so instead he transforms his impressions of the mummy into characters in his novel. In 1900, Mehmet Rauf publishes his novel, *Eylül*, which details the psychological descent of a quartet of characters locked in a downward spiral of love affairs and secret anxieties that threaten to destroy their health and their lives. Once the mummy reads it, it is clear that the themes of inability to express love and depression at the bleakness of the future reflect the denuded state of the Deathless. Does this analysis spur some of the guild of Scribes into action from the fear that it contains underlying metaphysical truths, or perhaps turn an Arisen reader to Apotheosis, with a mind to escaping the constant numbing servitude of endless lives?

- Rising in Topkapi Palace in Constantinople in the late 1800s, the mummy discovers that his cult has been mostly exterminated, and the only remaining member is in the sultan's harem. Although she is loyal, she is also trapped in the harem wing of the palace, subject to the intrigues of the court, and desperate to call upon the mummy for protection — and also to steal away a relic held by the sultan, which is causing the increasing paranoia of Abdul Hamid II. Obviously, the mummy cannot be seen in the harem apartments without causing alarm, and actually approaching the sultan directly could cause more problems than it solves. If only there were some way to get the gilded copy of the Qur'an away from the increasingly erratic sultan without arousing excessive suspicion....

EGYPT — THE OLD HOME

Of course, while the European influence on Egypt is pervasive in this era, Egypt still has a rich historical culture all its own. Dealing with European imperialists may be *necessary*, but the Egyptians are much closer to what mummies remember of the Nameless Empire, much more accommodating, and much better informed about the history and customs that mummies hazily recall.

Besides, a typical mummy doesn't exactly fit in at the local British country club.

At the outset of the era, Egypt is under the thumb of British controllers, although it has spent its last century as a nominal part of the Ottoman Empire. With the start of hostilities in 1914, the British accelerate their program for influence over Egypt by propping up a new sultan, to counter the influence of the Sultanate of the Ottomans, against whom the British are pitted in the Great War. Nationalist and independence movements occasionally flare up, but it is not until much later that Egypt gains its liberation from imperialism.



THE DEPARTMENT OF ANTIQUITIES

After the plundering of Egyptian treasures by Napoleon Bonaparte, the Egyptian Viceroy Said Pasha decreed the formation of the Department of Antiquities in 1858. In an ironic twist, the first director appointed was Auguste Mariette, a French academic. Mariette oversaw the opening of the first museum by the Department of Antiquities in Cairo in 1863. Thereafter, in a deliberate blow to the British, French interests continued to oversee the Department of Antiquities for a century. The Department became the official branch of the Egyptian government concerned with the search for tombs and artifacts. From time to time, the Department would become embroiled in political conflicts over the assignment of discoveries, or the gifting or repatriation of certain artifacts.

Due to its central role in the collection and distribution of artifacts, the Department of Antiquities is something of a clearinghouse for Arisen in search of vessels. Though objects do not commonly go missing from the museum at Cairo, the Department keeps records of permits for archeologists working in the field, and of various discoveries. The Department also oversees the business of recovering artifacts that have been stolen or sold under suspicious provenance. As a result, the Department has a significant store of knowledge regarding all manner of vessels. Of course, there's no way to tell which items are actually vessels and which are simply mundane treasures of the ancient world — but an Arisen or cultist who's hunting for a specific object, or wants to know who found it, can probably learn of that from the DOA.

In 1893, at the opening of the *Ruins of Empire* era, the head of the Department is Jacques de Morgan, a French miner with experience in the Caucasus, Stonehenge, and



Persepolis, with some especial experience in disinterring graves. It's likely that he has at least some suspicion of the actual supernatural power that lies beneath the sands in Egypt, having already dug through the mystic remnants of several other cultures. De Morgan's particular focus is on digging up evidence of a proto-dynastic civilization that predates any of the Egyptian tombs and pyramids that he unearths during his digs; little does he realize that he's chasing evidence of Irem of the Pillars. When he leaves the service of the DOA in 1897, it's to head to Persia in hopes of digging up evidence of an even earlier civilization. His later work is hounded by concerted attacks by brigands — possibly cultists mixed in with looters — and by an increasing inability to concentrate on the mundane details necessary to run an excavation, perhaps as a result of mental damage from a cursed relic.

When Jacques de Morgan leaves, his replacement is Victor Loret, an Egyptologist who discovers several tombs but leaves only a few years later, in 1899. Loret proves to be an able teacher and scholar but less effective as an administrator. He does manage to take detailed notes about the tombs of several New Kingdom Pharaohs such as Rameses III and Amenhotep III, and bequeaths these notes to his student, Alexandre Varille. Subsequently, his notes pass into the private collection of the Varille family, to be locked away until auctioned off in the 21st century. Loret also uncovered the tomb of at least one priest, so Arisen in this time period might suspect that his writings include more than just pictures of New Dynasty funerary trinkets.

Following Loret, the DOA comes under the purview of Gaston Maspero, a linguist and archeologist who had, in his early years, worked with August Mariette — the original director of the organization. Maspero proves to be an able administrator, and he works hand-in-hand with the Egyptian government to expand their storage facilities, promote anti-looting laws, crack down on known tomb robbers, and build a much more comprehensive understanding of the hieroglyphic writing system. Even so, Maspero understands that the trade in antiquities is so pervasive that completely abolishing it may be outside the scope of his resources, and thus he focuses primarily on protecting specific artifacts of particular value rather than attempting to halt all sales (a policy which, of course, could be beneficial to a mummy seeking to move a vessel without drawing too much attention from the archeological enforcement arm of the government). Maspero also mentors a young British student who proves to be a quick study, and suggests to certain noble patrons that this student would be an excellent guide for future digs in Egypt. That student is Howard Carter (see below). Maspero retires in 1914.

Succeeding Maspero is Pierre Lacau, a philologist who proves a bit more difficult than his predecessor. Lacau changes policy so that he or the DOA retain complete control over all antiquities, even able to decide whether the archeologists are allowed to keep any of the artifacts that they discover. He notably butts heads with Howard Carter, as he oversees Carter's work and often makes demands that Carter finds unpalatable. In a **Mummy: The Curse** chronicle, Lacau is less interested in the mythology of origins or languages, and thus is unlikely to be a cultist; rather, he is a bureaucratic difficulty for Arisen trying to recover vessels from tombs or hoping to disinter their allies.

Lacau serves as head of the DOA until 1936, after the time of the *Ruins of Empire* chronicle. It is not until 1953 that the DOA has an Egyptian at its head.

The Museum of Egyptian Antiquities

In tandem with the Department of Antiquities, the Museum of Cairo is constructed as a local repository for artifacts unearthed in the many digs across Egypt. The Museum also serves as a physical center of operations for scholars and Egyptophiles. Anyone hoping to undertake a dig will begin at the Museum, in order to deal with the Department of Antiquities, and end there, to place artifacts into the safe care of the museum's curators.

At the start of the period, in 1893, the Museum is located in Giza, the site of a relocation after flooding of the Nile damaged several artifacts at the prior facility. (The unintentional destruction of these artifacts also contributed to the formation of several lesser Amkhata.) In 1902 the Museum is relocated again to Tahrir Square in Cairo.

The Museum in Cairo is a two-story building, with the lower floor holding small artifacts from a variety of periods and the upper floor hosting valuable jewels, mummies, entire tombs' worth of artifacts, and (later) the famous treasures of Tutankhamun. Naturally, the Arisen may scent a vessel or two in this place; it would be almost impossible for the museum not to house several, whether by accident or by design. Getting to such a vessel, though, is a bit trickier.

The museum is typically guarded by Egyptian police, and the Department of Antiquities takes its job *very* seriously. Every artifact is catalogued, so an artifact that goes missing will generally be quickly noticed, and the museum will bring the considerable resources of the government to bear in tracking down the thief, often by distributing information about the piece to other governments in hopes that the art thief will be unable to bring it to market. For mummies, this is less of a concern — the vessel likely isn't going up for auction in some seedy venue — but the mummy and any associated cultists may find that the previous owners are a *bit* more dogged in their pursuit of vessels than any typical mortal, partly because many of the museum's directors have at least a passing familiarity with occultism, and partly because some of the museum's Egyptian employees are also cultists or magicians in their own right.

Any mummy who decides to splash through the museum in a paroxysm of Sekhem-fueled violence is likely to meet a quick return to the Underworld via efforts from the police, and possibly from a relic wielded by one of the employees. Even if nobody's sure exactly *what* the Arisen is, a cursed alabaster knife in the hands of a dedicated cultist can still pose a problem. The biggest reason not to rampage through the museum, though, is that *everybody* in the occult world knows that it's a resting

place for vessels, which means that *everybody* is watching it. A mummy who exercises anything but the lightest touch with the museum will become the target of every petty sorcerer within a hundred miles, not to mention drawing down the attention of every rogue scorpion cult and Shuankhsen who happens to hear about the deed. Other mummies, too, would doubtless hear about this, and would move quickly to neutralize anyone who drew such attention to their secret society, with a special interest toward collecting any relics that the interloper might have discovered. The rest of mummy society would consider such an act both reckless and arrogant, and probably an affront to the Judges; any mummy unwise enough to attempt it would become *mumi non grata*.

This also explains why no one mummy sets up a cult to take personal control of the museum: it's simply too high-profile, and would draw too many challengers. Having the resources of the museum would be valuable, but probably not worth the price of potentially losing one's entire cult to enemies.

KARNAK

The famous temple complex at Karnak is old — even to mummies. It may be more recent than Irem, but it has the veneer of age that the rest of the continent has trouble matching. The complex features sandstone columns and massive gates adorned with hieroglyphs of religious meaning. Though the complex is little more than a shrine adjacent to the city of Thebes during the first Sothic Turn, only two hundred 200 years later it enters a phase of additional construction that will go on for centuries, finishing (for the most part) in the 4th century BCE. This means that the temple complex is active and being worked on during the second Sothic Turn.

To a mummy's eyes, the inspiration for Karnak is obvious: The long rows of pillars are meant to emulate the glorious architecture of the former City of Pillars. The religious hieroglyphs are corrupted scribblings of priests who no longer understand the language that calls for the intercession of the Shan'iatu. The many temple complexes are partly built to reflect the glory of the later Pharaohs, but also to emulate half-forgotten designs from an architecture that can no longer be constructed, since the magic behind it has left the world.

Vague memories among the Arisen point to more than coincidence in the location and construction of Karnak. Irem, in its day, had many outposts — places from which to watch the borders of its empire, to see the movements of outsiders and threats, and to use as staging grounds for other projects. Some of these places had power of their own, either left behind by the works of the Shan'iatu, or from something lying deep under the sand. Karnak is one such place. By the standards of Irem, it is a humble edifice. To mummies left behind, it is a reminder of their lost civilization, and of the immense power that once crisscrossed the deserts and savannahs of Africa.

Mummies who visit Karnak quickly notice three things:

First, any mummy who stands in the great hypostyle and faces east as the sun rises refreshes one point of each Pillar. The alignment and positioning of the pillars here is *not* accidental.

Second, any Utterance cast while touching one of the large obelisks (they're unmistakable, some standing over 30 feet high) gains two bonus dice added to the speaking Arisen's dice pool for the effects of the Utterance. (Should an Utterance involve no roll for some reason, there is no bonus.) The obelisks themselves seem to focus a repository of Sekhem that springs from deep underground.

Third, any mummy who sets foot within Karnak must make a Descent roll 24 hours later, and another such roll follows every 24 hours after that as long as the mummy remains in the environs. Am-Khaibit seem to suffer in a related fashion, suffering one point of lethal damage every day in Karnak, whether tangible or not. The mystic foundations of Karnak bleed off Sekhem in order to fuel...something unknown.

For these reasons, mummies tend to make any trips to Karnak very brief and only by necessity, but this also means that any mummy forced to walk the streets of Karnak is probably only a few steps away from unleashing devastating Utterances should the need arise.

AMARNA (AKHETATEN)

Situated two hundred miles from Cairo, Amarna — Akhetaten to the Egyptians — is another site of various obelisks, temple complexes, and ruins. The city was constructed hastily in the Eighteenth Dynasty (14th century BCE) at the command of the Pharaoh Akhenaten, and abandoned just as quickly upon his death.

Egyptologists believe that Akhenaten was trying to break the power of the Egyptian priesthood and establish worship of Aten as a new faith centered on the worship of a single sun god, with other deities relegated to positions of much lesser importance. The city of Akhetaten was his attempt to split from historical traditions by making a new capitol for the empire. Thanks to the immense personal power of Akhenaten, and his strong connections with the military, he was able to make the project happen, but it was quickly abandoned and destroyed after he died.

Akhetaten has notable boundary stelae that mark the borders of the city, and a plan that survives to the modern era. In the *Ruins* era, it is just becoming a notable location for exploration after a local woman discovers a cache of Akkadian cuneiform tablets in 1887, followed in 1891 by excavation of the king's tomb, and then in 1907 the arrival of Ludwig Borchardt's German expedition (which, of course, was forced to leave once the Great War broke out).

What mummies know about Akhetaten is markedly different. The site wasn't chosen by a fluke; Akhenaten decorated his royal quarters with hieroglyphs and symbols marking the horizon. Archeologists think that he was commenting on the fact that the city was in fresh, unsettled territory, or perhaps that it was connected somehow with the sun-worship of the Aten cult. On the latter count, they are closer: Akhenaten was an attempt to re-open a door to the sky — a connection to wherever the Shan'iatu went. Of

course, what Akhenaten knew and what he was doing were not entirely accurate. Almost certainly, a cult influenced his thinking and gave him some sort of directions about how to reach a "higher" or "transcendent" authority that would be able to shower his kingdom in the light of paradise. Even the Arisen, though, don't know where the Shan'iatu really went, and bereft of that direction, Akhenaten was taking stabs in the dark. His letters, kept in Akkadian cuneiform, were partly destroyed, and large swaths of his legacy were eradicated by the priesthood after his death, effectively erasing much of his work from Egyptian history — though enough survived to reconstruct some basic ideas about his reign and the turmoil that surrounded it, and to become part of the foundational mythology for the Rosicrucians (see below).

The reasons that the priests of Egypt spent so much effort destroying and dismantling Akhenaten's work are twofold. Obviously, the priests needed to discredit his Aten-cult in order to retain their political power and wealth. Overthrowing his religious experiment and erasing it from the record allowed them to continue on as if the Akhenaten period was simply an aberration. But beyond that, not all priests were simple bureaucrats and functionaries. Sorcerers and cultists abounded in the courts of old Egypt, and with their fragmentary knowledge they pressed for the construction of special edifices through which they could work their petty magics in an attempt to harness Sekhem and the powers that the Shan'iatu carried off into legend. Although successes in this endeavor are few and far between (such as LDI), this does not stop the parade of those willing to try. The destruction of Amarna represents the crumbled ambitions of those sorcerers who would dare try to raise the notice of the Shan'iatu once more, smashed by the frightened masses unwilling to contemplate what might happen if the seekers were successful.

Mummies who make a study of Twilight find that piercing the veil of the afterlife is easier within the bounds of Amarna. Here, any magic or relic that sees into or manipulates the world of ghosts gains +2 bonus dice. This works both ways, though: Ghosts that reside in Amarna can more easily haunt visitors, especially at night, and some of the ghosts here are very old (by mortal standards).

Perhaps most tellingly, while Akhenaten's body is mummified and buried at Amarna, no mummy found matches that of his queen, Nefertiti. Busts and statues of her are discovered in many places and she is repeatedly referenced in the stone records at the ruins of Amarna, but Nefertiti is never given a fixed date of death, nor are her remains known to be interred among any of the royal mummies. Did Akhenaten's cult of the horizon meet with some measure of success after all? No known sorcery has ever been able to raise or contact Nefertiti's ghost. This is, of course, no great surprise when dealing with ancient spirits, but still....

The Pyramids and the Sphinx

Perhaps the most famous monuments of Egypt are the pyramids at Giza and the Sphinx. Of course, to the survivors of Irem, these are but pale shadows of the glory that was the City of Pillars, but that city is long gone, perhaps in Duat, perhaps lost to time. Nevertheless, these monuments remain, showing a legacy *almost* as potent.

The Arisen, of course, are no strangers to these structures. Even by the time of the second Sothic Turn, the Pyramid at Giza and the Sphinx were old. The remains interred in the pyramid at Giza, though, were looted long before the *Ruins of Empire* era. While the Great Pyramid may capture the imagination, to the mummies of Irem it is simply a showpiece, albeit a welcome distraction to occupy the minds of would-be occultists and avert their gaze from the cults functioning in their midst. Early in their eternities, many of the Deathless found the extensive necropolis at Giza a welcome (if sometimes uncomfortable) reflection of the works of the Shan'iatu, and likewise a ready source of minor vessels. In the era of *Ruins*, Giza is the center of much exploration, and every would-be Egyptologist starts with a visit here, just outside of Cairo; even so, the Arisen can often follow the flows of kepher to find what mere mortals cannot (see **Mummy: The Curse**, p. 145).

The Sphinx is a different matter. While suspicion exists that the face of the Sphinx was recarved, the entire structure creates the appearance of a tremendous Amkhat, albeit with a human head instead of combining two animal forms. Few among the Arisen can remember the specifics of this statue, as it was likely built before the first Sothic Turn and, thus, while most of the Arisen were deep in their first henet. What the Arisen *do* know is that the Great Sphinx at Giza shows the characteristics of being a powerful structure, possibly some kind of Masonic ritual site. The Tef-Aabhi say that it is a perversion of *heka*, a construct that absorbs Sekhem in order to sustain itself and whatever unholy cause created it. If it is indeed related to an Amkhat cult, the Great Sphinx was built on a scale never encountered since. Mortals coming near the Sphinx seem to act with drunken disregard, as if affected by the curse of a relic; mummies suffer an even greater danger: Like a relic that drains off unnecessary Sekhem, the Sphinx steals away that brilliant energy, but it does so on a massive scale. Simply being within physical sight of the monument is sufficient to call for a Sekhem roll at every sunset; scoring any successes on the roll causes the loss of one point of Sekhem, as the energy is drained away. Utterances and Affinities related to commanding locations, such as Palace Knows its Pharaoh (**Mummy,** p. 124), simply *do not function* within a mile of the statue, but still drain their usual cost in Pillars if a mummy attempts their use. If the Sphinx is the representation of some greater Amkhat, that creature has not been seen in this age...yet.

Mesopotamia — Conflicts Old and New

Situated famously at the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, the region of Mesopotamia has an ancient history to match nearby Egypt and Greece. With North Africa and the Mediterranean just west of Mesopotamia, it

is no surprise that this region is also home to many conflicts that mummies have witnessed time and time again. In the modern era this location is also called Persia, home to Iraq, Kuwait, and Iran, but those are just transitory conventions for an area with a much longer history.

Most mummies believe that Mesopotamia was settled by survivors fleeing the disappearance of Irem. Modern archeology places Neolithic pottery in the region in 10,000 BCE, which means that from the perspective of the Arisen the timeline is unclear; people were living in Mesopotamia before the first mummies were interred in Irem, but those people barely had the craft of tool-use. It's probably no coincidence that the transformation of Mesopotamia's Early Dynastic Period to the Akkadian Empire happens right at the time of the first Sothic Turn. When the second Sothic Turn arrives, the area is deep in the Iron Age, in the Neo-Assyrian Empire, and by the third Turn, it is the late Assyrian Empire, whose capital city, Ctesiphon, is only 22 miles from Baghdad and is for a while the largest city in the world. The consequence of this is that in any era in which a mummy might have awakened due to a Sothic Turn, the Mesopotamian region is a settled, cultivated land with an established civilization — an excellent place to engage in power-brokering and the accumulation of wealth for various occult purposes.

During the *Ruins* era, Mesopotamia is under the control of the Ottoman Empire, and becomes the staging ground for the Mesopotamian campaign. Before the invasion, it is under the direct control of the Ottomans. The British invade in 1915 and are repelled in 1916 with the Siege of Kut, which prompts them to relieve their general in charge, regroup, and attack again. Arab and Assyrian locals keep the Ottomans busy while the British invade Baghdad, which falls in 1917. By 1918 they sign an armistice and in 1920 the League of Nations recognizes the State of Iraq, which is essentially a British client state.

As with the invasions of Iraq in the modern era, the primary goal for the Western powers in seizing this territory is acquisition of oil. The British Navy was dependent upon oil from the Middle Eastern oil fields. A British socialite had engineered a deal with the Shah of Persia to prospect for oil in 1901, but it wasn't until 1908 that oil was actually found. In 1913 the Anglo-Persian Oil Company — which would survive in some form to the modern day as part of British Petroleum — built what was at the time the world's largest oil refinery. Naturally, when it looked like Ottoman powers might abrogate the original deal with the shah, the British moved to reinforce their claims. After the Great War, the British government, acting as a quiet stakeholder in the oil companies formed to exploit the region, spread development to Iran, which led to a great deal of unrest. Locals resented the poor terms of the British oil deals, which gave only a small amount of the profits to the area governments and communities.

Post-war, the Mesopotamian area remains heavily influenced by the British. In 1932, Iraq is released from British control to become the Kingdom of Iraq, though the British continue to exert special privileges in the area.

BAGHDAD

By mummy standards, Baghdad is a recent city, having grown up around the 8th century CE, meaning that for the Arisen this city didn't exist prior to the *Ruins* era and the fourth Sothic Turn (though many small villages were situated in this area for millennia). Its early planned growth was explosive, but slowed after the 10th century CE. Nevertheless, it remained a major city, and when the British captured Baghdad it became the capital of the British Mandate of Mesopotamia.

While Baghdad is a cosmopolitan city that combines the history of the Middle East with modern development — the city is, after all, situated near the oil fields that were so central to industrialization — its importance to mummies comes not only from its nearby location and its connections to the ancient world, but to its mythology. Baghdad is the centerpiece for many stories in the collected *One Thousand and One Arabian Nights*, and many of those stories carry a veneer of Islam over old folktales, myths, legends, and erotic comedies. Flying carpets may seem comical, but these stories may contain a few grains of truth to them, as the characters often encounter strange devices with magical powers imported from distant lands. Unsurprisingly, this lines up with the findings of trade between Egypt and Assyria in (relatively) ancient times. Amulets, legal seals, gold and jewelry all found their way across the Red Sea and the Strait of Hormuz.

Arisen who find themselves in Baghdad, whether chasing a relic or looking for clues to their own past, will find some unsettlingly familiar architectural practices. The Suq al-Ghazel Minaret, finished in the 10th century CE, seems to call back to the towers in Egypt, like the ones at Karnak. The Zumurrud Khaton, a tomb from the 13th century, bears an elaborate flowering top over a burial space, like something that a cult might commission to inter its master. And all across the former Abbasid Empire, which reached from Mesopotamia to North Africa, are spiral minarets, found in similar forms in Cairo, Samarra, and Baghdad. It's a lost memory of an ancient world adorned with pillars.

THE GREAT WAR AND ITS PLAYERS

Casting a shadow over this entire era is the Great War, spanning the period from 1914 to 1918. The assassination of Archduke Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary by a Yugoslavian national triggers a diplomatic crisis, as Austria-Hungary threatens Serbia, which in turn triggers the world-spanning web of alliances pitting the Allied Powers against the Central Powers. Several of the European nations that enter the war do not come out the same — or at all.

For some of the Arisen, the Great War seems eerily familiar: It is a conflict that engages the entire known world; there is nowhere to escape, and the strange sciences of the modern age deploy weapons that devastate entire cities. Those Deathless who have fleeting glimpses of the Nameless Empire see similarities to the battle against the *Ki-En-Gir* and

the Pact of Ubar (see **Mummy**, p. 19). To other mummies, this conflict is a nuisance, as it scatters cults, destroys power structures, shatters fragile vessels or spirits them away in thievery, and often brings the mummy to a quick Descent with violations of the tomb.

For the mortals who surround the Deathless, the Great War is terrifying. Even if one of their mummy patrons can crush skulls with bare hands and survive the attacks of handguns and rifles, there's no stopping entire armies that can wash into towns with machine guns and poison gas. Mummies can and do lose entire cults to the press of the war, forcing them to rise again and again when their corpses are disturbed or their relics looted, only to have scant time to get their bearings and try to find some place where they can rebuild.

Characters in Europe during the war will find that the fighting in the west stabilizes on the aptly named Western Front, east of Paris, with the Germans and the French battering each other in trench warfare for literal *years*. On the Eastern Front, conflict between Russia and the Ottoman Empire leads to significant reversals for both groups; the Ottoman Empire's invasion of the Caucasus is repulsed and the Western powers eventually invade (as noted previously) and dismantle the empire, but Russia undergoes the October Revolution in late 1918 and transitions to the Soviet state, with the transition complete by 1922. Germany loses much of its territory, and Austria-Hungary dissolves and ceases to exist in 1918. The Prussian Kingdom, once a powerhouse of Ruhr coal and conservatism, was absorbed into the Weimar Republic — sometimes better known as the German Reich.

While the Great War isn't the only thing going on during the *Ruins of Empire* era, it is certainly the focal point. The war relates to everything involved thematically in this time period: The decline of once-great powers; the destruction of cities; the first modern war with machine guns, chemical weapons, tanks, and air power. For humans in the trenches, it seems like the war will go on forever; for mummies, the war seems to change the world in an eyeblink. Of course, the reshaping of would-be empires and lines on a map mean little to the Deathless, but the reality sinks in as the casualties mount in the trenches: The world has veered in a direction far from what the Nameless Empire was like, and that old world might never come again. The days of client villages in which a mummy is a godlike force to be reckoned with are over — the mummy might be able to make changes locally by wielding brute strength and Sekhem, but reshaping the course of these new politics is outside the grasp of most of the Arisen. Once again, the Deathless are reminded that they are workers, not rulers.

Each player in the Great War brings its own special horrors to the table for the Deathless. Britain and the Ottoman Empire have been previously explored. Germany and Austria-Hungary, along with the Central Powers, lose the war; Austria-Hungary dissolves, but Germany winds up pushed into a punitive treaty, paying massive war reparations to France. The tremendous burden on the economy later pushes a surge in nationalism that contributes to the rise of the Third Reich and the next World War. While the Deathless may not have a specific opposition to fascism, as the Shan'iatu were a near-fascist magocracy, the situation becomes awkward for Deathless in central Europe, as rising nationalism increasingly casts them as outsiders on the occasions when they awaken and deal with mortals.

Worse than the destruction in Central Europe (to the Deathless, at least) is the situation in Russia. The October Revolution is, as far as most of the Arisen are concerned, a guild uprising against its appointed masters. This is, of course, only a step away from a nauseating notion like rebelling against the Judges and the Shan'iatu. To mummies, the rise of the proletariat and the creation of the Soviet Union strikes an uneasy chord: On the one hand, the mummies were once guildsmen and workers themselves; but on the other hand, they are pledged in service to a greater power, and the Soviet state smacks of heresy against the faith of Irem.

Worst of all is the situation at home, in Africa. For previous turns, the Arisen have counted on the stability of regimes in the area. Names change — Egyptian, Greek, Macedonian, Roman — but the familiarity of a great, world-spanning empire with a sense of *purpose* has remained constant. Now, the combination of the disintegrating Ottoman Empire and the imperialist meddling in Africa and the Middle East has upended this constant. The laborers of Irem are second-class citizens in the remnants of their own homes. The archeologists of the "developed" countries question whether the monuments of the past were even built by the native peoples at all, as if only their countries could build anything of importance — all while they remain ignorant of the heights of sorcery and art that Irem commanded. This state of affairs is arrogant, unjust, and perhaps above all, it is *hubris*. The Arisen deal with the Judges of the afterlife and lived in an age when the gods of Irem displayed true power to mortals. Now, outsiders scoff at these ancient religions, calling them "superstition," and they violate sacred ground and steal away treasures and culture, calling it "progress." Little wonder that dreadful stories strike up of mummy curses and attacks among the interlopers, as the anger of the Deathless at such treatment causes an obvious response to the tomb-robbers from afar.

War Stories

Deathless who arise during the Great War can partake in a range of stories that showcase the horrors unleashed by the modern sorcery of science. While a mummy would certainly not be caught in the rank and file of some army, fighting in trench warfare, the mummy's goals might intersect with the military ambitions of an enemy force, with predictable results.

- Soldiers stumble into a small village and immediately set about intimidating the villagers, who of course happen to be part of the mummy's cult. When the mummy awakens, the villagers beg the mummy to deal with the soldiers, which she easily does, but one of

the soldiers has a strange relic. Orders found amidst the carnage detail that these soldiers were sent to meet with another group that is collecting archeological relics and art treasures, and the mummy is suddenly left with the difficulty of finding a way to recover these other stolen vessels from a military encampment surrounded by barbed wire and Maxim guns. (See the film *The Keep* for inspiration, even if it is set in World War II.)

- The mummy decides to head away from the wars to a more stable society — the strange new land of the Americas. Securing passage on a steamer ship from Africa or Europe is not especially difficult, but the trip is too long for the mummy to remain active for the entire journey. The mummy could risk having the cult re-awaken him mid-journey, which could be a risky endeavor in such a tight space; or bear the indignity of traveling as a cadaver in a box. Once arrived, the mummy can set up a cult in a new location far from the war, but customs officials and military inspectors all conspire to make the transition difficult. In the New World, racism is still rampant, and the mummy and his cult will face problems integrating. And once there, what next? The New World has its own strange vessels, made by the now extinct or nearly extinct indigenous people, and some of the Central and South American empires long gone also attempted to create mummies. Could the influence of Irem have already stretched so far, from ages so long ago? Will Thor Heyerdahl's later hypothesis of oceanic travelers crossing from Africa to South America prove to be perhaps not so far-fetched, even if his conclusions are erroneous?

- The mummy awakens to a Descent triggered by a tomb invasion, but mysteriously there is nobody present in the burial chamber. Investigation soon shows that chlorine gas was leaked into the tomb, and the cultists who were there have died in grotesque fashion. Though sealing the flesh will prevent the mummy from dying, the mummy must escape the tomb before the gas kills him, find the attackers, and somehow make the resting place safe again.

- Pursuing a relic thief, the mummy learns that the thief is an unwitting mail carrier for one of the military powers. The carrier travels by motorcycle, delivering packages and orders as directed by his army's leadership. To re-acquire the relic, the mummy must catch up to the messenger, which means traveling through No Man's Land, into the heart of military territory, and into the trenches at the front. Machine guns and grenades may be only a minor nuisance to the mummy, but precious relics are often much more easily destroyed. Perhaps influencing the officers in charge of the messenger corps would be a safer means to deliver the relic back into the mummy's hands?

THE DEATHLESS — GUILDS DURING THE FALL

Because the *Ruins of Empire* era occupies a time period between Sothic Turns, mummy activity happens in fits and starts. The wholescale violation of many tombs and robbery of a great number of vessels does stir a disproportionate number of Deathless, which provides some degree of unified guild activity, but it is to a degree less than that encountered during one of the transits of Sirius. Nevertheless, the advent of the Great War forces every guild to re-evaluate their position on mortal affairs.

See **Guildhalls of the Deathless** for more intimate information about the various guilds and their agendas; the details presented here can provide some additional relevant information for the era.

MAA-KEP: BUILDING DOWNWARD

The Maa-Kep of the *Ruins* era are just as vigilant about heresy and just as committed to a unified guild front as always. The guild not only watches other mummies for signs of ideological corruption in an age of godless philosophies, but actively seeks out places where such problems might crop up. For this reason, the Maa-Kep are busy in the process of becoming quite widespread, moving their tombs and their relics to distant locations. While most mummies would consider it an annoying chore to have to pack everything up and move to England or the Americas, the Maa-Kep see it as part and parcel of their business: Better that they get a foothold there *first* and keep an eye on any other mummies who wind up in the same place, rather than playing catch-up later. As a result, Maa-Kep who have the opportunity are busy sending forth their minions to places abroad in order to prepare new domiciles. At least one high-ranking member of the guild has also taken on a risky project of dubious legitimacy — contacting lower-ranking guild members' cults and instructing them to awaken their charges with orders to move the cults to new locales. Naturally, this is something of a perversion of the authority of the guild, but aren't some evils necessary in the name of security? (This pseudo-heretical project is abandoned at the end of the Great War, when most cults are too weakened and disorganized, and resources too scattered, to make this kind of manipulation practical.)

While the Maa-Kep are working to make a unified world government in hopes of drawing the Shan'iatu back, the disintegration engendered by the Great War shatters many of their ideals. To the Engravers, this is a terrible sign: Can humanity really be yoked under one master when that master is war? The Maa-Kep hoped to usher in a return of the Nameless Empire by finding the government most suited to ruling the whole world, but all of the nouveau experiments of the modern era collide in disaster. To avert total catastrophe, the Maa-Kep must nudge the war to a conclusion, either

by pressuring for peace or by forcing the issue through the destruction of one side or another. Unfortunately, the powers that gain the advantage are distant, foreign nations, hard to understand or influence. A few disenfranchised Engravers mutter that perhaps the Shan'iatu will return if all of humanity is engulfed in the flames and the whole of the human race is sentenced to Duat, but never where the guildmasters might hear such things.

Working from the Bottom Up

To address the problem of the Great War and the collapse of empires, the Maa-Kep do what any good mason does with a flawed project: Tear it down and start over. The Ottoman Empire, for all that it's local, is clearly in decline; down it must go. The European obsession with colonialism means that they overreach their influence and create more problems than they solve; time to destroy the reach of those empires, pruning their tendrils back and forcing them into retreat. If nobody's up to the challenge of ruling the world, the Maa-Kep decide, then everyone can start over again.

To this end, the Maa-Kep of the *Ruins* era wind up actually *fostering* revolutions. Not that they would ever encourage people to oppose the will of their masters — instead, the Maa-Kep encourage nationalist parties, conservative ideals, and isolationism, all policies with strong authoritarian streaks and a tendency toward inward focus. By doing so, they hope to push nations back into a period of internal stabilization, instead of external exploitation. As is often the case with Maa-Kep agendas, though, this one teeters between opposing forces. Isolationism and conservatism would normally lead to insular behaviors, but the zealotry of national dogma creates ideas of cultural superiority that lead to countries imposing their "developed" and "civilized" ideologies on others. As a result, each Maa-Kep must chart a personal course in how to pursue these agendas, determining whether to support colonial powers or indigenous ones, democratic governments or autocratic ones, or nobody at all.

The Maa-Kep tendrils of influence are uncertain, primarily because of the limited time and reach available during this era, but they focus predominantly on the areas where their power is the strongest, in the Middle East and North Africa. This, of course, means that the Maa-Kep are also deep in the midst of the conflicts of the era, as British and French archeologists are busy unearthing Deathless tombs in the area, and the crumbling of the Ottoman Empire leaves territory in Egypt, the Sudan, Libya, and Tunisia vulnerable to the march of European troops and bureaucrats.

Making Trouble

Because the Maa-Kep see themselves as the quiet guardians not only of mummies but of mummy society and the lost glory of the Nameless Empire, they have a tendency to poke their noses into the business of other Deathless. Of course, this is all done in the guise of friendship — just checking up on other mummies, looking out for their cults, making sure that none of their precious vessels have been lost, and so on. This also means that the Maa-Kep send their cultists not only to look into other mummies, but to follow the diaspora of artifacts and cadavers that result from archeological inquiries. The Engravers' network becomes quite widespread, with fingers reaching across the oceans. Usually, a Maa-Kep keeping an eye on someone or something like this will send only one or two cultists. If the cultists disappear suddenly, the watchful mummy either withdraws from contact (since it'll be easy enough to pick up the trail again in another century) or, if the prize is valuable enough, becomes involved personally.

As part of their self-proclaimed mission to watch other Arisen for sedition, the Maa-Kep also peek into which nations other mummies settle in or influence. A mummy who goes to the trouble of moving his cult and tomb to Russia must have a reason for doing so; is it a sign that the mummy is sympathetic to the ideas of a proletarian revolution? If a mummy attempts to prop up the struggling Ottoman Empire, does that mean that she is a supporter of the latecomer (by Iremite standards) religion of Islam? Nearly any choice could indicate some heretical predilection, and the Maa-Kep helpfully seek out other mummies, aid them in their projects, and take notes on any possible connection that might be a sign of unorthodox beliefs.

Making Sense of It All

As part and parcel of recording everything that other mummies are doing, the Maa-Kep came to the realization that their fallible memories will occasionally need assistance. Though they started their library project in the 9th century CE, the Unread Record (see **Guildhalls of the Deathless**, p. 11) moved to Libya during the Napoleonic invasion. In 1912, this territory becomes Italian North Africa, after the Ottoman Empire loses it in war. The Maa-Kep, used to thinking of their hidden library as inviolate, see this as a moment of concern (or, some might say, panic). In an unprecedented show of trust, the Maa-Kep allow a select number of mummies to assist in the protection of the library, primarily by obfuscating its location and importance. As compensation, they allow any *trusted* mummy who aids them to ask one question from the archivists — no perusing of the library directly, of course; not that it would be useful, given that the entire library is ciphered. After the crisis passes, the Maa-Kep quickly close access to the archives once again. A meret of Deathless in search of information about the past activities of other mummies — or perhaps even themselves! — could potentially petition the Maa-Kep for information in exchange for services during this turbulent time, or make a back-end deal with the Sesha-Hebsu to acquire copies of some of the records there.

Note that the Unread Record is, at present, located in high desert just west of the border between what will be modern-day Libya and Egypt, at least 90 miles from the nearest stable water source, without any nearby roads, train lines, or airways. This means that access to the physical location of the library is generally limited to very determined travelers who have the means to survive crossing the desert for several days either on foot or camelback.

Mesen-Nebu: Transforming Economies

The *Ruins* era lies directly in the midst of the time of colonialism and imperialism, with Western European powers sending their soldiers and corporations to settle the lands of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Of course, the ultimate goal is the same as always: the accumulation of wealth and power. To the Alchemists, this is a transfer of Dedwen. The imperialists are, by right of recognition, claiming the objects and ideas of value from their subject lands. To the Mesen-Nebu, this is the simple process of extracting Dedwen.

The imperialists, however, do not truly understand Dedwen. They hoard their wealth uselessly, waste their strength in petty wars, and constantly seek to cast their own age-old, tired structures onto other cultures. The Alchemists have no patience for this sort of foolishness, so they step in to claim the Dedwen as their own.

The Alchemists' goal of recapturing Dedwen that conquerors miss causes their motivations to seem erratic to outsiders. A Mesen-Nebu could assist imperialists in their conquest of indigenous people, then immediately rob the conquerors of all of the wealth that they pillage. Those outside the guild see these as contradictory acts: Who are the Alchemists supporting, the European newcomers or the descendants of the old country? To the Alchemists there's no conflict; they don't back anyone, because they support only the flow of Dedwen.

Where other guilds see turmoil, the Alchemists see a chance for profit. If these countries and their wars are going to change the world, reason the Mesen-Nebu, that transformation will be an opportunity to search out new ways of collecting Dedwen. Whether in gold, spices, labor, or in the strange new political structures that meld the power of the masses together, the Alchemists will have their due.

Black Blood of the Earth

The lands of the old Nameless Empire are killing fields for the nations in the throes of the Great War, but those lands hold an even more valuable substance. The precious oil needed to run the great machinery of civilization is found there in abundance. Coal, too, is valuable, as it fires the trains that carry merchandise (and later, military materiel) across the world. At the start of the *Ruins* era, the automobile and the aeroplane are recent innovations, but their incredible utility shows that Dedwen has entered a new stage. The technological inventions that require petroleum will drive the prosperity of nations for the age to come, and the Alchemists are no strangers to rising trends. The Mesen-Nebu place their bets where the most productivity will come to fruition: with whomever will exploit these newly recognized resources. In some places, like the Caucasus, that means backing the upstart invading nations; in others, like the Arabian peninsula, it means adopting new technologies and putting them in the hands of traditional tribal structures. Once again, the Mesen-Nebu see no conflict, as they are not invested in the politics of who's in charge, but rather in the business of harvesting the end results once skilled labor is put into place.

Perhaps more so than members of any other guild, the Mesen-Nebu take it upon themselves to infiltrate the societies and governments of other nations. They don't care about who's running the government or why the politics have fallen out in a particular way; rather, they look for the ideologies that lead to successful nations. By the definition of the Alchemists, this means countries able to tap the Dedwen of their resources and their people, no matter how crudely. Thus, in countries where revolutions destroy works of art or civil strife leaves thousands dead, the Mesen-Nebu quietly wait in the wings to swoop in and clean up when the cycle of violence exhausts itself. Countries that organize their populations, pull wealth from the earth, and create new and lasting works — like the Eiffel Tower (1889), the Suez Canal (1869), or in the literary movements of the late Ottoman Empire or the avant-garde artistic movement — attract the attentions of the Mesen-Nebu, who quietly insinuate themselves in places where they can become intermediaries in the flow of Dedwen. This means that Mesen-Nebu in this period have cults involved in industrialization, antiquities trades (all the better to get their hands on actual vessels!), and the blossoming new forms of modern art and media.

Where Blood Runs Gold

Because the Mesen-Nebu pursue Dedwen when the opportunity arises, they almost inevitably become involved in the various conflicts flaring up around the globe. Indeed, moving *into* those hot zones provides the Alchemists with the opportunity to sweep up valuable pieces when the conflict dies down, before either of the combatants can organize and conduct their own pillaging. As a result, not only do the Mesen-Nebu cults engage in industrial development and art movements, they often become patrons to mercenaries or military groups. The raiding bands of Emir Faisal and T.E. Lawrence in the Arabian peninsula almost certainly contained agents of the Alchemists, ready to abscond with both valuable devices and artistic works from the Ottoman trains.

In order to finance their operations, the Mesen-Nebu pursue the inventions of the increasingly sophisticated world of investment: stocks, corporations, insurance, international trade. As always, the Alchemists don't directly bother to get their hands dirty; besides, who could understand all the terminology of shorting stock, seignorage, and securities? But there is something else coming — something that will bring entire economies closer to Dedwen. The Mesen-Nebu haven't sniffed it out yet, but the death of mercantilism and the failure of colonialism mean that the old systems of hoarding gold and silver are no longer sufficient. There's value in the exchange even without the gold, a way to reward and recognize excellence in craftsmanship or leadership or innovation without showering the gifted with treasures.



That's right, the Mesen-Nebu are in the process of becoming *bankers*. After all, a banker can turn *anything* to gold.

This is not to say that the Alchemists are boring stay-at-homes counting their money, though. As any Alchemist knows, transitions happen when states are in flux — when tension between what was and what is, or between things that are of different essential natures, creates change. That's why the Mesen-Nebu are found at the edges of wars, carefully watching the outcome of shifting borders and the collapses of nations. Out of each victory, something new is built, and there is a glimpse of excellence. Out of each failure, something old crumbles, and Dedwen is released.

Sesha-Hebsu: Recording the End of Divinity

Although the Scribes usually confine themselves to record-keeping and judgment, those who awaken in the *Ruins* era find themselves confronted with a horrifying proposition: A world bereft of meaning. The new forms of philosophy and literature in this modern era concern themselves with heretical notions that the Sesha-Hebsu can barely bear to record, ideas like the notion of a godless world, a world in which meaning is subjective instead of assigned by pharaohs and Judges, a world where art is not glorification but rather designed to create unease and discord.

Of course, the Scribes would never admit to any doubt on their side. The Scroll of Ages will continue, as it always has, without interruption. The Scribes themselves are a reflection of that: Endlessly continuing, always recording. Since the Rite of Return shows no signs of ending, then why should the Scroll of Ages? Thus, the Scribes take all of these modern notions of philosophy as passing fads, albeit with enough adherents to be of some concern to social stability.

Reconstructing the Past

While the Scribes continue to pass judgment on other Arisen, the difficulty increases greatly in the *Ruins* era, simply due to the acceleration of tomb robberies and the destruction of ancient texts. Repositories that the Sesha-Hebsu had considered inviolable now fall before the determined chisels of foreign explorers, and in some cases valuable scrolls are lost forever when grasping hands, unaware of the delicacy of these treasures, accidentally destroy them. Of course, the most important documents remain protected with magic and secreted away in the close recesses of the Scribes' own tombs, but the pillaging is still noticeable. Worse still, the Scribes know that their imperfect memories mean that there may be lost records that *nobody remembers losing*.

With this in mind, Scribes of this era find themselves rising with the specific task of recovering lost records. In some cases this means simply murdering unprepared archeologists who break into their tombs, but as often as not it means

chasing down stolen vessels and records after a panicked cult raises the mummy once the cultists failed to dissuade relic-hunters. In the worst cases, old papyrus records are destroyed by careless hands (or burned as worthless) while various treasures are scattered amongst a wealth of collectors, forcing the mummy to spend precious time tracking down who purchased which treasures, which ones were actual vessels, and where to go to retrieve them.

In order to best perform these duties, Scribes pursue knowledge of both languages and cultures. For the most part, the Sesha-Hebsu don't feel that modern cultures have much to add to their understanding of jurisprudence; rather, understanding the language lets them know how people of a particular culture *think*, and understanding the culture lets them know why people *act* a certain way. Armed with this understanding, the Scribes can determine who the power players are in any conflict, what they seek from the tombs of the Deathless, and where they will take the treasures that they steal. Naturally, some motivations are timeless: Greed is all too well understood. By determining which adventurers are seekers of knowledge, though, the Scribes can separate the wheat from the chaff when it comes to recruiting new members into their cults. Further, by studying the forms that modern cultures have taken, Scribes can develop a greater understanding of the River of Truth (as described in **Guildhalls of the Deathless**, p. 41).

Copying Greatness

With the help of their new confederates, the Scribes have a massive undertaking at hand. Rather than spend all of their time chasing down records in distant corners of the Earth, the Scribes have taken up the quill to make copies of their most important records and seed them in separate libraries in distant locations. While the Laborers have a secret record in one place, the Scribes have realized that keeping all of your papers in one tomb is a liability in this new world where artillery can smash cities and bombs can lead to firestorms that leave only ash for miles around. To that end, many of the Sesha-Hebsu who arise to chase down stolen texts or vessels end their Descents by relocating their tombs and cults.

Of course, having one's records stashed in various far corners of the Earth is only an advantage if a system remains in place for communications. Scribes awakened in this era take advantage of indices, kept nearest them in their tombs, that detail the locations of other Scribes and their archives. This way, even if a given Sesha-Hebsu doesn't have access to some snippet of information, she knows who to track down and contact in order to gain it. In keeping with their central duties, Scribes will make copies of their records and send them to other guildmates upon request, using one of the significant innovations of the modern era — rapid, intercontinental parcel delivery.

Although the Nameless Empire and many of its successors had their own mail services (the Egyptian, Roman, and Byzantine Empires had public courier services that used the excellent roads of their day), the advent of motor-driven transport, telegraph, powered flight, and steam- or oil-driven sea trade allow parcels to travel more quickly and reliably, which eases the Scribes' task of sending copies of their work to other locations. To ensure reliability, some low-ranking members of the guild take on the role of *ba-shai*, or couriers. Tasked to deliver copies and parcels with legerity, the *ba-shai* are considered low-ranking members of the guild (because they are trusted more to carry words than to write them), but increasingly valuable as the guild continues its diaspora. Even during this period of turmoil, the *ba-shai* enjoy certain benefits as mail carriers, including immunity from being searched or stopped by other mummies, except by the order of a higher-ranked Sesha-Hebsu. (Of course, this same immunity could allow a *ba-shai* to carry certain contraband, such as heretical documents, without being stopped — but only if protected by a corrupt Scribe, who contravened any requests by outsiders to stop and search the mail....)

Su-Menent: The Surgeon Generals

The tools of the blossoming modern age give the Su-Menent new hope in their unbeating hearts: Mortals are finally taking halting steps in the understanding not only of medicine, but of the living shell. The terrible trials of the Great War and the deprivation endured in genocide and colonialism push the human condition to breaking points rarely before seen. For once, the Su-Menent are not merely repeating funerary rituals over stolen cadavers; now, they again have the opportunity to search into the origins of those rites, to practice on people killed in various forms of agony, and to discover how the twisting of the spirit affects the vessel of flesh.

Of course, the Su-Menent do not necessarily glory in this kind of grotesquerie. Rather, it is a clinical form of study, a means to the end of practicing the same excruciating tribulations that the Shan'iatu used in their greater rituals. While no right-thinking Shepherd would ever dare to compare himself to the great sorcerers who built the Nameless Empire, the hope is that a greater understanding of death and the funerary arts might help the Su-Menent to reveal a fragment of the glory of Irem, and that such a shining moment would draw the attention of the Shan'iatu from wherever they are, to return and bring their reign back to the world, or perhaps to carry their most faithful servants to Duat for a new existence beyond the shackles of the flawed world of flesh.

Whenever their cults raise them in a panicked response to invasion or war, the Su-Menent take to the fields of battle like carrion crows, gathering not only corpses and tools of death, but the bodies of their own cultists, killed in the clash of cultures. Naturally, such cultists are always given a reverent funeral — promises of great rewards in Duat, adulation for their service, a name that will live forever in memory (at least until the next time the mummy rises) — but then they disappear into the inner sanctums of the Shepherds, there to become subjects for the next rituals and experiments.



Building a Better Killing Machine

To the Shepherds, the atrocities of the early 20th century are hardly atrocities; they're just business as usual in empires with large populations of slaves and have-nots. The ethnic underpinnings of many of the conflicts are largely dismissed out of hand; the Su-Menent don't much care what excuses people are using for mass murder *this* time around, so much as they are interested in *how* people are finding new ways to do the deed.

Thus, the doctors also become disciples of the gun. Without any pesky prohibition to "Do no harm," the Su-Menent look to the new methods of mass killing almost as divine revelations. Did the Shan'iatu kill by the score, by the hundred, by the thousands? Of course. Did they do so by raining hot metal, choking fumes and noxious diseases upon their subjects? Difficult to say, as fragmented as the memory of the Arisen is now; certainly worth further investigation.

The other side of this funerary coin is, of course, the role of the Su-Menent as priests. While they are priests by rote, it is still an important duty, as intermediaries between Duat and the physical world, and as keepers of tradition. Though the Su-Menent involve themselves in the collection of bodies from the battlefields, they are cautious in their exploration of the new warfare of this world. A priest may use the falchion in executing a sacrifice, but that does not mean that the priest is a swordsmith. Instead, the Su-Menent who study the new means of killing delve into the significance of the deaths. The technology of the gun may be a fascinating study, but more important to the Shepherds is how it makes killing *casual*. Similarly, the use of poison gas is mildly interesting, but the true value is in the way that it can kill hundreds or thousands of people in an area simultaneously, without having to stab or shoot each one. And the song of artillery, of course, represents not just the ability to break up enemy soldiers' formations, but the means to destroy a people's temples, homes, and symbols along with their bodies.

Fortunately for the death-priests, most of them don't have to travel very far to see these in action.

Keeping the Lamp Lit

Of greater concern to the Su-Menent is the problem of encroaching heresy. Not only does the modern era have a riot of various religions, but the rising tide of science increases the skepticism of the masses. Dealing with this problem means sneaking into various groups and co-opting them. Instead of bringing outsiders into the cult, the Shepherds spread their cult ideas to other groups, knowing that certain fundamentals may survive the ages, ready to be called upon a decade, or a century, or a millennium later in a debased form that can be corrected with the proper guidance.

To this end, the Su-Menent insert their tendrils into the latest fad — philosophical gentleman's societies. The Theosophical Society, Anthroposophical Society, Rosicrucians, Silver Star, Golden Dawn, and Freemasons (everything that draws the attention of jaded or socially climbing gents of the Gilded Age) all become subjects of exploration for the Shepherds, and some groups feel a heavier touch than others. Naturally, this also brings the Su-Menent into conflict with the supernatural patrons (or parasites) involved with these organizations. In some cases, this conflict becomes direct, with the Deathless engaged in combat with sorcerers, vampires, and their ilk; in most cases, though, the organizations undergo schisms as various members experience "secret revelations" or find that the establishment of a new, distant chapterhouse suits the purposes of their new mentors and advisors. (The Su-Menent also make an attempt at infiltrating Islam through the Ottoman sultanate, but this attempt fails for several reasons — partly because of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and partly because the Islamic community of Constantinople proves to be supernaturally protected in some fashion, whether by faith or by the agency of some other creature.)

Ideally, of course, the Su-Menent await the day when the Shan'iatu will return and reveal their glory, and the gods of Irem, once more.

Tef-Aabhi: A Djed to the Heavens

The new materials of the blossoming 20th century may be unproven tools, but they are certainly not worthless ones. The Fathers of Idols are mildly impressed by the development of materials that can build modern structures: canals lined with concrete, skyscrapers with steel skeletons, synthetic tools built from plastics. As always, though, the material is less important than the builder. Pyramids and colossi of the ancient world were built with only stone and copper. It is the vision, the guiding hand, that wields the tool.

The builders note with some interest the rise of philosophies like individual empowerment, the idea of humanity without gods or even humanity *as* gods. Though many of these ideas tread the line to blasphemy, the Tef-Aabhi also recognize that broad swaths of the population now have access not only to stability but to education, travel, and leisure. Of course, this comes on the backs of the poor and less fortunate, especially those in colonized countries, but *that* is nothing new.

The rise of an industrial middle class gives thousands of people new opportunities to excel. Their excellence takes strange forms, be it in development of economic and political theories or in the invention of devices to further automate their world and expand their reach — and their entertainments. As always, the downtrodden masses are generally unable to grasp this level of new development, but the birth of concepts like free time and mass media opens doors to new forms of art.

And what art! Spires made of twisted steel; paintings designed to evoke emotions with only blurry, indistinct images; pictures that capture the all-too-real images of both beauty and ugliness; gilded mosques that reflect the glory of their spirituality. Construction of edifices like the Great Mosque of Giza, damaged in the Great War and restored in 1925, shows the lengths to which the new world will go to rebuild the old.

Many of the Fathers of Idols see the rise of new art movements such as Les Nabis, Pointillism, and Secession style as examples of the free thinking of the modern age. By understanding not only what messages artists hope to convey with these styles, but why artists choose this Art Nouveau, the Tef-Aabhi glean knowledge of the current social changes sweeping the continent and beyond. In earlier ages, artists crafted their icons to glorify pharaohs, priests, and gods. Now artists reject politics, overturn social mores, and create art designed to break away from convention and to shock the senses — or even, in some cases, to create art divorced from any meaning at all, with a message that rejects convention.

Still, even the work of Gustav Klimt and Alphonse Mucha cannot halt admiration for the old world. The Gothic Revival in Britain hearkens back to earlier architectural styles, and the influence of Historicism in art remains strong in Europe. To the Tef-Aabhi, this shows that even while humanity sees a rise of bourgeoisie with industrialization, that new wealthy elite hearkens back to a time of Classical ideals — a time of a lost, grand empire.

For the Father of Idols, the time is coming for the creation of a new Irem — or rather, something greater than Irem. Now, instead of the alchemy of bronze and the cutting of stone, a new Irem might be forged on steel, coal, and synthetics.

THE GRAND CITY

The Tef-Aabhi have plans (as they always have had). In earlier ages, the limits of communication, travel, and language made it impossible for an empire to span the world; couriers couldn't reach the capital in time for emperors to respond to changing battles on the frontier, cultural clashes meant that meetings with neighboring powers often turned into war, and the sensitivity of early agriculture to weather patterns meant that a bad plague or drought could cause an entire kingdom to collapse. The technology of the 20th century makes many of these problems much more manageable: Telegraph, radio, and (eventually) telephone provide international communication; train and air travel speed people around the globe in days; and new approaches to farming and medicine help to contain the spread of famine and disease (in the west European parts of the world, anyway). It could finally be time to build a new city — a grand city, one that can point the way to a better future, a city built as much on *heka* as on concrete.

For a time the Tef-Aabhi entertained some notions that Constantinople might be that city, but its many sackings and eventual decline show that it is a poor choice. What will be the new modern design? London? New York? Cairo? Cape Town? Each Tef-Aabhi has an idea of what city might make the foundation for a newer society, and they spread cultists to their chosen models to better oversee the plans needed to turn those cities into examples of order and prosperity. Of course, most Tef-Aabhi are loath to leave their hoary and peculiar tombs, but sometimes the vagaries of warfare leave no choice, in which case a fresh start in a rising city may mark a better beginning.

More than just cities, though, the Tef-Aabhi of this era begin examining social planning on a large scale. The founding of the League of Nations in 1914, though it meets a fairly quick and bitter end, sparks an interest in the idea of planning an international society, not just through military or magical conquest, but through economic and diplomatic command. Individual Masons watch carefully as the October Revolution of 1917 and the independent Turkish Republic formed in 1923 showcase the formation of new social structures. Here, the mortals align their *heka* to work toward a new identity. The Communist uprising that forms the Soviet Union is a massive social shift, one that shows remarkable promise in the proletariat seizing their own identity. By the same token, the Turkish revolution is a war of identity and self-determination. The rise of labor unions fits perfectly with the Tef-Aabhi vision, as a brotherhood of fellow workers following a common cause for protection of mutual interest while pursuing professional excellence. It may well be that the Grand City is not a city, but a Grand Society, with its *heka* molded not by streets and buildings, but by ideologies and visionaries.

THE CULT OF CENTURIES

Tef-Aabhi have a problem: Long-term planning and cult turnover don't mix. Fall into henet for a few centuries, wake up, and suddenly everyone's forgotten all of the rules and they're babbling about strange religions in strange languages while wearing strange clothes and bringing you useless garbage offerings. Plus, they spend all of their time on bizarre projects that can only be seen as the result of fever-addled brains that have misinterpreted orders over successive generations.

The Masons circumvent this problem as best they can by building to last. In earlier Turns, this meant constructing lavish tombs full of stone-carved instructions in Iremite or ancient dialects, all with an aim toward keeping the cult ideologically on target. In this new era, the means to store both relics and information rapidly change. Archeologists start as treasure-seekers, hunting artifacts for their wealthy patrons, but experiences with destruction of priceless antiquities lead to the discipline developing means to handle and store very old texts and materials. Modern methods of printing also mean that it's easier than ever to disseminate information, or to print special copies of books for use by a cult without relying on pesky translation errors or transcription problems.

Furthermore, the rising rate of literacy means that most cultists don't require personal instruction. While indoctrination is important from a cultural perspective, it's possible to simply provide written directions that almost anyone in the cult can read. This is a major boon, especially in an era of safe-deposit boxes, time capsules, and estate orders. Now the mummy can not only leave detailed instructions, but be sure that they aren't lost when the current head of the cult dies. Of course, instructions deliberately lost or destroyed are another matter, but mummies just become used to making examples of that sort every few centuries.



Once again, the fledgling academic fields of psychology and sociology come into play. While the Tef-Aabhi are not *really* in the business of making religions, they are doing the next best thing: Creating ideologies that grip people and bring them in line with the mummy's agenda. Tell them what they want to hear, then tell them what you want them to hear, as the saying goes. The line between the two may be a fine one, but the rise of understanding of how people think and how groups work gives mummies and their confederates a much clearer method for bringing the right kind of people into the fold.

With all of that in mind, the Tef-Aabhi find the *Ruins* era a fertile ground for recruitment. People displaced by politics, colonialism, and warfare seek the comfort of a new home, or an ideology or in-group that promises protection and stability. Mummy cults, for all of their oddness, can provide both to people who are ready and willing to serve. Given that the mummy himself may not even show up during the cultist's lifetime, what is there to lose? Join up, come to meetings, get a hand during troubled times — and if things go *really* badly, the cult has an actual supernatural protector who will turn your enemies into spattered viscera against the wall. In some places, where entire towns of displaced people flock for sanctuary, the cults have to turn away prospective members simply because there are so many people ready and willing to serve if only it will offer them a modicum of protection!

Stories of Ruin

The descriptions of what the various guilds are doing during the *Ruins* era are, of course, designed to inspire you with story ideas for your chronicles. Each guild's signature focus lends itself well to particular horrors, so you could easily center a story on a Tef-Aabhi attempting to break into an art museum and steal a piece of nouveau art in order to better study and understand it, or visiting a European metropolis like Paris or Berlin to meet and study with modern artists. Su-Menent will find themselves drawn to battlefields and war stories, and could be instrumental in the development of anesthesia, antibiotics, and modern medicine. Mesen-Nebu may infiltrate themselves into conferences designed to formalize trade deals or the usurious loans that the European powers foist off on countries such as Egypt and Sudan. In each case, there are a riot of historical figures with whom the mummies might interact, and flashpoints of history that they might impact.

If running a *Ruins* chronicle on its own, of course, the mummies might well change the course of history. The other variation is to use these points as flashbacks for a mummy recovering memories in the course of a modern-day chronicle. Did your mummy study psychology with Sigmund Freud? Ride with T.E. Lawrence and Faisal? Lurk on the fringes as Willis Carrier invented air conditioning in 1902? Think about what your mummy considers important, what his or her guild values, and how the intersection of two aligns with events in the *Ruins* era, and you have a hook for a story ready to go.

Character Creation

Mummies in the *Ruins* era follow the same guidelines for character creation given in **Mummy: The Curse**, for the most part. After all, they've been through all of this before, and they will be around forever, so not much has changed for them.

When building a mummy character for this era, follow the usual system of purchasing abilities and Skills, applying the mummy template, and spending points on backgrounds, Utterances, Affinities, Memory, and Pillars. You need only a few small changes for this specific time period.

Skills in the Era

Brawl

Keep in mind that in the *Ruins* era, martial arts have not spread widely into Western Europe. Mummy characters will probably not encounter Asiatic martial arts unless they travel east, or have an unlikely encounter with a trained character during the Great War. Boxing itself is still seen as a rough, lower-class sport; this image changes slowly as the U.S. Marine Corps. adopts boxing as part of its close-combat training regimen during the Great War and as boxing becomes part of the Olympic games. Of course, pugilism was not unknown in Irem, Egypt, and the later empires in which mummies Arose, but in this particular point in the timeline mummies are unlikely to be specialized in any Asiatic forms.

Computer

The most important change to Skills for this era is the absence of the Computer Skill. Although some of the raw ideas of computing exist thanks to the Babbage engine, the Jacquard loom, and the work of Ada Lovelace, the electronic computer hasn't been invented yet. Characters who study the early mechanical elements of computing and number theory are studying Science and possibly some of the mechanical Crafts involved in construction of such devices.

Enigmas

Instead of the Computer Skill, characters of the *Ruins* era should use the Enigmas Skill, described in the Introduction. Enigmas covers the study of riddles, puzzles, and brain twisters. For mummies and their cultists, this Skill handles tasks like deciphering the meaning of strange glyphs that aren't Iremite or hieroglyphic; figuring out the meaning

behind a cryptic phrase; or looking into the strange traps left behind in a mummy's tomb and trying to find out how to get inside without getting killed.

Characters who focus on Enigmas tend to be mystery-solvers, whether of the armchair variety or the sort who go out into the world to experience them first-hand. A smattering of this Skill is common among senior cultists, and among mummies who delve deeply into interpretation of dreams, unclear memory fragments, or what pronouncements they can remember (or think they can remember) from the Judges.

Note: Don't confuse the Enigmas *Skill* with the Enigma *Merit*. The former represents ability to solve conundrums; the latter means that your character *is* a conundrum.

Firearms

The Firearms Skill still functions as expected for a modern chronicle, but keep in mind that many of the automatic weapons of the modern age don't exist yet. The terror of the battlefield in trench warfare is the Maxim machine gun, and the rifles used by militaries during the Great War are typically bolt-action affairs that require the wielder to work the bolt with each shot. Pistols in this era include both revolvers like the Colt M1892 and semi-automatics such as the M1911, depending upon the exact year. The submachine gun is invented during the Great War, but does not see widespread use until World War II; assault rifles have not yet been invented.

Medicine

Penicillin isn't discovered until 1928, so antibiotics do not yet exist in the *Ruins* era. This means that, for people without benefit of supernatural healing, surgery, childbirth, and infection are all serious problems. Anesthesia does exist, but it is still proceeding through many processing steps; cocaine is used as an anesthetic in 1898, opioids in 1900, and synthesized cocaine derivatives by 1900 and onward. Heart surgery and organ transplants are technologies of the future, as is the discovery of DNA.

Science

The scientific revolution is well underway, with its works quickly advancing the state of industry. Studies in plastics, petrochemicals, number theory, observational astronomy, and electricity are well underway. By contrast, the transistor doesn't exist yet; electronic devices still use vacuum tubes. Radio is a common means of hearing the news, but radios are still big and bulky. Television doesn't become commercially available until the 1920s. RADAR won't exist until World War II.

In this era, scientists will find great strides happening in chemistry, with the development of synthetics of all kinds — dyes, rubber substitutes, plastics, and medicine. Physics is still working out theories of electromagnetism and doesn't yet have an understanding of nuclear forces (the Standard Model won't exist until much later); most physics ends at electricity, magnetism, and classical forces. Biology is still working under many flawed assumptions, as DNA has not been discovered (although inheritance is known), evolution is a new concept, and the taxonomic classification of various animals still leans toward examination of their physiology, because there is no way to trace common ancestry via DNA or mitochondria. Dinosaurs have been discovered, but are still considered lizards and not well understood, with many misclassifications based on improperly assembled skeletons.

The scientific discipline most likely to cross paths with mummies is, of course, archeology. Antiquarianism helped to give rise to this study, but in this era, archeologists are as likely to be hobbyists who have too much money as they are rigorously trained professionals from a university. Naturally, mummies tend to despise the kind of work that archeologists of this era do, since they "helpfully" remove vessels from tombs and send them overseas to sit in glass cases on a display in someone's private collection because "it belongs in a museum."

Merits

The *Ruins* era is a difficult time to situate a full-scale chronicle of **Mummy: The Curse** because it takes place just prior to a Sothic Turn. Naturally, cults can and do raise mummies outside of this timetable, but experiencing a full three decades is nearly impossible, given the rate at which Sekhem bleeds off. To some degree, this is part and parcel of a **Mummy** game; mummies live only in eyeblinks, missing the essential moments of life and turns of history. Still, this can be a challenge, and the new merits presented below may help to mitigate this to some degree.

Ba-Shai (••)

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Sesha-Hebsu) •• – •••

You are one of the *ba-shai*, a courier from the Guild of Scribes. While alive, your job duties included delivery of important documents and associated parcels, in addition to copying and translating texts. Now that you are Arisen, this sort of task is somewhat beneath you...except when it comes to important relics of the guilds, or even bodies of other mummies.

While you are engaged in carrying a parcel at the behest of your guild, you are politically immune from being stopped or searched by other mummies or their agents. It does happen from time to time, but it causes a great deal of political strife between the guilds, so most Deathless respect this protection. This protection can be waived by a higher-ranking member of the Sesha-Hebsu, though they are loath to do so without extreme circumstances.

From time to time you may be called up by your cult at the behest of one of the Sesha-Hebsu guildmasters in order to fulfill your ancient duty of carrying a text, vessel, or other important artifact. This is, of course, an excellent way for a Storyteller to start a new story.



Cadaver's Quiet Touch (•)

Prerequisite: Must be a mummy.

Your touch does not cause other mummies to rise while they are in a death cycle. You can safely touch, pick up, or manipulate the corpse of another mummy while its soul is in Duat, without causing it to burst into a sudden paroxysm of violence.

This Merit is especially useful if a mummy is assisting another mummy in relocating a tomb — but it has, in the past, been used by a mummy to abscond with the corpses of others in order to blackmail them or put them in a difficult position to arise.

Early Riser (• – •••)

Due to an eager soul, or a twist of the magic in your particular Rite of Return, you have a tendency to wake up early when a new Sothic Turn is about to arrive. You gain all the benefits of the Sothic arising — once your Sekhem rating reaches 1, your last point does not drain away due to time. If you are killed before the normal Sothic Turn actually arrives, though, you do not automatically awaken again once the Turn happens. In effect, your Sothic Turn starts slightly before that of other mummies.

The amount of lead time that you get depends upon the dots in this Merit:

•	1 year
••	10 years
•••	50 years

For a *Ruins of Empire* era game, the Storyteller should consider giving this Merit as a free bonus to mummies who are central to the story, so that they can awaken early for the time period and remain active for the duration of the chronicle. Keep in mind too that mummies who arise early thanks to this Merit might even stay active all the way into the modern age and the new Sothic Turn, if they avoid dying once their Sekhem drains to its minimum.

Interstitial Lives (••••)

While most mummies live only in the fits and starts of their summons and Sothic Turns, you sometimes arise for unclear reasons. Perhaps the Judges decided to send you forth on a special errand. Maybe your Rite of Return was so powerful that it fills you with excess Sekhem beyond that normally imbued by the spell. Possibly, your *ba* and *ka* refuse to remain in Duat, and force their way back into your corpse at odd times.

With this Merit, you occasionally awaken at odd times, unconnected to a specific purpose, outside of a regular Sothic Turn. When you begin a new Descent uncalled, you treat it much like a Sothic Turn — you do not have a specific goal to achieve, beyond the general elements laid out by your Judge, your guild, and your decree. Unlike an awakening during a Sothic Turn, you can run out of Sekhem over time and eventually die again, so time is something of a factor — but you are not necessarily beholden to performing at the behest of a cult or murdering tomb robbers.

Your interstitial lives are especially vague in your damaged and spotty Memory. Recalling moments from interstitial lives while you proceed through a "normal" Descent requires a Memory score of 5 or higher, and at a score of 5 you only recall sporadic flashes — just enough to let you realize that you have some flicker of existence outside of the cycle common to the Deathless. Only with a Memory score of 7 or more can you recall specifics from other interstitial moments. (This does not apply to your memory of things that have happened in an interstitial life that you are currently experiencing, of course.) Flashbacks from interstitial lives can be sudden and unexpected, and also confusing to a mummy who does not expect a memory of an off-cycle Descent spent without a clear purpose.

Your rising into an interstitial life happens when strange forces coalesce — that is, when the Storyteller has an interesting tale to tell, but chooses not to invoke your cult or the other trappings of Arising. While in Duat, you may attempt to rise prematurely, pitting a roll of your Willpower pool against a difficulty of your Memory rating. If you fail, you cannot try again until a full year has passed. If you succeed, the effort to refill your Sheut with Sekhem costs you a Willpower *dot*. Rising in this fashion does cause you to begin a new Descent filled with Sekhem, though.

Visions of Dead Gods (••••)

For reasons not wholly understood, you have strong memories of your encounters with the Judges in Duat. While most mummies find the Underworld a mysterious place, one for which they have the least recollection, you have regular flashbacks to the face of your Judge, sometimes including decrees that it has made to you (in the Iremite language, of course).

These visions can provide a mummy with specific direction — you have a much better idea of your purpose with each Arising, as compared to other Deathless. This direction can be a help or a hindrance, of course, as the Judges often send mummies on cryptic errands without regard to any personal agenda on the part of the mummy.

Because of your visions, you have a very literal belief that you are performing divinely appointed tasks. When you fulfill a goal that your Judge (that is, your Storyteller) has given you via a vision, you refresh all of your Willpower, just as if you had engaged in your Virtue. You can do this up to once per scene, *in addition to* gaining the benefits of your Virtue. Every time you increase your Memory, you immediately gain another vision, which comes with an associated task (and the opportunity to increase your Willpower).

In addition, you sometimes simply *know* (as decreed by Fate, i.e. the Storyteller) when someone makes a false claim regarding the Judges. This could be a case of another Arisen lying about its purpose, or a sorcerer trying to convince you that he shares the agenda of one of the Judges. While this

sense is not constant — simply making arbitrary statements about the Judges does not give you any idea of what they want — when it does occur, it is infallible.

Affinities

The introduction of new technology in the *Ruins* era causes some mummies to discover heretofore unknown Affinities. In particular, mummies discover that they seem to have some level of protection against the new electronic and photographic records of the era, and against the toxins deployed during the Great War.

Ancient Artifice

Prerequisite: Sheut • • • •

Effect: The mummy's body clings to physical shapes and imbues them, almost intuitively, with magical powers. When handcrafting objects from simple materials common to the desert belts of Africa, such as sandstone and papyrus, the mummy automatically gives them a tiny amount of magical power.

Items crafted in this way grant a bonus die to Skills with which they are appropriately used: Using enchanted papyrus to write a note or a poem grants a bonus to the Expression Skill roll, while using an enchanted bronze chisel to carve a statue would grant a bonus to the Craft Skill roll.

Items made in this fashion are inherently unstable and "bleed" away their magical energies rapidly. An item made in this fashion loses its magic energy after a day; the amount of time that it remains enchanted doubles with each success scored on the initial Crafts test to create it.

Note that this Affinity generally doesn't affect modern items such as guns and automobiles, as they are made with refined metals and plastics rather than with the raw materials of the natural world.

Entombed Ba

Prerequisite: Ba • • •

Effect: The mummy's driving spirit is intimately connected to her personal tomb — generally, the last place from which she arose. Her spirit helps to sustain it, but in the event of her demise, the tomb follows her into the grave.

When the mummy dies, the outer structures of her tomb collapse as well. Walls buckle and ceilings fall in. Each turn for ten turns, everyone inside the structure must make a Wits + Composure roll; anyone who scores fewer successes than the mummy's Ba rating suffers one point of bashing damage and one point of lethal damage from the debris.

The collapse of the mummy's tomb also protects her body. Strategic passageways and corridors always wind up blocked, but in a way that will enable her to clear the passage from the inside when she eventually reawakens. Excavation with dynamite or heavy equipment could still clear the area away, and given enough time her cult could reach her cadaver, but at least for the moment she remains out of the reach of her enemies.

Face Without Witness

Prerequisite: Ren • •

Effect: The explorers cracking open mummies' tombs in this age often bring cameras to gather photographic evidence. Later, the craze surrounding the tomb of Tutankhamen and the mummy's curse will form the basis of many cinematic forays. Mummies interacting with these media sometimes discover that they do not "catch" quite right. With this Affinity, the mummy's visage is almost always distorted when captured in photographs (whether on film or, later, by digital means). This usually takes the form of shrouding the face with a blurring effect, though some element of the mummy's true, desiccated nature is usually apparent. If desired, the mummy can appear normally at no cost; this requires only the most momentary, minimal effort. Unwitting photographers may chalk up an errant photo of this sort to bad exposure or poor developing process.

Form of the Sybaritic Need

Prerequisite: Ab • • • • •

Effect: The Arisen gains a new Sybaris form (see **Mummy: The Curse**, p. 148): *Enticement Sybaris*. When the mummy's soul manifests, mortals who glimpse the mummy's true nature find themselves fascinated and attracted, even in spite of any repulsiveness or inhumanity that they might glimpse. The sheer unnatural power of the mummy's soul stirs something in mortal onlookers, and they crave the opportunity to serve, to please, and to abase themselves.

Roll for Terror Sybaris when appropriate, but instead of being overwhelmed with terror or anger, mortals find themselves quivering with longing mixed with fear. A mortal affected by Enticement Sybaris will not attack the mummy, but instead may become smitten, overwhelmed, with difficulty behaving rationally and trouble reconciling the combination of revulsion and desire. The usual penalties to dice pools and fading of memories still apply, though the distorted memories of the event tend to cause a different kind of unease. A mortal struck by Enticement Sybaris is a victim of the mummy's power and would never think to so much as touch the object of this supernaturally amplified nauseating desire, without the mummy's express command; the Sybaris turns mortals into fawning adorers, both repelled and drawn to the eternity that lies behind the mummy's eyes.

Note that while the manifestation of the Sybaris is different, what a mortal envisions is not. The mummy may still appear as a desiccated corpse surrounded by a wreath of flames, writhing serpents, or a heron's wings with sharp-bladed edges. The Enticement Sybaris simply causes the image to represent something that is both fearsome and strangely attractive to the viewer.

Scent of Sybaris

Prerequisite: Sheut • •

Effect: For most of the Arisen, Sybaris is an afterthought — a mystic reflection of a spiritual nature, but one that primarily serves to warn away mortals. For this mummy,

though, Sybaris is innately tied to death, and it mirrors itself in deaths that surround it.

When the mummy sees or touches a corpse of a person who was killed by a mummy, she has a sudden insight into the Sybaris image of the mummy who killed that person. This takes the form of a sort of mental afterimage that shows her a glimpse of the aura that surrounds the killer when he flares with Sekhem. While this doesn't show the observer the mummy's actual appearance, it is in some ways better: If the observer has ever encountered this mummy before, even if she didn't possess this Affinity at the time, she immediately recognizes who it is. If it's a mummy she's never met, she recognizes that as well, and if she later meets that mummy, she instantly knows it's the same one.

This Affinity penetrates mundane disguises and functions even if the observer can't see the killer's face, but it only works if the mummy is directly observing the subject with her own eyes or hands (or through a mystical sense); seeing a mummy on film or in a photograph doesn't trigger this sense.

Sovereign Breath

Prerequisite: Ka ••

Effect: The lungs are one of the four cardinal organs of a mummy, and with this Affinity the mummy finds that his lungs (or what's left in his hollow torso) are incorruptible — at least, while in a Descent. Any inhaled gas with a Toxicity rating below [twice the mummy's Ka rating] has no effect whatsoever. Thus, the mummy could freely roam the trenches of the Great War, or shrug off the effects of chloroform without effort. (Mummies will also discover that this prevents any form of cancer or other respiratory problems brought on by smoking, but this is largely irrelevant to them, as they're immune to such maladies, anyway.)

Note that the mummy may suppress this Affinity as desired, such as to enjoy the effects of a cigarette.

New Utterances

Fire from Sand

Tier 1: Ba •; **Tier 2:** Ren *or* Sheut •••; **Tier 3:** Ab (Curse) •••••

Tier 1: The Arisen speaks a sibilant set of words that call for the fire that hides in certain solid objects, such as gunpowder or coal. This fire immediately ignites and bursts forth in the nature of the object: coal or wood catches fire and burns, while gunpowder explodes. No attack roll is needed; you can affect any one object that you can see or touch, up to the size of your own body. (Particulate matter, like gunpowder or flour, is considered a "single object" if it's in one pile.) The substance immediately ignites or explodes, as appropriate. A person in contact with the substance may take fire damage based on the size and amount of contact, up to three health levels of damage. A person holding an item that catches fire or explodes may make a Dexterity + Athletics check to mitigate the damage, but needs to score at least as many successes as the mummy's defining Pillar rating; each additional success reduces the damage by one point. The object remains on fire and burns as it normally would, and can be extinguished by the usual methods (smothering it, burying it, and so on).

Tier 2: When one calls forth the flame from objects, a mummy's honeyed words can cause fire to ooze out of liquid. Petroleum, gasoline, kerosene, and alcohol are all subject to calling forth this flame. As before, the mummy can affect any one discrete object that he can see or touch; in this case, this means a single container or body of fluid. As before, the subject continues to burn as long as it normally would, unless extinguished.

Tier 3: When a mummy calls upon the inner fire for this tier, he does not whisper. He shouts. All flammable items within the sound of his voice immediately burn or explode, as he chooses. The mummy may exclude substances that he doesn't want to ignite, and he doesn't have to see or touch an item; one could, for instance, cause the gasoline inside of the tank of a truck to suddenly detonate. Once again, the fire continues to burn normally afterward, and people who are in range of the exploding objects may take damage as outlined for the first tier.

Regalia of the Mamelukes

Tier 1: Sheut •; **Tier 2:** Ka ••; **Tier 3:** Ba *or* Ren ••••

Tier 1: Rusty old weapons and ceremonial armor line a mummy's tomb walls for a reason. With a minor investment of magical power, one can cause such weapons to become like new. A pitted bronze khopesh shines once more, ready to remove heads, while a rotted linen garment with a leather belt turns once again into thick, padded armor. The investment of magical energy allows the mummy to immediately renew up to [Sheut rating] number of objects touched. The items are completely restored, as if they never suffered the passage of time — renewed like their master. This Utterance cannot, however, restore damaged technological devices (anything that relies on interactions of chemistry or electricity, or the use of plastic components).

Tier 2: When the mummy restores ancient arms and armor, he also imbues them with a brief aura of power. For the remainder of the scene, any weapon or armor restored by this Utterance grants one additional (non-cumulative) die on attack rolls, or one additional point of Defense.

Tier 3: The regalia that one restores with this Utterance takes on a shadow of the quality of Irem. When the mummy enhances a weapon with this tier of power, in his hand it becomes a magical weapon that inflicts aggravated damage on mummies and the Lifeless (and possibly other supernatural entities as well) for the remainder of the scene. As before, this functions only on ancient weapons, not upon modern contrivances.

Chronicles of Ruins

The *Ruins* era is not only a time of adventures for mummies and their cohorts, it's the period that helps to establish what mummies are in the popular consciousness. The discoveries in Egypt during this period fire the imagination, and in a few short years those stories turn into movies and books carrying distorted interpretations of the Descent. For **Mummy: The Curse** players, it's a perfect time to embrace those stereotypes. Your mummy can rise from a violated tomb and take up a role pretending to be a priest of an old native religion, become embroiled in the warfare that grips the world, slip into the high society of the Victorian and Edwardian eras as an exotic foreigner, hunt down mysterious relics while pursued by Austrians and Ottomans and Prussians — there's no shortage of things to do, and there's no reason that mummies in this era shouldn't do them in a big way. Especially for mummies who're in war-torn countries or in the colonized parts of Africa and the Middle East, there's nothing stopping the mummy from a casual exercise of power. People are dying in strange and horrible ways all throughout this period, so rumors of walking dead and cursed tombs simply add to the cachet of legends surrounding the undead.

Building Your Pyramid

The Pyramid chronicle style (**Mummy**, p. 241) is an excellent choice for chronicles set in the *Ruins* era. Because this era happens a century before the next Sothic Turn, it's unlikely that several mummies will all wake up at the same time with a loose, formless sort of personal agenda; new Descents in this period generally stem from tomb violations and cult summons, with the occasional outlier who is an Early Ariser (as noted in Merits, previously). Playing a mummy, some members of the mummy's cult, and some hangers-on who have run into this unexpected brush with the supernatural can give a much more focused experience, in which the mummy is central to many of the supernatural goings-on and serves as the underpinning of the group's agenda (by driving forward the goal with which she arose), but the cult members have freedom to engage in other pursuits, like getting wrapped up in the tumultuous politics and warfare of the day.

A variation on the Rotating Pyramid scheme is to build your characters collaboratively, but then have a different player take the role of the lone central mummy with each new Descent. This way, changes to the mummy's personality work in naturally as part of the process of lost memories. Each player has a turn to play the central mummy for a single story, while everyone else plays members of the cult. In such a chronicle, the players should all work together to create a cast of characters sufficient for everyone to have a role that they enjoy. The players can collaborate to build the single mummy, then each player can make a mortal character who is connected to the mummy in some way, so that everyone has a character to play regardless of who's in charge of the mummy during a given story.

A variation on this is to have a rotating pyramid in which one central mummy (probably one with the aforementioned Early Ariser Merit) is always present, but other mummies rotate in and out of the cast — often because the central mummy has pressured their cults into summoning them. In this style of chronicle, the central mummy figure can become quite potent by amassing experience over the course of several stories, but each player has an ancillary mummy to play from time to time in order to have a chance to play a mummy that's customized according to the player's desires.

Of central importance to these chronicles is the notion that *you don't have to have supernatural powers to have a good story*. Players who're used to comparing their character sheets and adding up points to determine who's a "winner" in Darkstalkers slugfests may reject the notion of playing a mere mortal in a supernatural chronicle, but mortals in a **Mummy** game have a very specific advantage that mummies do not: They are beholden only to themselves; no supernatural compulsions force them to deal with cryptic issues from the Underworld. Thus, mortal characters can pursue adventures, romances, and intrigues that most mummies would consider Sekhem-withering distractions. To build a chronicle for these characters, then, you must consider the intersection of the mummy's interests and the mortals'. Both sides need each other — the mummy needs mortals as confederates during the death cycle, and the mortals need the mummy for sheer supernatural power. Connecting the two means deploying challenges that put the characters in positions where what they want is something that they can only get through the agency of the other party.

Challenging the Future

Although **Mummy: The Curse** has a set mythology and backstory, much of that lies in the distant past. Players in the *Ruins* era can easily change the course of early modern history. Perhaps the mummies decide to prop up the Ottoman Empire, in order to repel foreign colonialists and spread stability through the region. Without the destruction of that empire, the Republic of Turkey might never form; a powerful Ottoman Empire could prevent the tensions that led to the hostility of Britain and the Americas against Libya, Iran, and Iraq. The creation of Israel might never happen or happen differently, if a revitalized empire refuses to allow Britain to parcel out its lands. Or the mummies might intervene in the course of the Great War, assassinating generals or leaders of various nations in a heavy-handed attempt to change its outcome. The Central Powers could remain intact, with Austria-Hungary a separate entity from Germany, and Bulgaria reabsorbed into the Ottoman Empire. In such a schema, Russia would have a smaller Soviet Union because it would not have as easy a time annexing the Balkan states, while Germany might lack the population and industrial base to turn into a military power later.



It's a game with immortal creatures from a vanished pre-recorded empire. Tweaking history is part and parcel of that game.

Allies and Adversaries

Mummies in the *Ruins* era will find that making new allies outside of their cults requires significant effort. In earlier days, people lived in comparatively small towns, and suborning a few local families was enough to build a personal legend that was whispered around hearths. In the interconnected industrial world, the sheer teeming masses mean that influencing an entire town or city is hardly practical unless the mummy somehow suborns a ruler or other leader — itself a difficult proposition, since the mummy will not always be available to helm the rudder of state.

Adversaries, though, are plentiful.

Last Dynasty International

As described in **Mummy: The Curse** (p. 204), Last Dynasty International is a mystical conspiracy that takes the form of an international corporation, ostensibly creating new pharmaceuticals, but actually harvesting Sekhem from mummies for its supernatural rejuvenative properties. During the *Ruins* era, LDI isn't a corporation yet; it's a conspiracy between the Three Gentleman and a renegade scorpion cult, based out of Egypt, slowly infiltrating the local government and building its wealth on the back of trade — mostly exports from Egypt to England to enrich that empire. The Great War tears the cult apart, but the specifics are left to the Storyteller to decide upon.

Even though LDI isn't a corporation yet, it's still a cult with dangerous information. The Three Gentlemen are certainly not mummies, but through the aid of their cult they are able to make the leap to refining mummy essence in order to preserve their own immortality. How did they first refine mummy Sekhem? Was their first captive one of the players' characters? An ally? An enemy (even so, someone who can't be left in the hands of mortals)? How do they maintain their alliance with Muhammad Ali Pasha — blackmail, threats, or shared greed? What happens when the Amkhat that the cult routinely creates start hunting down relics in the tombs of the players' mummies? And what happened to the mummy who originally founded the cult?

Mummies who cross paths with any of the Three Gentlemen or their henchmen are in for a bit of a surprise. By the start of the *Ruins* era, the Three Gentlemen have already crossed paths with mummies several times, and they have a crude but effective formula that they later parlay as the Cell-Scrub treatment. Naturally, they're eager to get their hands on as much Exudation as possible, and that means that they're dangerous in the extreme. Notably, the Three Gentlemen themselves already know that tackling mummies is outside the bailiwick of mere mortals — so they leave it to their less-intelligent employees. A mummy who crosses paths with the Gentlemen will find herself cunningly stalked until she can be cornered by a *very* large group of henchmen, preferably with some kind of leverage, like a hostage or a threat to blow up a favorite tomb or relic. The Gentlemen also aren't above using their pull in the government; bribery and extortion will go a long way to cause no end of headaches for the mummy, from police harassment to shutdowns of her cult's facilities and confiscation of any money or treasures that happen to be in circulation outside of a tomb.

Even if the players' mummies manage to get their hands on the Three Gentlemen, there's no guarantee that this solves the problem. Any number of unscrupulous subordinates could step in to take the place of one of the bosses, should the worst happen. And of course, through the miracle of Exudation, death isn't what it used to be. Rumor holds that Adam Drake Esq. has already died once, and though he's not eager to repeat the experience, he's certainly the wiser for it.

Revivatar: This miracle fluid requires five units of Exudation for one dose. The fluid takes the form of a golden gel that is applied by rubbing it over the subject's torso (specifically, over the locations of the four cardinal organs — heart, liver, lungs, and stomach). Applied within a few hours of death, it returns a mortal subject to normal life. Well, mostly.

Revivatar doesn't always work, and even when it does, it doesn't always work *quite right*. The decedent must make a Willpower roll, with a difficulty equal to the number of hours already dead. Success means that the subject returns to death's door, at the last health level. Subsequent rest, therapy, and medical treatment are necessary to heal back to a semblance of normalcy.

Returning via Revivatar is a harrowing experience. The subject automatically loses one permanent dot of Willpower. If the subject scored fewer than five successes on the Willpower roll to rise, additional problems happen; the Storyteller should choose one problem for each success short of five (that is, if the subject scored three successes, the Storyteller would choose two problems):

- The subject loses a physical Merit, such as Strong Back or Stunning Looks, due to damage and permanent scarring.
- The subject gains a derangement.
- The subject suffers the loss of one dot from an attribute — a loss of Stamina could be due to the severe injuries; loss of Dexterity due to scarring; loss of Intelligence due to trauma; and so on.

It's possible for the subject to suffer from any of these effects more than once, of course, on a poor (but successful) roll.

Revivatar doesn't work on the undead, and nobody has tested it on animals. It could theoretically function on a sorcerer, should the Three Gentlemen *happen* to have some handy and *happen* to want to use it on a sorcerer, an unlikely set of coincidences at best.

Revivatar has a shelf life of only seven years, and it must be stored in extremely specific conditions, so the Three Gentlemen usually try to keep a single dose on hand at any given time, but even that is difficult.

The Rosicrucian Order (AMORC)

In 1915, Harvey Spencer Lewis forms a new branch of the four-century-old Rosicrucian society. The Rosicrucians claim to keep the secret practices of an ancient Egyptian priesthood dating back to 150 BCE, and Lewis succeeds in becoming a man of great influence. In keeping with their professed origins, they have an extreme interest in all things Egyptian, and the Rosicrucians recruit members from among the prominent European and American Egyptologists of the day.

Though it would seem at first that the Rosicrucians are a rogue cult, nobody claims credit for their existence, and much of the usual lore held by rogue cults simply isn't present among the Rosicrucians. They don't seem to have any notion of a vanished precursor civilization, nor a particular affinity for serving the interests of undead patrons. What they *do* have are a dedication to a universalist philosophy of philanthropy, the occasional practicing sorcerer, and a huge collection of vessels.

Lewis, in 1921, raises funds from members of the Order to finance the excavation of the temple city of Tel el Amarna. In return, he receives a large number of artifacts from the excavation, which go into the Rosicrucians' collection. Over the following years, additional artifacts flood in to the museum in San Jose, where the Rosicrucians keep the massive collection catalogued and protected. While the museum also contains some replicas, it holds thousands of pieces, many of which still keep traces of Sekhem. Unfortunately this also means that the occasional curse strikes a researcher or member from time to time — but as many of the relics are simply locked away in temperature-controlled cases, they do not often have an outlet for their powers or curses.

The Rosicrucians have chapters all across Europe and the Americas, as well as in Egypt. Opinions about them vary from person to person: Some people see them as harmless idealists, others as a dangerously secretive cult. In the world of **Mummy: The Curse**, they are a wild card: Their goals will sometimes align with and sometimes oppose those of mummies, they possess enough sorcerous knowledge to be useful, but they are not part of the grand plan and history of Irem. (Indeed, the Arisen would likely consider them naïve, in spite of their skills.)

Jamiyat an Nahda al-Islamiya, al Jamiya al-Watania al-Islamiya, and Hamas al-Istiqlal

By 1918, British rule over Iraq and Syria had fostered enough resistance to lead to the formation of a variety of secret and not-so-secret societies, including the League of Islamic Awakening, the Muslim National League, and the Guardians of Independence. Each of these groups formed in response to grievances over British sovereignty and advocated for the liberation of their countries. The former two groups agitated for the election or appointment of Muslim officials, supported by the decree that Muslims could not be ruled over by non-Muslims; the latter group relied on a combination of nationalist sensibilities and Muslim populism. Both Shia and Sunni Muslims joined these groups, forming a coalition that brought together historical enemies in opposition to the British.

By 1920, the agitation of these groups led to a compromise. Emir Faisal, the wartime associate of T. E. Lawrence, had recently been ejected from Syria by France, but Britain "supported" him as a new king of Iraq. Although Britain retained a military presence in the country, Faisal had some degree of legitimacy, partially through deliberate statesmanship in the form of a guided election and partly due to a claim to descent from the line of Mohammed. Faisal spent the next twelve years walking a tightrope between British and Iraqi interests, with an eventual end of Iraqi independence. These revolutionary groups then continued into the modern era as Islamic parties vested in the elections and politics of the Middle East.

For mummies, these organizations are of note because they are conspiratorial, organized, and politically influential: just the sorts of groups that are ripe for use by a cult. While no mummy could ever claim to dominate one of these three groups (and the Muslim influence would put them at odds with a mummy if her true nature were revealed), during the *Ruins* era these nascent groups and their eventual leaders are under the pressure of British rule and the demand for oil from Mesopotamia, and thus hungry for powerful allies. A mummy and her cult could easily supply a few bits of supernatural pressure here and there in exchange for the promise of eventual political concessions. Of course, the long view would also mean that practical mummies would make similar arrangements with the British administration; after all, if you don't know which side will eventually win, you might as well make agreements with both.

Mummies in Iraq or Syria during the *Ruins* era will likely see these groups coming together, forming support coalitions in their local communities, and uniting improbable alliances between Sunni and Shia Muslims, as well as independent nationalists with no religious agenda. Such encounters could be public, in the form of rallies or community gatherings, or via private back-room correspondence in coffee houses and mosques.

Personalities of Note

Instead of providing exhaustive character records for every significant mortal, we've included a list of some particular people who might serve as focal points for interesting **Mummy** stories. The descriptions highlight elements of the personality and history of each that might pique your interest, so that you can decide who you'll choose to research via the internet or your local library.



MUSTAFA KEMAL ATATÜRK

A military officer in the Ottoman Empire, Mustafa Kemal serves in the army from 1907 until the dissolution of the empire in 1918; even in his early years, he is a member of a secret reform movement inside of the army. After the Ottoman Empire collapses, he works for the establishment of independent Turkey, as a military leader fighting to expel foreign invaders. He orchestrates several successful campaigns and becomes such a popular leader that when the Republic of Turkey forms in 1923, he becomes its first president.

Mustafa is a reformist and a modernist, strongly interested in developing Turkey technologically and establishing it as a new center of culture and trade. He is keenly aware that, if his fledgling country becomes riven with internecine conflict, it will simply fall into the machinations of European imperial powers. To stabilize the new country, he leans on many of the reformist ideas circulating among the Young Turk movement and looks to a secular Turkish identity as a unifying force. The Turkish Congress, in recognition of his leadership, grants him the surname Atatürk, or "Father of the Turks," as an exclusive honorific.

Mummies involved in the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the formation of the Republic of Turkey will likely cross paths with Kemal or his army. Mummies could alternately praise his pragmatic approach and his political maneuvering, or be disturbed by the secular principles upon which he forms the new society.

HOWARD CARTER

During the beginning of the *Ruins* era, Howard Carter is 18 years old, gathering information from tombs in Amarna. For the next few years, up until 1899, he uses his artistic talents to record copies of wall reliefs from temples in Deir el-Bahari. He becomes chief inspector for the Antiquities Department, but leaves over a dispute in 1904, then labors for nearly two decades with limited results. In 1922, his benefactor, Lord Carnarvon, announces that Carter has one more season of digging to find something worthwhile. What Carter finds changes the face of Egyptology to the world at large.

In late 1922, Carter's team finds the tomb of Tutankhamun in the Valley of Kings. This tomb, highly intact and filled with glorious treasures and works of art, cements Carter's reputation as a premier archeologist and the discoverer of the most iconic find of its time. The world press publishes glowing accounts of the treasures discovered, which fires the imagination of millions of readers worldwide. The tomb of the "boy king" becomes *the* central representation of ancient Egypt in the public mind, and Howard Carter is celebrated for his role as the discoverer.

After his discovery, Carter retires to part-time work, assisting in identifying artifacts and securing pieces for museum collections.

For mummies in the *Ruins* era, Carter is a key figure simply because his discovery catalyzes public fascination with the treasures and glories of mummies' tombs. Previously, mummies and their tombs were considered dry, barren, and quaint. After 1922, Carter opens people's eyes to the world of art and grandeur associated with mummies. Even the connection to a "false mummy" — Tutankhamun was a later Egyptian royal, not an Iremite guildsman — provides a reflection of the glory of Irem. This awakening spurs a fascination that makes people more apt to join mummy cults.

JACQUES DE MORGAN

As Director of Antiquities for Egypt until 1897, de Morgan oversees foreign interests in archeology and the collection of artifacts. He is an experienced miner and excavator, having already worked in Malaya and later in Susa. Any artifact that isn't stolen or smuggled almost certainly passes under his scrutiny before it leaves the country. Not that this stops him from sending artifacts abroad — a situation that leads to repercussions later, when Egypt re-establishes itself as an independent country, as many of those artifacts must be repatriated. De Morgan is systematic in his approach and manages to unearth artifacts that were missed by previous digs, by rigorously cataloging each step and establishing maps and breakdown zones of dig sites in accordance with techniques that he learned while mining for metals.

For mummies, de Morgan is a crucial figure because of his authority over digs in much of colonial North Africa. If the mummies seek a particular tomb, relic, or archeologist, de Morgan is the man to meet. Although he is of a scientific bent, he has his own theories about early Mediterranean civilization, and he becomes increasingly erratic in later years, possibly as a result of a brush with the supernatural.

EMIR FAISAL

At the opening of the *Ruins* era, Faisal is one of many leaders in the Arabian peninsula. As a son of the Sharif of Mecca, he has a strong hereditary claim to leadership, one that he cements by joining the Ottoman Parliament. In 1916 he meets Captain T. E. Lawrence of the British military, and the two form a union that will spark the final collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

Faisal is unusual among some of his countrymen in that he seeks a new Arabian state to replace the empire, but he does so in the name of politics and identity rather than a specific branch of religion. After he and Lawrence capture Damascus and precipitate the collapse of the Ottomans, he becomes the new king of Syria in 1918, then king of Iraq in 1921. During this time he is a strong proponent of modernization, looking to build infrastructure in the countries of the Middle East to foster trade relations and a stronger sense of community between the disparate groups that live in the desert.

Faisal can be an interesting hook in a **Mummy** chronicle because he is a pragmatic man with strong leadership skills, exactly the sort of person that a mummy would want to influence in forming a new society in the Arabian peninsula.

T. E. LAWRENCE

Made famous by the book lionizing his exploits and later the movie *Lawrence of Arabia*, T.E. Lawrence is a British intelligence officer with experience in the Arab world. He is picked to foster a revolution to slow the Ottoman advance, and

he does not disappoint. In conjunction with several other intelligence officers and an alliance of Arab irregulars under the titular command of Emir Faisal, Lawrence engineers a series of raids on Ottoman railroads; the Arabs carry off all they can loot, and the Ottomans are left stretching their forces across miles of desert in a vain attempt to stop the raiders.

Lawrence is a dynamic personality, at once charismatic, resolute, and decisive. He is also an excellent tactician and strategist, as shown both by his ability to paralyze Ottoman logistics and his capture of Aqaba and later Damascus (though the city actually fell shortly before he personally was able to arrive). He is also a masochist, with a penchant for surviving torture and beatings (both consensual and otherwise).

Mummy characters will certainly hear about Lawrence's exploits as the Great War drags on. His various personality quirks may well be the result of exposure to Sybaris during his early years as an archeologist in 1910–1914.

Nezihe Muhiddin

Born just before the beginning of the *Ruins* era, as a young woman Nezihe lives through the turmoil of the Ottoman collapse and becomes a citizen of the Republic of Turkey. Though the Voting Rights Bill of 1909 had given women the right to vote during Ottoman dominion, women's participation in the political process and in higher education was limited. Working as a journalist, she sees the revolutionary process and the formation of the new nation of Turkey first-hand, and this galvanizes her to remain active in politics. She forms Kadınlar Halk Fırkas, the Women's People Party, in 1923. Although Turkey does not officially recognize the party, she uses her political clout to continue to press for women's political equality.

Although women do have the ability to vote before Nezihe founds her party, the Women's People Party is the first organized attempt to create a voting bloc from women. In addition, Nezihe writes several feminist books, exploring progressive ideas about the role of women in Turkish society and the struggle to capture personal agency.

For mummy characters, Nezihe is a galvanizing figure. She has a wide-reaching view of the issues that surround Ottoman and Turkish politics, and she is not afraid to speak out about them. She is also a skilled organizer and writer, able to motivate with her powerful stories. A mummy who tries to make her into a cultist might find that she is a bit more self-possessed than most mere mortals.

Mehmed Rauf

The Turkish writer of the modernist novel *Eylül* is a figure of penetrating intellect, forging a new form of literature in the wake of the collapse of old, stratified forms of poetry favored in the Ottoman Empire. Though Rauf only writes one novel, it is seen as a watershed in Turkish literature, focused on the psychology of characters and their deep-set thoughts



and feelings. Rauf abandons the prosaic styles of the time and, as part of the *Edebiyyât-ı Cedîde* (or New Literature) movement, pioneers what could be characterized as a modern novel.

Mehmed Rauf is a useful ally for mummies because of his role in establishing part of the new artistic movement of the Turkish revolution. His circle of associates helps to build the ideas and writings that transition from the remains of the old Ottoman Empire to the new Republic of Turkey.

Mehmed Vahideddin

The final sultan of the Ottoman Empire, Mehmed VI presides over a series of disastrous military campaigns that lead to the empire's dissolution. Raised in the harem in Topkapi Palace, he has an isolated childhood that turns to a rigorously structured education designed to protect him from outside influences or dangers. Though he is intelligent and politically savvy, his predecessors have left the empire in a poor state, and once the British and Russian militaries trounce the Ottomans on the field of war, he is forced into a series of concessions. Further undercutting his position is the activity of Turkish nationalists who agitate (eventually successfully) for a new Republic of Turkey. In 1918 he is forced to surrender unconditionally, and the Ottoman Empire is quickly dissolved and partitioned off according to Allied interests.

Mehmed VI is a dynamic figure on the losing end of history. For mummies his story is a familiar one, of a leader attempting to navigate treacherous waters but outmaneuvered by the stagnation of his empire and a series of humbling reversals. Mummy characters could become involved in stories attempting to prop up the sultan in order to stabilize the empire and repulse European invaders, or to speed him to his demise in hopes of establishing their own preferred catspaws in the ensuing chaos.

ANNOUB

"No bargain is too small."

"Of course I can get that. My only stipulation is that you ask no questions."

"We are pieces in a grand and eternal game. Do not presume that there is no value in making certain that every piece is in its proper place at the proper time."

Background: Situated in Cairo, Annoub sees the diaspora of mummies as tightening a web (the Lifeweb, perhaps) around the whole world, something that even Irem could not accomplish in its heyday. Although he does not remember many particulars of his old life, Annoub is content to remain where he is currently situated, because he knows that every crisis begins with someone leaving her familiar home, or with a stranger coming into town. Having kept scrupulous records, and with a small but dedicated and wealthy cult, Annoub doesn't consider many people in mummy society strangers, and he has no intention of leaving his tomb and his home.

This assumes, of course, that his records are genuine. Annoub can't remember writing more than half of them.

Annoub also interfaces irregularly with other Maa-Kep, who presume that he's actually doing spywork for them by operating as a point of contact for other mummies and their guilds. This may or may not be correct.

Description: Annoub is a squat man reaching only 4'6" — a dwarf. In Egyptian and pre-Egyptian societies, dwarfs were thought to be expert jewelers because of their small hands, and Annoub was trained in the crafting of gems, jewels, and amulets in tandem with this belief. In spite of his small size, he has an unsettling charisma, especially when he smiles. Like many Iremites, his skin is a dark brown color, and he has thick black hair that he keeps well groomed.

Annoub rarely shows himself in public while active, but when he does, he is always immaculately dressed, with clothing tailored specifically for his size.

Storytelling Hints: As a middleman, Annoub often comes across as collected, congenial, and always perfectly positioned. He will deal with any of the Arisen (though he quickly becomes angry if anyone accuses him of dealing with the Shuanksen) and is quick to point out the value of his positioning as a neutral supplier and information resource in mummy society. Very little can rattle him, as he is used to people assuming that he is shady, underhanded, and dishonest. In truth, he is quite scrupulous in his dealings and always tries to make good on any deal, but he is also a pragmatist when forced into a corner.

Though some unsuspecting folk might be inclined to consider Annoub a comical figure due to his size, he still has the power of Sekhem. He also *always* carries an amulet and is *always* armed.

Annoub uses his prime location in Cairo to work not only as a dealer in antiquities, but as an information broker for other mummies. He will gladly sell information about the location of



relics and vessels, too. Other Maa-Kep believe that Annoub does this so that he can keep an ear to the ground on mummy affairs, in case any sort of secret policing is needed. While few mummies really *trust* Annoub, his information is generally correct.

Annoub serves best as a means to hook other mummies into a story, or a way to push them in a particular direction. Whether they are looking for a specific relic, trying to hunt down one of the Shuanksen, or even searching for records of their own pasts, Annoub is a known information broker who works in a location convenient to any mummy based out of Africa or the Mediterranean, and that makes him an easy first stop.

Concept: Broker to the Arisen

Decree: Shadow

Judge: Fentu, the Snout

Guild: Maa-Kep

Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 6, Resolve 4; Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2; Presence 4, Manipulation 5, Composure 3

Skills: Academics 4, Crafts 5 (Jewelry), Empathy 4, Enigmas 3, Intimidation 3, Investigation 3, Larceny 3, Occult 4, Persuasion 5, Politics 3, Stealth 2, Socialize 2, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 5, Weaponry 3

Merits: Allies 2, Contacts 4, Cult (Conspiracy; Reach 2, Grasp 5), Guild Status 2, Relic 5, Retainer 4, Resources 5, Status (Mercantile) 2, Tomb (Geometry 3, Peril [Traps] 2), Vessel 5

Affinities: Ancient Horror Unveiling, Anointed Prowess, Blessed Panoply, Blessed Soul, Enlightened Senses

Utterances: Doom Affliction, Dust Beneath Feet, Obedient Clay

Pillars: Ab 2, Ba 3, Ka 3, Ren 4, Sheut 5

Sekhem: Varies; Annoub has given his cult standing orders to awaken him if another mummy should arrive and request him.

Willpower: 6

Memory: 4

Virtue: Prudence (Annoub is a planner; he has a long-term vision, and believes that moving around relics and vessels, supplying mummies with information, and promoting cooperation between various mummies is key to putting all of the survivors of Irem into the right place to bring about some eventual new order.)

Vice: Greed (Annoub can't help but collect relics and vessels. He justifies this to himself by saying that he is doing so in order to make sure that they can make it into the correct hands later, but he often winds up keeping more than the Judges would consider appropriate.)

Initiative: 7

Defense: 4

Speed: 10

Size: 4

MAIBE

"Of course I can read it! It says...'DANGER'."

"Fine, I'm sure you can find another guide. Just not one who has already been there."

"I am not French or British or Persian or any of that nonsense. I am Egyptian and this land is my home and my heart."

Background: The turn of the century is a time of world turmoil due to war and imperialism, and in such times people have unlikely opportunities. Maibe is one such, a woman who under other circumstances might have been a librarian or a coffee-house server. Driven by hunger and the increasing demand for Egyptian artifacts, she went from being a teen girl with a good eye for old ruins to an adventurous woman as curious and as skilled in tomb hunting as any European-schooled archeologist.

Description: Maibe is a mousy Egyptian woman in her 20s. She is short and thin, with the frame of someone who has seen lean years in her childhood. Her head is usually covered, and her hair is black; her eyes are brown, often squinting, and betraying little of what she thinks. She has a skittery quickness and a fast reaction to danger, loud noises, or people coming close to her. She also has an amazing ability to reflexively grab small objects, whether they're suspicious-looking relics on the other side of a falling rock or a notebook stashed in an aimless academic's pocket.

Storytelling Hints: Maibe might appear to be just another hungry local looking to earn a little money, but she's courageous and a quick learner. She knows that her specialized knowledge about Egypt and its history is a luxury to jaded European travelers





and to more specialized clients. She also knows enough not to ask too many pointed questions. Maibe can serve as a hook to a sacred site or someone who knows clues about a relic. She's also smart enough to get out early if she suspects that something strange is going on. Mummies might wind up hiring her to get close to a rival, since many people in this era assume that a young woman like this is nothing more than a plain girl or a housewife.

Concept: Mortal Adventurer

Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 3; Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2; Presence 1, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Skills: Academics 2, Athletics 3, Empathy 2, Enigmas 4, Intimidation 1, Investigation 2, Larceny 4, Occult 2, Persuasion 3, Politics 1, Stealth 2, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 1, Survival 2, Weaponry 1

Merits: Contacts 2, Resources 1

Willpower: 6

Virtue: Diligence (When she sets her mind to a task, Maibe doesn't shirk from getting it done, even if it may take significant effort and time.)

Vice: Envy (Maibe often finds it ridiculous that wealthy Europeans come and dominate her home country simply by virtue of being rich, and she wants a better life for herself.)

Initiative: 6

Defense: 2

Speed: 10

Size: 5

Archetypes of the Era

The *Ruins of Empire* period is far enough removed from modern life that Storytellers might want to have on hand a sampling of quick-reference stat blocks for some of the most illustrative and/or common Storyteller characters of the era. They are as follows.

Arab Skirmisher

Hardened by life in the desert, the skirmisher can strike without warning and vanish without a trace, carrying off goods and treasures from a train or caravan.

Power 2, **Finesse** 3, **Resistance** 2

Skills: Animal Ken 1, Brawl 1, Firearms 1, Stealth 2, Survival 3, Weaponry 2

Willpower: 4

Initiative: 5

Defense: 3

Speed: 9

Size: 5

Enthusiastic Egyptologist

Come from England, France, Germany, or some other European state, this academic is eager to take home artifacts and gain patronage from a noble. Especially skilled at running from traps. Speaks many languages and knows how to condescend to other cultures in all of them.

Power 1, **Finesse** 3, **Resistance** 2

Skills: Academics 3, Expression 1, Occult 1, Politics 1

Willpower: 4

Initiative: 4

Defense: 2

Speed: 9

Size: 5

European Infantryman

These soldiers are found all across Europe and parts of Africa during the Great War, fighting and dying in great numbers over tiny advances between trenches.

Power 2, **Finesse** 2, **Resistance** 3

Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Firearms 2, Survival 1, Weaponry 1. A soldier will also have one level in a specialty, such as Medicine or Drive.

Willpower: 5

Initiative: 4

Defense: 2

Speed: 8

Size: 5

Local Laborer

A local laborer is a worker who lacks specialized skills, but will work cheap to dig, carry, and run when something supernatural happens.

Power 2, **Finesse** 2, **Resistance** 2

Skills: Athletics 2, Streetwise 1, Survival 1

Willpower: 4

Initiative: 4

Defense: 2

Speed: 8

Size: 5

Old World Courtier

European courtiers linger in all the courts of the Middle East and the colonized African nations, surviving on family wealth, political connections, and conniving schemes.

Power 1, **Finesse** 3, **Resistance** 2

Skills: Expression 2, Politics 3, Socialize 3, Subterfuge 2

Willpower: 4

Initiative: 5
Defense: 2
Speed: 9
Size: 5

QUICK STORY GENERATOR

Everyone wants to play a game but you don't have anything prepared? Such is the fate of many a Storyteller. The tables here will give you some inspiration to help create a fast and simple story for a Mummy game set during the *Ruins* era.

Use these tables for ideas — if you decide that you want a particular topic, there's nothing mandating that you roll the dice for every possible entry. This can just give you a quick plot that you can flesh out into an evening's adventure. Some entries may seem a bit odd when strung together; in such a case you can always reroll, or take it as a challenge to decide how they fit!

This generator is very simple: Start with an instigator, then repeat through courses of action and complications until you're ready to end the story.

INSTIGATOR:

WHAT EVENT CAUSES THE STORY TO START?

1. Tomb is broken into
2. Tomb suffers damage due to age or warfare
3. Cult awakens the mummy for help
4. Cult awakens the mummy accidentally by doing a rite incorrectly
5. Relic stolen
6. Relic mysteriously appears in tomb
7. Other supernatural creature disturbs tomb (Amkhat, sorcerer, etc.)
8. Familiar mummy pays a visit
9. Strange mummy pays a visit
10. Mummy doesn't know why he/she woke up

WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE FIRST COURSE OF ACTION?

Ideally, the players would really drive the action with their choices, but this is something that can present itself as an obvious first step.

1. Travel to a distant location to find something
2. Travel to a distant location to find someone
3. Visit a knowledgeable figure for information
4. Search for clues nearby
5. Confront an enemy agent
6. Dig for personal memories that may be relevant
7. Find a specific relevant relic
8. Find a specific relevant mummy
9. Find a specific relevant other supernatural entity
10. Make a deal or bargain for information/power/necessary items

WHAT SORT OF COMPLICATION ARISES?

The story encounters a twist or a speed bump. Again, if you're up to the task, you can take steps to make this complication a reflection of the characters' choices and their personal pasts and foibles.

1. An ally betrays the character (possibly for a good reason, depending on circumstances)
2. An enemy offers to help
3. An important place is attacked or destroyed
4. An important item is lost, destroyed, or stolen
5. The mummy is placed in a morally compromising position (such as having to violate one of the Judges' proscriptions in order to make progress)
6. The mummy has a chance to spark Memory, but it may mean a cost to the overall goal
7. Someone who shouldn't discovers some of the mummy's secrets
8. The mummy's tomb is compromised
9. Someone important to the mummy is threatened
10. Something that the mummy believes is shown to be untrue

ENCOUNTER TYPES

If you need an encounter and have no idea who it is, give it a roll. Note that an encounter doesn't always mean a fight. If a particular kind of person doesn't make sense for your location, reroll or pin a story hook on the character's reason for being in a strange place. Also note that the choices are equally weighted, even though it's technically "more likely" to run into French Europeans in Algeria than Americans (for instance), but probabilities are not as important as drama.

1. Local
2. European (British, French, German, etc.)
3. Ottoman
4. Egyptian
5. North African (Algerian, Tunisian, etc.)
6. Middle Eastern (Turkish or proto-Turkish, Armenian, Syrian, etc.)
7. Arab (Palestinian, Saudi, etc.)
8. Mummy cultist (maybe friendly, maybe not)
9. American (American, Canadian, Mexican, Brazilian, etc.)
10. Unknown supernatural entity

EXAMPLE

Here's a sample of stringing together some unlikely possibilities.

Malcolm has promised to run a **Mummy** game for Colin, but he's on the thin edge of scheduling, hasn't had any sleep, and has run out of poutine. He rolls for inspiration.

Colin is playing Menes, a mummy who was an administrator in ancient Irem and who has a tendency to build extremely loyal cults that subtly influence local politics.

6: Relic mysteriously appears in tomb

Malcolm knows that Colin likes music, so he decides that an unusual *sistrum* has been placed in the mummy's tomb. Colin's character awakens with a start in the *Ruins* era, a full hundred years before the fourth Sothic Turn, finding that he's clutching an ancient *sistrum*, knowing that it is a relic, but not knowing how he got it or why it's there in his hand, and with no memory of the object.

9: Find a specific relevant other supernatural entity

Malcolm tells Colin that Menes doesn't recognize the *sistrum*, but he knows someone who might: an ghost who haunts one of the ancient neighborhoods of Cairo near Colin's character's tomb.

Menes emerges from his tomb, looking for a cultist or someone who can help him to get his bearings. Malcolm describes that his flickering memory doesn't really recognize the area, but he seems to be in a denuded, crumbling part of a city that is much larger than he recalls. Menes accosts a terrified local and demands answers. Malcolm quickly flips over to the Internet to look up haunted places in or near Cairo and decides that Menes' ghostly contact is in Dahshour, about 30 miles south. Menes demands to know how to get to Dahshour, and the accosted (and terrified) human babbles something about tourists, diggers, and the pyramids to the south.

Menes spends a short scene getting accustomed to the modern Cairo, which Malcolm peppers with descriptions of strange modern devices like automobiles and men carrying rifles.

8: The mummy's tomb is compromised

Colin decides that Menes needs to get to Dahshour, and the best way to do so is to try to find vestiges of his cult and co-opt them for transportation. He follows his instincts and tracks down an aged man who now works in a bookshop. Menes enters the bookshop and closes the door behind him, then starts demanding answers. The startled bookkeeper soon realizes that he is in the presence of greatness, and he explains that now they use cars and trucks to get from place to place. After giving up trying to explain those devices to Menes, he tells the mummy that he'll arrange for someone to come and take Menes wherever he wants.

Menes returns to his tomb, but he discovers that the door, which he had carefully shut behind him, is ajar and broken off its hinges! Enraged, the mummy stalks inside to find... someone randomly decided.

2: Europeans

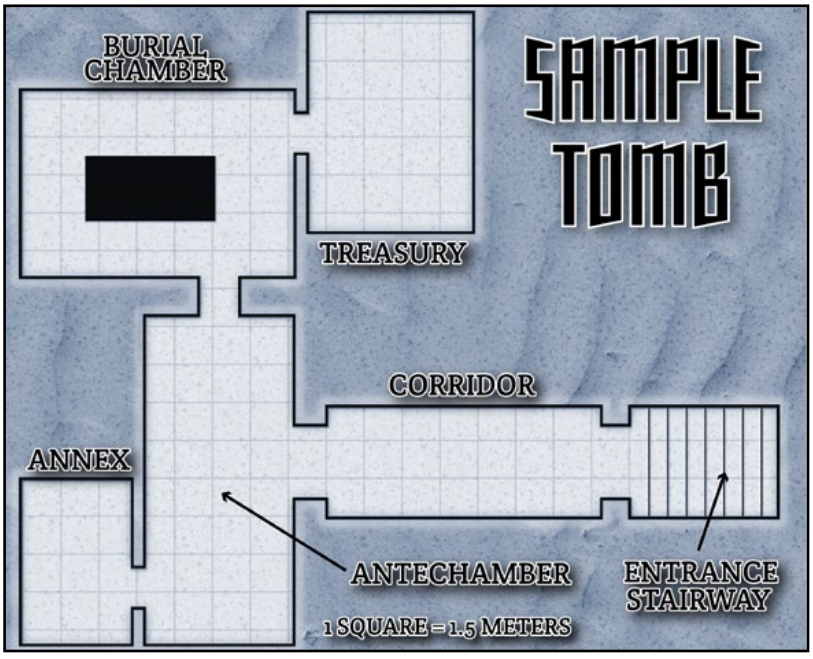
A small group of British travelers have let their curiosity get the better of them. Malcolm decides that they are archeology assistants who are amusing themselves in their off-hours by breaking into what they think is an abandoned house. Drunkenly, they are examining the tomb with lanterns and making crude jokes, and one even knocks over a precious vase with ashes from one of Menes' pets from a former time! Furious, the mummy starts to call upon his supernatural powers, just as the sound of a motor pulls up out in front of the tomb....

Of course, these story points aren't specific to the *Ruins* era, but the interactions of the various groups will be. For instance, Europeans in Egypt or Africa may be arrogant and imperialistic, or they may be bent on converting the locals to Christianity. An Arab in Britain might be a representative of Faisal, sent to talk the British into further commitments to the Arabs working with T. E. Lawrence. A Mexican in the Ottoman Empire might be a former emissary of Maximillian I, sent to help gain support for that dignitary, now left behind and trying to navigate the collapsing bureaucracy of the Ottomans while avoiding European (especially German) entanglements.

SAMPLE TOMB

This sample mummy tomb is based on the layout of the tomb of Tutankhamun, though of course a mummy will have certain additional security measures. While the tombs of historical Egyptian mummies rarely had actual traps — these were mostly myths — the tombs of Iremite mummies are often better guarded, and with the assistance of magic may well have guards and perils that survive for the turning of the Sothic Wheel.

Entrance: Tombs from earlier eras tend to have decorated entryways made of stone, with hieroglyphs or even earlier forms of writing that ward off would-be trespassers and display the names and titles of the interred. By the time of the era of *Ruins*, most of these entryways have become buried beneath sand or rubble, worn away by wind, or defaced by looters and vandals. Mummies who rebuild their tombs in the modern era might choose to camouflage the entryway, by putting it behind a mound of rocks or even making it look like a tomb that was already broken into and robbed.



Stairway: The stairway almost always leads down. Figuratively, the stairway represents a descent into the Underworld. This is usually the first place to put physical traps: an Iremite mummy's tomb might have spears or spikes activated by pressure. Such traps rarely survive the test of time unless a friendly cult maintains them or the mummy uses magic to preserve them.

While traps may be a deterrent to nuisance intruders, hardened robbers or archeologists will see them as confirmation that the tomb is protecting something important, so their value depends on whether the mummy prefers to rely on brute force or misdirection.

In many Iremite tombs, the stairway ends in another narrow door, which is plugged with stone or plaster and painted over.

Corridor: The corridor is the second location that tends to have traps. The walls of the corridor are often emblazoned with artistic depictions of elements of the mummy's life, usually idealized. Some mummies use these engravings and paintings as a way to jog their memories upon first rising, by allowing them to read these exaggerated inscriptions detailing their former glory. Corridor traps range from the difficult (spikes in the floor or walls, plugs in the ceiling that

Sample Traps

Peril Level	Description	Effect
•	Alarm	Simple noise alarm alerts cultists and possibly the mummy to a trespasser.
•	Falling Sandbag	Bag of sand drops on your head. 1L + 1B.
•	Pricking Needles	Small needles in a floor area inflict 1L on someone who steps on them. If the damage is not resisted or avoided in some fashion, the subject also suffers –1 to Speed until healed.
•	Scorpion Stinger	A single spring-loaded barb inflicts 1L and delivers a mild poison if it hits.
••	Sliding Wall	A wall falls or slides into place to block a doorway or corridor. Inflicts 2L + 2B if someone is stuck in the way, and can bar passage.
••	Slippery Oil	Oil coats part of the floor and a failed roll to evade the trap leaves the victim prone and inflicts 2B.
••	Spear Trap	A spear shoots out of a concealed hole, inflicting 2L (and possibly poison).
•••	Beetle Swarm	Flesh-eating beetles fall from the ceiling or pour out of the walls, inflicting 1L per turn for three turns before they disperse.
•••	Concealed Pit	Floor falls away to a concealed pit 20′ deep. Fall inflicts 3L + 3B. Pit might also have other awful things in it, and no ready way out.
•••	Scything Blade	Wide blade scythes through a passage and inflicts 3L (and possibly poison).
••••	Cage	Metal cage falls on top of interloper (or bars come up from floor or out of walls). Metal bars pierce for 3L if someone is caught in the way, and the cage keeps the trespasser caught. May have an Alarm at no additional cost.
••••	Collapsing Ceiling	Entire area of ceiling falls on the interlopers, causing 4L + 4B and possibly blocking passage.
••••	Immolator	Pressurized lamp oil or kerosene sprays through the area and is then ignited by spring-loaded spark maker or magic. Inflicts 3A fire damage. Fire persists over 3 turns, making crossing dangerous.
•••••	Dark Water	Floor falls away to a pit 50′ down that terminates in black, lightless water. Fall into the water inflicts 5B. The water quickly drains away body heat and may conceal horrors (crocodiles, predatory fish, etc.).
•••••	Render	Multiple spinning blades crisscross the area. Inflicts 5L damage. A victim who scores no successes on Wits + Composure to avoid the trap takes 8L instead.
•••••	The Boulder	Giant boulder chases archeologist down corridor. Direct hit inflicts 5L + 5B and may plug the passageway.

give way and pour in sand until the corridor fills, or heavy falling ceiling tiles) to the magically constructed and absurd (scything blades, floors that give way to pits hundreds of feet deep, poison gas or alchemical fire).

Antechamber: The antechamber is the tomb's equivalent of an (un)living room: Often, it includes couches, chairs, chests, and functional items. A mummy just awakening from slumber may find here sufficient furniture to recuperate and strategize for a short time. As always, time and tomb robbers may make off with such items. For this reason, Iremite mummies with the means often place magical guardians here: animated *ushabti* statues, a Sadikh, bound spirits, or even curses held in abeyance until an unwelcome guest arrives.

The decor of the antechamber usually matches the mummy's station. A mummy that is in dire straits and forced to invite another mummy into its tomb will generally do its hosting here.

Annex: If the antechamber is the living room, the annex is the storage pantry. Pottery and baskets here hold dishes, utensils, containers, oils, and tools. Again, time or robbery may leave this room with nothing useful, but a mummy with an active cult can usually count on at least a few useful items being left here in case of an errant awakening. While the mummy's most valuable treasures are kept in the treasury, the annex may contain utensils made of gold, or rare perfumes and oils.

Burial Chamber: The mummy lies in repose here, with canopic jars surrounding the sarcophagus. The burial chamber is usually separated from the rest of the tomb by a heavy stone seal or plaster wall — easily broken by a freshly risen mummy brimming with Sekhem.

The burial chamber typically has a few strategically chosen paintings or carvings designed to get to the heart of the mummy's role in life, so that immediately upon rising the mummy can be reminded of who she is and what she is meant to do. Of course, a mummy rising due to a disturbance may be overcome with fury and not exactly prone to reading such messages, and if a lucky or diligent robber gets this far the walls may already be defaced.

Treasury: The treasury holds everything that is ritually or magically valuable to the mummy. The Egyptians buried great vessels, statues, and art objects made of gold, jewels, and alabaster in their treasuries, but for Iremite mummies those are merely the gilded containers for relics and personal antiquities.

SAMPLE TRAPS

Although traps in a mummy's tomb are mostly a staple of fiction, some cults may think they are "helping" by adding traps, and particularly paranoid or fanciful mummies might include traps in their tombs by personal design.

A trap generally succumbs to time and wear after a number of decades equal to the successes scored on its construction, so a trap won't last through a Sothic Turn unless it is maintained by a cultist or magically reinforced.

As described on p. 82 of **Mummy**, a tomb's traps are a function of the level of Peril assigned to the background. Evading a trap is generally a Wits + Composure roll with a difficulty of the trap's level of Peril. The traps described here can provide some inspiration for ways to make that level of Peril a little bit uncertain to interlopers.

INSPIRATIONS

The collection of inspirational works below focuses on historical sources, with a few pieces of fiction sprinkled in to tantalize. Understanding *The Ruins of Empire* era means understanding the context of the collapse of empires in Europe, the period of colonization that led to massive upheaval in Africa, and the horrors of the Great War.

Akcam, Taner. *The Young Turks' Crime Against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire*. Princeton: Princeton University Press (2013). A (rather horrifying) accounting of Ottoman documents relating to the forcible relocation and extermination of Armenians; not for the faint of heart, but useful in understanding the backdrops of the religious and ethnic tensions of the time (which have led to modern conflicts).

Balfour, Arthur James. Letter to Baron Rothschild. 2 Nov. 1917. British Library. The "Balfour Declaration" is a document that leans upon the British policy for defeating the Ottoman Empire — by turning various regional powers against each other, making promises to both sides, and pushing for British support among whoever emerges as the victor in the local conflicts. The Balfour Declaration specifically calls for the settlement of the area of Palestine, which naturally leads to conflicts that are still felt today. Although support in the British government for such a program was low, the tactic of leveraging various kingdoms against one another was a key element of British strategy.

Burnett, Frances Hodgson. *The Secret Garden*. London: Heinemann, 1911. A whimsical children's literary piece in England, showcasing the society of the Edwardian era and perhaps underscoring the place of England on the world stage — an Imperial power, but one desperately alone and longing for a new revival.

Carter, Howard and Mace, Arthur C. *The Discovery of the Tomb of Tutankhamun*. New York: Courier Dover Publications, 1977. Carter's account of the opening and discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun in 1922.

Erickson, Edward J. *Ordered to Die: A History of the Ottoman Army in the First World War*. Greenwood press, 2000. A contemporary compilation of Turkish sources that provides some insights into how the Ottoman Empire fared before its end during the Great War. A useful resource for games set in the empire during the War, or for characters who may have experiences with the Ottoman military.

Lawrence, T. E.. *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. London: Oxford Times, 1922. Lawrence's account of the Arab revolt of 1917-1918. A look into the revolt, through the lens of Lawrence, and a look into the thoughts of Lawrence himself.

Lawrence of Arabia, David Lean, Sam Spiegel, 1962. A dramatized and cinematic version of the adventures of T. E. Lawrence in Arabia. Though elements are heavily fictionalized, the film is a cinematic *tour de force* and a must-see for, well, pretty much anyone. Peter O'Toole portrays Lawrence as a driven man, at times overcome by the gravity of the acts that he commits in the name of his signature vision.

The Lost Battalion, Russel Mulcah, A&E Television Networks, 2001. A made-for-television remake of a 1919 black-and-white

film dramatizing the events of an American battalion cut off and surrounded by German forces in the Argonne Forest in 1918.

Loudon, Jane C. *The Mummy*! 1827. An early *science fiction* novel focusing on the resurrection of the mummy Cheops in the year 2126, complete with a mummy's curse. A must-read for any **Mummy: The Curse** Storyteller.

Marwick, Arthur. *The Deluge. British Society and the First World War* (Second ed.). Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991. A look at the Edwardian era in Britain, and about the culture and fashion of the times — useful for creating the kind of flavor that defines the period.

Mombauer, Annika. *The Origins of the First World War: Diplomatic and Military Documents*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013. A chronological series of documents leading up to the beginning of the Great War, for a more nuanced understanding of the politics and pressures behind the eventual explosion.

The Night of Counting the Years, Shadi Abdel Salam, General Egyptian Cinema Organization, 1969. An Egyptian feature film set in 1881, showcasing grave robbers selling a cache of mummies on the antiquities market. Though the dialogue is in Arabic, the sense of what's going on in the film is still established well enough for a non-speaking viewer to get an idea of the plot, and the movie both portrays Egypt during that turbulent time and features the Antiquities Service.

Rauf, Mehmet. *Eylül*. Istanbul: Âlim Matbaası, 1901. A principal example of the Turkish "New Literature" movement, based on the premise of creating a prose psychological novel. Arguably, a showcase of the transition from the old Ottoman Empire's poetic literature to the modernist forms of the new century, following the examples coming out of Western Europe.

Treaty of Versailles, 28 June 1919. The Treaty of Versailles ends the Great War, and famously forces Germany to engage in payment of reparations, which naturally becomes part of the focus of Germany's later military ambitions (in order to get out from under its crushing war guilt obligations).

Worger, William H. *Africa and the West: A Documentary History: Volume 2: From Colonialism to Independence, 1875 to the Present*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. A collection of primary sources relating the turbulent times of European colonialism and its impact on Africa.

Zurcher, Erik J. *Turkey: A Modern History* (3rd ed.). London: I. B. Tauris, 2004. An academic resource that covers the development of Turkey from its Ottoman roots to the modern era, and an excellent initial source for a Storyteller or player looking to know more about the impetus behind the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey.

The Chronicles of Darkness

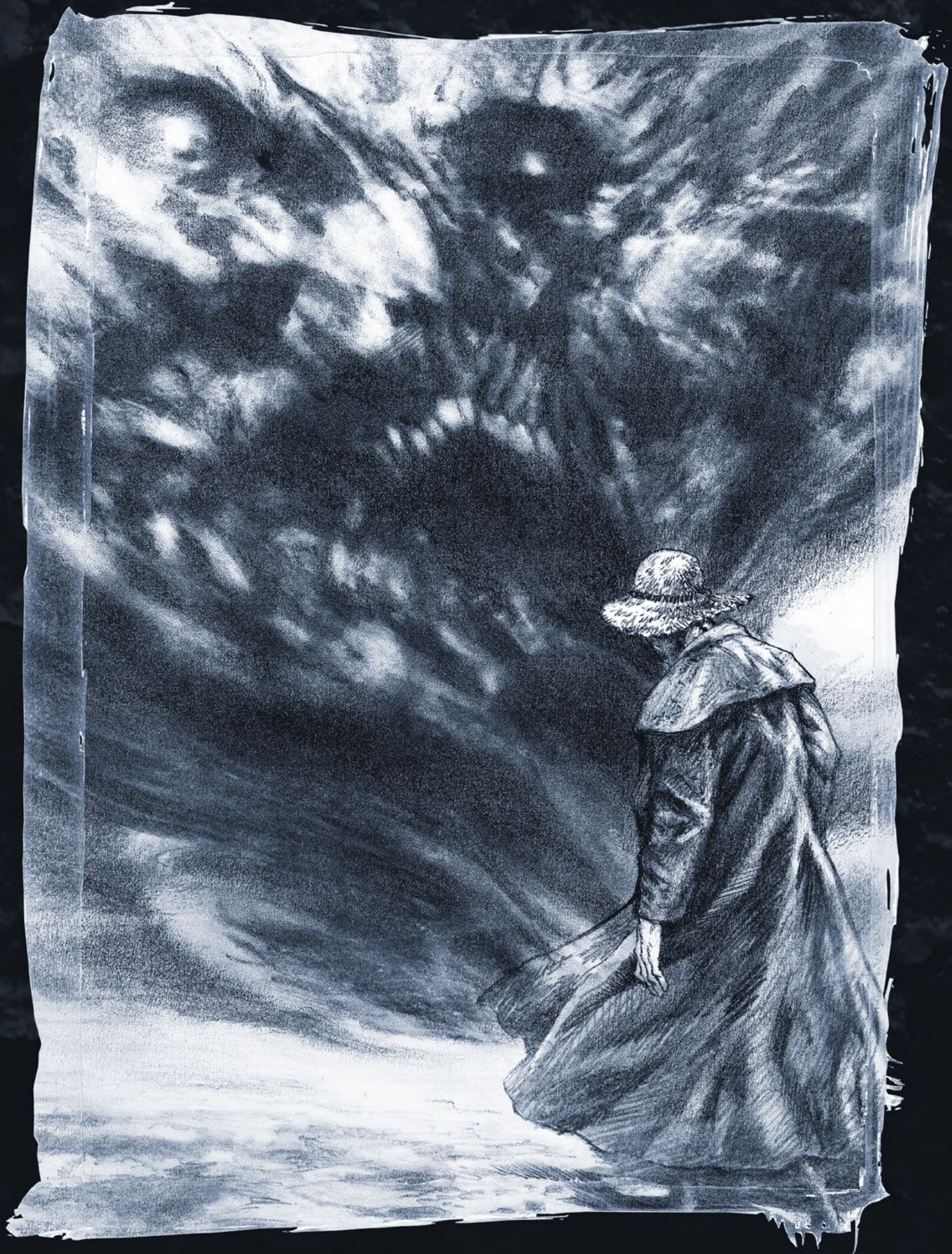
As "fellow" undead, of course **vampires** are a shoo-in when it comes to cross-pollinating external supernatural beings with the protagonists of the *Ruins* era. Both the decline of the British Empire and the advent of World War I open up numerous potential doorways to great stories, and certain figures in the vampire world have their sights set on key areas of Europe and the Middle East during this time, making it a prime occasion with which to put them at odds with mummies.

Throughout the areas of focus of the *Ruins* era, **werewolves** are on the move. Like their undead counterparts, they turn wheels within wheels in the shadows, maneuvering their enemies into striking position. In the early years of the 20th century, the Pure are mobilizing a massive salvo against the others, using the backdrop of global unrest to initiate a scheme to advance their goal of reestablishing the supremacy of their overlords. These efforts run counter to the Arisen's interests, of course, and could easily lead to either confrontations with these mad wolves, temporary alliances with their enemies (the Uratha), or both, and tying such events to both the Arisen timeline and to the real-world timeline could prove a fulfilling exercise for a Storyteller.

Perhaps the easiest cross-pollination with the central figures and themes of **Mummy** involves those other potent will-workers of the setting: **mages**. Beyond the abilities of the mundane sorcerers of the Arisen world, mages are truly just coming into their own during this time: In 1899, a faction called the Seers tries to forge an alliance with the broader body of unaffiliated mages with the intent of crushing the magical establishment, but in an act called the Great Refusal, the unaffiliated instead ally with the established orders (in a pact called the Pentacle) in 1900. From that moment on, a new paradigm spreads across the Old World, and could easily or directly play a role in the events discussed herein.

Slightly more difficult to incorporate in the abstract, but potentially rewarding if executed to perfection, are the themes and stories of the **Created**. As beings born of powerful magic, they are a natural fit for either falling in with or else running afoul of the Arisen in this time. It also doesn't hurt that this era comes right on the heels of the key period for those beings; Mary Shelly published *Frankenstein* in the 19th century, and the first film adaptation of her novel came out in 1910, which is right in the middle of the *Ruins* era.

The same potentially holds true for the **Lost**, those forlorn exiles from both the living world and the realm of the fae. World War I contains the most horrific fighting conditions of any human conflict, and the battlefields of Europe are testimonies to that; what these "changelings" have to contend with — in terms of what they call the Hedge (the sensitive and dangerous barrier between worlds) alone — could be the stuff of a fulfilling chronicle, especially if tied to the Arisen.



The five of them sat in the darkness. The barn provided some protection against the wind and dust, but the air was still thick with grit. When the wooden walls creaked, the five of them wondered if they had just traded the risk of exposure and dust pneumonia for the risk of being crushed when the walls finally gave way.

Mrs. Fitzpatrick owned the barn, but she had allowed Morton, one of the sheriff's deputies, to pass out responsibilities. Sarah Fey, just a traveler passing through, had helped Mrs. Fitzpatrick to find rags and straw and use them to plug up the chinks and knot-holes in the dry boards that formed the walls. Morton had directed the last two outsiders, the salesman and the hobo — Josiah and Charlie — to look for the lantern that Mrs. Fitzpatrick said was kept in the barn and then to light it. Charlie had proven to be completely useless at lighting the lantern once it had been found, shying away from the flame of Josiah's tiny lighter as though it could hurt him.

Once the barn was made as comfortable as could be, there was nothing to do but wait. Morton and Mrs. Fitzpatrick gossiped about mutual friends and acquaintances while the rest huddled silently in the opposite corner.

Josiah was the first to hear the sound and voice his concern. "I think there's someone out there."

The barn fell silent, except for the sound of the driving wind outside. Then everyone could hear it — a faint scratching at the wooden slats, the faint suggestion of words, spoken too quietly to carry above the wind, and a piteous hacking cough.

Morton demanded that he be the one to go. He wrapped Mrs. Fitzpatrick's shawl several times around his face, then, sheltering his eyes with his hand, went out into the storm.

The four of them waited. The storm did not let up and Morton did not return.

Mrs. Fitzpatrick went next, insisting that Morton must have simply lost his way and be wandering in circles. She went out into the storm and also did not come back. The three who remained gathered closer around the lantern, except for Charlie, who kept a respectful distance from the flame. Whenever he even looked at the flame, he gathered a fold of his ragged clothes between his dirty fingers and squeezed it anxiously.

"I'm going to go out and look for them," Josiah said eventually.

"Are you an idiot?" Sarah asked.

Josiah shook his head. "No," he replied, "but I have faith in God to protect me." He reached into his leather case and brought out a little snub-nose revolver, which he carefully loaded. "God and the Colt Manufacturing Company."

Then Josiah was gone. They waited. At length, Sarah turned to Charlie and said, "At least there wasn't a scream, or a shot."

"The others didn't scream," was all Charlie could say.

Both of them jumped when Josiah came back into the barn. He was panting, trying to simultaneously hold his gun in one hand, something else in the other hand, claw the grit out of his eyes, and bar the door behind him. Sarah leapt up to help him, and soon all three of them were back around the lantern.

Before anyone could ask what had happened, Josiah dropped the thing he had been holding into the circle of the light. It was a human hand, bloodless and tattered as though it had been gnawed away from the wrist by tiny, relentless teeth.

Then the chattering laughter came, easily carrying above the sound of the storm. It sounded as though it were circling the barn, scratching on the wooden walls and cackling.

"Oh no," the voice screamed sardonically, "oh no, oh no, don't hurt me, don't, please." The words dissolved into laughter for a while, then continued. "Charlie. Charlie? How you doin', Charlie? Missed you, Charlie. Charlie Charlie Charlie…"

Sarah and Josiah looked at Charlie, who shrank away from them.

"It wants you," Josiah said.

Charlie nodded.

Sarah started to pray, quietly, under her breath. Her voice barely carried above the sound of the storm, but whatever was outside could hear, and it began to mimic her as well.

"Our father in heaven. Father father father. Charlie in heaven. Charlie! Miss you, Charlie. Don't hurt me, please, Charlie. Miss you!"

"Come on, man," Josiah said, suddenly, turning away from Charlie. "There's got to be something we can use to bar the door. If we can last until the storm ends…" He trailed off, grit his teeth, and made himself to continue. Charlie could see him doing that peculiar human thing where he forced himself not think of something he had realized. "If we can last until the storm ends, we'll be all right."

"No," Charlie said. He rose to his full height. For the first time, Josiah and Sarah saw how big he was — enormous and covered in ugly knotted muscles. "I'll go."

Josiah shook his head. "You can't. That thing, it'll —"

"I'll go," Charlie said flatly. He put a hand on Josiah's shoulder. "Thank you." He turned to Sarah and repeated himself. "Thank you."

Josiah wordlessly pressed his gun into Charlie's hand. Charlie looked at it — dwarfed in his enormous fist — and put it in his pocket.

"Bar the door after me."

"We will."

Then Charlie walked out, alone, into the black blizzard.



A Handful of Dust

During the 1930s, while the entire Western world suffered from a period of economic dysfunction called the Great Depression, parts of America, Canada, and Mexico were struck by an accompanying ecological disaster. Agricultural practices used in the previous decades had destroyed the grasses that kept the topsoil in place, and when the drought came, the topsoil blew away in huge black clouds. Not only did the combination of economic depression, drought, and famine eliminate all possibility of agriculture — turning cities into refugee camps — but the dust storms themselves were severe enough that they could be deadly. People caught in the dust storms could die of asphyxiation as the fine grit invaded their lungs. Even if they survived the dust, they could die of pneumonia in the weeks that followed.

The Great Depression was a difficult time for much of the world, but the Midwestern states affected by the Dust Bowl were struck particularly hard. The breakdown of the urban infrastructure had an impact on many Americans on a daily basis. In the Dust Bowl, however, the landscape underwent a nightmarish transformation. Entire communities dissolved overnight as the weather and the land itself seemed to rebel against their way of life.

Like all events that shake up the world of humans, the Dust Bowl had a profound effect on the supernatural beings that live alongside humanity. For those who are more or less human and live within human society, the Dust Bowl was a painful and dangerous time. Of all the supernatural creatures inhabiting the Chronicles of Darkness, the Promethean experience resonates the best with the Dust Bowl. The Dust Bowl was the Promethean experience writ large. During the Dust Bowl, the American Midwest — once the breadbasket of the nation — turned into a blasted wasteland. Both Prometheans and the scattered survivors of the Dust Bowl long for the possibility of redemption; both fear that instead of making them stronger, the experience will destroy them.

In other periods of depression, it has always been possible to see some things which were solid and upon which you could base hope, but as I look about, I now see nothing to give ground to hope — nothing of man.

—President Calvin Coolidge

Hope and Despair

Humans are rugged creatures. As a species, we refuse to surrender. When things are at their hardest, we are often at our greatest, rising above our selfish instincts. We come together, support each other, and build great things out of the ashes of our past glories.

The story of the 1930s — the Great Depression in general and the Dust Bowl in particular — is a story about despair. Bad economics, bad agriculture, and bad luck combined to create a situation in which thousands of people lost their homes, livelihoods, and even lives. Faced with such utter hopelessness, many gave in. They abandoned their homes and families and turned on each other, becoming vicious and selfish and trying to find profit — or at least survival — in the misery of their fellow humans.

But others did not. Faced with despair, they looked for hope. Where they couldn't find hope, they invented it from scratch. Some communities were shattered, but others came together even more tightly than before. Some individuals lost all care for others and fought only for themselves, but others continued to welcome and assist each other for as long as they could. For every story of greed and depravity, there are other stories of selflessness and heroism.

Talking the Talk

People in the 1930s mostly talked like they do today. There were a few differences, of course. As a general rule, if it sounds a bit old-fashioned — but not entirely outlandish — to your ears today, it was probably common lingo in the 1930s. At the same time, a lot of things we say today, we still said back then. The word "fuck" for example, has been with the English language for about as long as there has *been* an English language. Informants were still called "narks" in the 1930s; they might have called something expensive "pricey," or called something sexually explicit and improper "raunchy."

If you want to make sure your troupe talks like genuine inhabitants of the 1930s, check out http://www.vintageallies.com/1930s/1930s-slang.html and http://www.paper-dragon.com/1939/slang.html.

For best results, use period slang sparingly. Remember that in all eras, people mostly just say what they want to say, dropping in slang terms that they either favored, personally, or saw as particularly appropriate to the occasion.

Naming your characters works more or less the same way. Biblical names were popular in the 1930s, but Biblical names have always been popular in America. In addition to many modern names, consider using names that seem "old-fashioned" today, like Morton or Bertha.

In this way, the Dust Bowl mirrors the dichotomy that every Promethean experiences. Despair is everywhere, but it contains the seed of hope.

Wasteland

The Dust Bowl transformed the American Midwest into a wasteland. Before the drought, the Midwest had been mostly prairie: dry, arid, but not properly a desert, the fragile topsoil held in place by hardy grasses, the occasional trees sucking moisture out of the dirt with deep, broad networks of roots. It was not always a forgiving environment, but it was definitely a lively one. Prairie dogs and other small mammals foraged among the grasses and were preyed on, in turn, by eagles, coyotes, foxes, and other predators.

But the humans who lived there overreached their bounds. They plowed too aggressively, let their fields lie fallow in the winter, and failed to adapt the farming techniques they had learned from their ancestors — techniques originally produced in Europe and perfected on the East Coast — to the drier climate of the Midwest. The soil turned into dust and blew away on the wind. Dirty rain and black snow fell as far away as the Capitol, and what was left behind was not enough to support life. The crops died, the grasses died, the trees died. The herbivorous animals died or fled and the carnivores died or followed them. The humans were faced with the same choice: Stay and starve, or leave their homes behind.

While the Great Depression caused cities to rot, half-finished structures standing like skeletons and ill-maintained buildings bearing broken windows, graffiti, and layers of bills, the Dust Bowl turned the once-fertile Midwest into a literal wasteland. The topsoil dried up and blew away, leaving miles of bare, dusty plain, studded with dead trees and dead crops. People abandoned their homes, leaving the structures and any belongings they couldn't carry with them to be slowly devoured by the dust. Where people remained, they were usually malnourished and desperate.

The Long Road

During the Dust Bowl, tens of thousands of people were forced out of their homes. Some were farmers who had to watch their land become completely non-arable. Other members of agricultural communities — the craftsmen and laborers who had serviced the farming communities — also watched their livelihoods disappear, and many of them took to the road. The Great Depression saw many homes and businesses claimed by banks, themselves struggling to remain afloat, and the conditions of the Dust Bowl exacerbated this situation.

Many of these unfortunates became migrant laborers, following the work from place to place. Some of these men and women had been farmers or farm hands, and they understood the patterns of planting and harvesting. Like modern migrant workers, they knew enough to plan their movements back and forth across the face of America so that they could be in one state in time to find work for the raspberry harvest and in another in time to pick oranges or reap wheat. More than a third of these migrants were white-collar workers, however — teachers, lawyers, and businessmen — who were forced onto the road by the general economic collapse. These people didn't have the same skills as displaced farm workers; they either learned fast, or failed to thrive.

Migrant workers were often unwelcome. They were viewed as taking jobs away from locals — which was sometimes true, because they were so desperate they were often willing to work for very little pay — and were accused of harboring criminals and carrying diseases.

America has always had a thread of cultural Calvinism, and this worked against the migrants. Many Americans assumed that the migrants must be somehow sinful or morally deficient; if they weren't, wouldn't God have done something to protect them? Some Americans, foreshadowing of some of today's religious fanatics, even went so far as to claim that America as a whole deserved the Great Depression and the

Dust Bowl. The migrants, as the most obviously suffering Americans, were therefore the most sinful.

Many of these migrant laborers joined the ranks of hobos. A hobo was an itinerant worker — hobos saw their eagerness to work as what set them above tramps, who traveled but did not work, and bums, who did neither. Hobos got from place to place by stowing away on freight trains, often by clambering up onto the rails. Unlike most migrant laborers, hobos were usually not looking to settle down; although not all of them were itinerant by choice, they had adopted and took pride in this lifestyle. Hobos were almost all single men, some of whom had abandoned their families. Although hobos had been a part of America ever since the advent of freight trains, the economic collapse of the Great Depression and the ecological collapse of the Dust Bowl caused many more men to take to the road in search of work.

A hobo had to face many threats, ranging from violent railroad employees attempting to chase him off trains, to bad weather, disease, and malnutrition. Hobos prided themselves in being willing to take on odd jobs, but that didn't mean that all hobos were good workers. Many of them had personality issues or substance abuse problems which contributed to the decision to take to the road in the first place. Hobos adapted by creating a simple code language, which they would scratch or paint on surfaces to advise other hobos of what they might find. There were hobo symbols to indicate ideas as diverse as whether or not a town was friendly to hobos, which doctors would treat a hobo for free and which would require payment, where a hobo might find work, and what campsites had easy access to clean water. It is easy to imagine that in the Chronicles of Darkness, hobo subculture might also have signs to indicate what sorts of supernatural threats might exist. Like most subcultures surviving on the bottom of the economic chain, hobos are more vulnerable to supernatural depredations than others, and might have learned to be less ignorant in order to survive. There could well be hobo symbols to indicate "many vampires here" or "strange things in this house — stay away."

Hobos also had an ethical system, fully codified in 1889. The hobo code of ethics encouraged hobos to do what they could to help their fellows, both by improving the attitude of settled people towards hobos as well as by directly assisting other hobos. An ethical hobo was instructed to look for work when he could, set a good example so as to encourage towns to treat other hobos well, try to stay clean, value items given to him as charity and pass them on to other hobos when they weren't needed anymore, protect children from molestation and encourage runaway children to return home, and so on.

Come Look at the Freaks

During the 1930s, America was fascinated by medical curiosities. Different experts point to a wide variety of causes for this trend. Some believe that it was a result of the gradual dissemination into the culture of the theory of evolution. As



Americans struggled with the knowledge of humanity's place in nature, they found "freaks of nature" — humans whose interrupted or malformed development demonstrated their dependence on natural cycles — increasingly interesting. Alternately, perhaps the survivors of the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl just wanted to look at people who were even less fortunate than themselves.

Ironically, some of these freaks were able to live very well on the proceeds of their shows. Although there were cases of sideshow performers — especially those with mental deficiencies alongside their physical differences — living in virtual slavery, "contracted" (or sold) by their parents to sideshow promoters who then kept the lion's share of their "client's" fees, many freaks were able to negotiate extremely favorable contracts. They were valuable, rare, and irreplaceable performers.

People with these sorts of deformities were also more common in the 1930s than they are today. The Environmental Protection Agency wasn't established until 1970; no one was studying the mutagenic and teratogenic properties of household chemicals and industrial byproducts. Many more Americans suffered malnutrition, even during pregnancy, and no one knew enough about the beneficial properties of folic acid to recommend it to new mothers. This was before the era of sonograms; most parents didn't even know if their child was male or female before it was born. Even if they might have been willing to abort a drastically deformed child, they would not have had the option.

Other freaks were made rather than born. Tuberculosis could cause the lungs to cave in, bending a person in half. World War I had left behind many wounded veterans — the G.I. Bill of 1944 was still more than a decade away — some of whom invented more dramatic stories for their various disabilities and displayed themselves as freaks. Other survivors of workplace injuries and farming accidents did the same.

Some freaks were merely performers who relied upon the audience's hangups and biases to terrify, amaze, and disgust them. For example effeminate men might create costumes that were half suit, half evening dress and perform as "half-and-halfs." While some of these performers were actual hermaphrodites and others may have been transgender, most were simply masculine women or men with sparse enough facial hair to carry off the disguise. Some performers covered themselves in ordinary white glue in order to appear "lizard-skinned," or attached doll parts to ordinary infants to make them seem as though they had extra limbs. Even the "genuine" freaks exaggerated their unusual characteristics: The fat women were rarely as fat as they claimed, and the giants were often not quite as giant as their advertisements would lead others to believe. They used stage magic — tricks of light, makeup, and positioning — to make the show more impressive.

Most freak shows supplemented their line-up with unusual performers who fit the theme of human and natural oddities. Contortionists, sword swallowers, fire-eaters, blockheads — who pretended to pound nails into their heads by taking advantage of the common misconception that the nasal cavity goes up, rather than directly into the head — snake-charmers, heavily pierced or tattooed performers, and geeks or "wild men" were all common additions to a freak show.

What Has Come Before

The Dust Bowl came about because of a perfect storm of economics, ecological factors, and human arrogance. The drought that struck the Midwest in the 1930s was unavoidable, but the choices that made it a national tragedy, rather than just a bad year, were entirely human.

The primary cause of the Dust Bowl was agricultural practices unsuited to the environment. The Midwest is an arid environment, almost a desert. A few years of unusually intense rainfall inspired the entirely fictitious belief that "rain follows the plow," an extension of the manifest destiny that held that European settlement somehow led to weather conditions conducive to European agriculture. The topsoil is naturally dry and powdery, but held in place by the Midwest's famous grasses. When farmers burned the grasses away to make room for their crops, they endangered the soil. The problem was compounded by the practice of leaving the fields entirely fallow during the winter, which allowed the top-soil to become even looser and more desiccated.

The Dust Bowl cut the heart out of the American Midwest. It extended far enough north and south to affect parts of Canada and Mexico. Although the drought itself didn't reach as far as the East Coast, enough dust remained in the air that the snow in areas as far away as New England sometimes had a reddish tinge.

Agriculture came to a grinding halt. The economic consequences spiraled outwards, worsening the effects of the Great Depression already in progress. Alone, either the Dust Bowl or the Great Depression would have been a serious hardship; together they were devastating. Entire communities vanished practically overnight, their inhabitants forced to take to the road. The ranks of America's migrant workers and hobos swelled vastly. Because so many of them came from Oklahoma — a largely agricultural state hit especially hard by the Dust Bowl — America took to calling these new homeless "Okies," regardless of where they came from.

Life in These Hard Times

The 1930s was an era indisputably different from our own. From the gaps in their technologies and the ways they impacted human lives to the people the majority failed to see as fully human, this era seems very hard and cruel from the comfortable vantage point of the present.



Perils of the Age

Dust storms, malnutrition, and disease stalked the ravaged Midwest during the Dust Bowl. Prometheans may be durable, but they still need to eat and breathe and can still — albeit rarely — become sick. More importantly, human relationships are always important to a Promethean's journey. How the Dust Bowl affects a Promethean's human friends can be a valuable source of drama.

Dust storms can be incredibly dangerous. As a rule of thumb, the number of minutes a character can survive a dust storm unscathed is based on her Stamina score. If the character spends this time in combat or other strenuous physical activities, she breathes as though her Stamina were one point lower.

Stamina	Time
•	15 minutes
• •	30 minutes
• • •	One hour
• • • •	Two hours
• • • • •	Four hours

When their time is up, characters start to choke. Each player must make a Stamina + Resolve roll every five minutes for his character to remain active. A failed roll results in a cumulative –1 penalty to all rolls, including future Stamina + Resolve rolls. Once the penalties exceed the character's Stamina, she falls unconscious. Either way, the player must pass a final Stamina + Resolve roll with a penalty equal to the total number of times he rolled to remain active. Failure indicates that the character comes down with a case of pneumonia.

Dust storms affect Prometheans in the same way that they do humans, though Prometheans are unlikely to develop pneumonia, or if they do, to suffer from it for very long (see p. 164 of **Promethean: The Created** for details).

Foraging (see the Survival Skill on p. 38 of the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**) in the Dust Bowl is challenging; the Midwest in the 1930s is both an arid environment (–2 penalty) and — in the first years of the drought — a foreign environment (additional –2 penalty). Additionally, proper medication and medical equipment could be hard to come by in many parts of America during the Great Depression, especially in the areas affected by the Dust Bowl. A dust storm is an Extreme Environment that inflicts the Blinded Tilt (p. 281 of the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**) on anyone caught in one.

Science and Technology

America began to be electrified in the late 1800s. By the 1930s, electricity was seen as a basic convenience in most urbanized parts of the United States. Roughly 90% of urban dwellers had electricity in their homes and businesses. Most rural areas — such as those hit hardest by the Dust Bowl — still operated without electricity. Only 10% of rural communities were electrified. Bringing electricity to these communities was one of Roosevelt's New Deal schemes, but in the 1930s, the New Deal and the end of the Depression were a long way off. Even in electrified communities, candles and oil lamps remained common in most homes because the electrical grid was nowhere near as reliable as it is today.

By modern standards, the medical technologies of the 1930s were woefully inadequate. Although doctors understood germ theory, they couldn't do much about major infections. The only antibacterial agents available were sulfanilamides — chemicals originally used to dye leather. Although they were relatively non-toxic to humans, sulfanilamide allergies were also common. The Food and Drug Administration lacked sufficient authority to regulate medicine, which resulted in many deaths before the bureau's powers were expanded in the late 1930s, only a year before the end of the Dust Bowl.

Americans in the 1930s were still subject to many diseases that have since been eliminated, or at least chased away from North America. Although doctors had developed many techniques to slow its spread and progress, tuberculosis was still a danger. The most striking disease of the 1930s, however, was probably polio. A viral infection that attacked the nervous system, polio usually caused flu-like symptoms before being defeated by the body's immune system. Some people with polio, however, developed partial or complete, permanent or temporary paralysis of one or more limbs, or even the entire body. Children were less likely to develop paralytic symptoms than adults, but when they did the consequences could be much more serious. Limbs paralyzed by polio could become deformed as the frozen muscles exerted pressure on the growing bones.

Between the scars and deformities that could be left by polio and tuberculosis, and a lack of interest in studying the causes of birth defects — most families still had many children, and the odd deformed or stillborn child was still viewed as expendable, one of the perils of reproducing — the streets of the 1930s could be a very different place. One was more likely to encounter someone with a twisted limb, a crushed chest, a club foot, or a cleft palate than in America today. The relative frequency of these deformities probably

Electroshock Therapy Redux

Chances are that in a game set during the Dust Bowl, Prometheans have no easy access to electricity. In a city, a Promethean might need to break into a home or business to find an electrical outlet. Out in the countryside, she might need to vandalize someone's car to get at the battery or pray for a convenient lightning storm. Given the possibility that the storm will kick up a "black blizzard," however, that might be a foolish thing to wish for.

Although the West's cultural obsession with electricity — which characterized the 1850s — had faded somewhat by the time the 1930s rolled around, it was still a pretty magical phenomenon. A clever Promethean might be able to find a traveling salesman hawking "headache-curing caps" or a similar device, which used a tiny battery to run a small current through the wearer's skin. Although it's unlikely that these devices did any good for humans, a Promethean might be able to drain the battery for a little healing.

The Storyteller should play up this difference. Easy access to electricity can make Prometheans seem indestructible in a modern game. While they still enjoy Promethean durability in a game set in the Dust Bowl, the lack of electricity can enhance the feeling of isolation and precarious safety that is part of the Promethean condition.

contributed to America's fascination with freaks. People with unusual bodies were a lot more common in the 1930s than they are today, and many of them were willing to leverage their disabilities into fame and fortune, or at least economic security and a place of value within their community.

Many other technological conveniences that we take for granted today were present in the 1930s, however. Although America's love affair with the automobile wouldn't really begin until after the Second World War, cars and trucks were not at all an uncommon sight. Telephones were as common as electricity, which is to say that they were ubiquitous in urban centers and rare in the country. Guns had replaced melee weapons as the preferred instrument of murder, and were cheap and common. As a rule of thumb, many modern conveniences were just a little more expensive in the 1930s than they are today, and as a result, they were also rarer. For example, a modern upper middle-class family in America might own two cars — one for each adult to commute in. An equivalent family in the 1930s might have a single car, which they would drive infrequently (to save on wear and tear, and gas).

The Long Struggle

America's past can be defined as a long war over who is allowed to participate fully in our society, and who is relegated to an outside or subservient role. We have a long way to go even now, but looking back at the 1930s presents a stark picture of just how far we have come.

A Woman's Place

It's easy to simplify America's sexist past by characterizing women as undervalued, second-class citizens who enjoyed no legal or social protections. This attitude isn't entirely incorrect — all the informal societal power in the world doesn't compare to cold, hard legal protections and access to money — but it isn't completely accurate, either. Accurately representing the role of women in America in the 1930s requires a more nuanced view.

In the 1930s, women were viewed as having a specific role as the creators and protectors of the domestic sphere. Their job was to maintain the home, raise children, and act as arbiters of moral virtue. Men, on the other hand, were expected to operate in the public sphere — the world of work, finance, and politics. In a functional family, anyway, both men and women could expect their roles to be valued and both suffered censure when they attempted to cross over into the other's world. Of course, as actors in the public sphere, men enjoyed more financial, legal, and political power, which led to inequalities that we are still combating to this day.

Barring unusual individual maliciousness, women could expect to live as contributing and relatively unmolested members of society, provided they stayed within the narrow boundaries society ordained for them. As long as women remained in the domestic sphere or a few appropriately "feminine" or "nurturing" careers — teacher, nurse, and social worker to name a few — and intruded into the public sphere only with appropriate male escorts, they could expect to be left more or less alone.

As soon as a woman dared to step outside these boundaries, however, she was in immediate danger. A woman alone in the public sphere, without a man for permission or protection, was frequently harassed or even assaulted. The general public might not have condoned these actions, but they viewed them understandable, a natural consequence of a woman intruding into a place where she didn't belong. Unless they could prove that the crime somehow surpassed the normal polite limitations on this sort of behavior — for example, a woman who had been sexually assaulted establishing that she had an unimpeachable reputation and had every right to be where she was when she was attacked — women could expect a very limited legal response. Rape wasn't legal, but bad girls got what was coming to them. Even when physical assault wasn't a factor, women in the public sphere could expect to be treated with a wearying condescension. Most men would assume that women didn't know anything about money (beyond the basics needed to buy household supplies), business, automobiles and other machinery, and so on.

Society placed limitations on men as well, but these limitations were much gentler. A man who expressed too much an interest in cooking, clothes, or raising his young children might be subject to some social stigma, but at the end of the day, he still had the money and the power to protect himself.

In a sense, however, the Great Depression was easier on women than men. Men were socialized to view themselves as bread-winners, responsible for going out into the world of work and returning with money. Women, on the other hand, were charged with maintaining the family. When a man lost his job or had to accept a pay cut, his identity as a man was threatened. When a woman had to cut corners to make ends meet, finding a way to stretch fewer resources to feed and clothe the same number of people, her identity as a woman was reinforced.

Gender expectations showed their ugliest and most violent face when it came to the treatment of homosexuals. Although America went through a more liberal phase in the 1920s, when openly gay actors and actresses openly spoke of their desire to be taken seriously and accepted for who they are, the end of the Roaring Twenties and the beginning of the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl brought out the worst. Americans turned their back on acceptance. During the 1930s, homosexual activity was viewed as an illness at best and criminal at worst. Police enacted sting operations to catch homosexuals. Because women — at least, good women — were viewed as less sexual than men, gay women were sometimes able to escape violence or imprisonment, but they still lived in fear of discovery.

Prometheans are certain to find gender roles extremely confusing because they are based more in biases and learned behavior than they are in reality. A male-bodied Promethean doesn't know that he is a "man." Even when he finally learns that he is expected to behave in certain ways because of his physical makeup, he isn't likely to find it intuitive. He will have to learn about maleness one piece at a time, choosing to accept or reject each part individually. While modern America isn't exactly friendly to people who defy the gender binary, most men and women enjoy more room to maneuver than they did in the 1930s. While violence towards transgender or non-gender-conformist people is still depressingly common in the modern day, it was more common in the 1930s.

Female-bodied Prometheans face an even more difficult journey. Without a home to claim or male protectors, they risk becoming the target of harassment or even sexual violence. Although many Prometheans have nothing to fear from human attackers, being attacked can be a harrowing experience, especially for a Promethean, who might not really understand what is happening. Worse, this can lead to a cycle of violence that could exacerbate Disquiet, leading the Promethean into a situation that escalates to the point that she is in real danger. When a female-bodied Promethean comes to understand the limitations placed on her by her surroundings, she might seek out male-bodied Prometheans for the express purpose of pretending to some respectable relationship.

White America

America's race problems were even worse in the 1930s than they are today. The African American community was still segregated, a legacy of slavery, which America had left behind less than a hundred years earlier. Politicians still publicly spoke of America as a white nation; for example, as the Depression worsened, some agitated for black workers to be fired from any job that an unemployed white was willing to do. Other groups — including Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos — also suffered disproportionately from the economic downturn and ecological devastation because discriminatory social and business practices had kept them from securing the money and power they needed to protect themselves.

The definition of "white" was very different in the 1930s. Some groups that are largely considered "white" today — such as the Jews — were considered distinct, foreign, suspect, and most importantly, not American. The Irish managed to fall under the auspices of whiteness, but remained an inferior sort of white and still subject to discrimination.

The idea that America was a "white" nation is key to portraying the 1930s. It wasn't that most Americans had anything against Asians, Latinos, Jews, or anyone else. It was that they viewed America as having a racial identity. As a result, the lion's share of America's resources should go to its "native" people — the whites. All others were in America on the sufferance of its true, rightful inhabitants, and should not expect an equal voice in politics or an equal share of the economic benefits. The groups that bore the brunt of these attitudes varied from place to place. On the East Coast, it was mostly Jews and Irish who were viewed as the undeserving "other." On the West Coast, it was mostly Asians of various nationalities. Native Americans and African Americans faced difficulties everywhere.

Part of the reason that America's black population suffered so much malignance from the dominant whites is that they represented an alien population that could not be limited and had no home to return to. Those who saw America as a white nation couldn't cope with a population of "native aliens" who were an inextricable part of America's past and future, but didn't — in their eyes — really belong.

When the Dust Bowl began, World War I (called simply the World War or the Great War) had only been over for 12 years. Many Americans had been touched by the war, from veterans who might still bear physical or mental scars, to those who had lost friends and loved ones on the battlefields of Europe. One of the side effects of the Great War was a hostile attitude towards the people who had been America's enemies, especially Germans. German Americans saw their language removed from university curricula and books in German removed from libraries and sometimes even burned. Companies that referenced the nationality of their founders, like Germania Life Insurance, changed their names, and the German origins of foods, dog breeds, and other cultural imports were obfuscated as well. Germans

Sympathy for Our Devils

Unless your troupe has agreed to avoid those themes entirely, roleplaying in America in the 1930s involves portraying people with problematic beliefs. Even if none of the players are interested in playing a racist, sexist, homophobic, or nativist character, the Storyteller will probably have to put some of those people on the stage.

Portraying someone honestly means understanding him, with all his complexities. To put a character on the stage who is in some ways a decent person, and also to some degree sexist, homophobic, and racist, you need to have an idea of where these beliefs come from and how he views them as compatible the rest of his worldview.

Like any antagonist, bigots should be more complex than "that jerk who makes the player's life difficult."

were banned from volunteering for the Red Cross, and some German Americans were even killed by mobs. Many Germans reacted by Americanizing their names. Although much of this sentiment had faded by the time the Dust Bowl began, German Americans sometimes remained wary of their fellow Americans. Anti-German sentiment remained part of America's culture until well after the end of the Second World War, almost a decade after the end of the Dust Bowl.

Understanding why humans of one skin color don't belong, while humans with a different skin color do, is a lesson that a Promethean might take a long time to understand. It won't take long, though, before she looks at her own mottled skin with a creeping sense that she, too, doesn't belong. Of course, a Promethean who tries to buck hundreds of years of human cruelty is setting herself up for a difficult Pilgrimage (not that there's any other kind), but where that goes next is up to the player and the Storyteller.

The Great Depression

The Great Depression itself looms over any game set in the Dust Bowl. These two catastrophes are deeply interrelated. Without the Dust Bowl, the Great Depression would have ended much sooner; without the Great Depression, the Dust Bowl might have been nothing more than a series of bad harvests. Together, however, the two phenomena wrecked an entire region and ruined thousands of lives. To understand life in the Dust Bowl, one needs to have at least a passing understanding of the Great Depression that surrounded it.

Economists still debate exactly what caused the Great Depression. Some point to Black Tuesday — Tuesday, October 29th, 1929 — when the stock market crashed. Others believe that Black Tuesday and the Great Depression were caused by the same underlying issues. Either way, Black Tuesday was the beginning of a worldwide economic downturn. Prices dropped, but unemployment soared, and international trade ground to a near halt. Conditions continued to worsen throughout the early 1930s, reaching their nadir in 1933.

Rural Areas

During the 1930s, America's rural population was mostly based on farmers and the skilled laborers, craftsmen, and merchants who took advantage of the farming industry. While there were also mining towns, artist's colonies, and other communities, rural American life still centered around farming. The needs and challenges of rural America were different from those of urban America, and the Great Depression affected them very differently.

When wholesale prices dropped, this included the price of food, which affected the farmers who produced that food. While farmers were struggling to pay their debts — most of them acquired during the economically exuberant 1920s — struggling banks were more than happy to call those debts in.

As a result, rural Americans had more reason to feel like the rest of the country had simply turned on them. From their point of view, they were still living as they always had, growing food the way their ancestors had, and then suddenly the people weren't buying the way they had before, and the banks were circling like sharks. Men in suits were showing up, claiming that the papers they brought with them gave them the rights to land that had been in one family for generations. Most farmers didn't understand the complex economic forces behind the Great Depression. All they knew was that suddenly the world was turned on its head. Rural Americans often became hostile and xenophobic, blaming their troubles on city-dwellers, the government, immigrants, and other nations. There were even cases of local judges being attacked by mobs of farmers, and threatened with death if they refused to stop enforcing foreclosures.

Ironically, rural Americans actually had it better than urban Americans. City-dwellers were reliant on the increasingly decrepit and dysfunctional infrastructure for necessities of life, like food. Farmers, on the other hand, were more likely to have the skills and resources to create these necessities for themselves. As long as they could avoid having their land claimed by their creditors, they could wait out the worst of the Great Depression.

Of course, the Dust Bowl dashed that hope for many farmers. When drought and erosion destroyed their farms' ability to produce, they were often forced to give up their long fight against foreclosure, abandon their homes and livelihoods, and take to the road as migrants.

Even when the Dust Bowl provided rural Americans with a more concrete cause for their suffering, many of them still

looked for someone to blame. It was easier to find a scapegoat than it was to accept that what was happening might not be anyone's fault or — worse yet — that their own farming practices had brought them to this state.

Urban Areas

The most striking effect of the Great Depression on urban areas was mass unemployment. At the height of the Great Depression, more than 20% of workforce was unemployed. Even those who were lucky enough to have jobs were often working for low pay, since the combination of a hirer's market and general economic malaise kept wages down. The construction and manufacturing industries were hit the hardest, while food and clothing industries remained relatively healthy — the economic downturn created a drop-off in the demand for new buildings and materials, but people needed eat and clothe themselves, and spent what little they could meeting those needs. Service, sales, and government jobs also survived.

Overall, this meant that it was the poor, unskilled, and uneducated who bore the brunt of the Great Depression. Everyone suffered, but construction workers, factory workers, miners, and the like suffered the worst. No one's jobs were secure, and many middle-class families found themselves facing hardship, but it was the working poor who saw their jobs evaporate. The cities became depopulated as more and more jobless Americans took to the road.

While the Dust Bowl caused America's Midwest to transform from a fertile plain to a dusty wasteland, the Great Depression wrought a terrible change on the cities as well. The drop-off in tax revenue forced cities to abandon new construction projects and let existing structures go as long as possible without repairs. Maintenance didn't stop altogether, but sidewalks were dirtier, buildings shabbier, broken windows more common.

What Comes After

Fortunately, the Dust Bowl eventually came to an end. The rains came, new policies came out of Washington, a war started in Europe, and the world began to move on. The period of hardship — which left an indelible mark on America's national consciousness — had come to an end.

World War II and the New Deal

Historians, economists, and politicians still argue about what actually ended the Great Depression. Most agree, however, that it was either FDR's New Deal, the start of World War II, or a combination of both.

The New Deal was a set of economic policies designed to jump-start the floundering economy. The New Deal included a wide variety of economic reforms and regulations intended to increase the public's confidence in the government and the banks. Perhaps most importantly, the New Deal included policies to reduce the number of foreclosures, which aided urban and rural Americans alike.

The most famous parts of the New Deal were the ambitious public works projects, many of them designed to simultaneously benefit and employ those hardest hit by the Great Depression. These projects included building new schools and government buildings, creating public art, extending the power grid to cover rural areas, and others. Some New Deal projects — planting trees and grasses to block the wind and hold down the soil, and employing teachers and scientists to educate farmers on crop rotation and caring for the soil as well as their crops — were intended to directly combat the Dust Bowl. The people employed in this way had money to spend, which helped local businesses, who could in turn use this money to hire more employees, creating a self-perpetuating upward cycle.

Despite promising initial statistics, history will never know for sure if the New Deal would have continued to work as intended, because in 1941, the United States entered World War II. The government used World War II to foster patriotic feelings and bolster the economy. Many Americans who would otherwise have been out of work were drafted into, or volunteered for, the armed services; and even those

Rich and Poor

Most modern histories of the Depression and the Dust Bowl focus on the experiences of America's most vulnerable. The 1930s are sometimes depicted as a total disaster, a period of total social and economic breakdown. This is a dramatic and evocative narrative — and this chapter is guilty of using some of this language, too, for just that reason — but it isn't entirely accurate.

While the Depression wasn't "business as usual" for anyone in America, many families were able to to cut back on some expenditures and get by. America's middle class had to struggle and do without, but they generally survived without significant or permanent harm to their standard of living. America's rich, as usual, got by just fine. Maybe they vacationed locally instead of Paris and had to sell off some of their cars or yachts, but they were never in any real danger.

A Depression-era game should make some concession to the fact that rich people never felt the worst of it. A train roaring across the Promethean's path, wealthy people staring out the windows eating good food, might drive the point home nicely.

who didn't or couldn't fight were often able to find work assembling weapons and war machines.

It is easy to imagine Prometheans being caught up in the New Deal, World War II, or both. In a sense, both the New Deal and World War II make a fitting end for a Pilgrimage. It is easy to imagine a Promethean putting his great strength to use creating objects of beauty and use for the humans around him, and finding humanity amidst the honest labor. Or, alternately, becoming human — with all the fragility and mortality that comes with it — and still stepping willingly into what many consider America's last just war.

For younger Prometheans, not yet ready to become human, the end of the Depression could be a poignant moment. Watching the humans around her shake off the dust and despair of the 1930s while she remains a monster could be hard for a Promethean, pushing her to work even harder on her transformation while reminding her that she is being left behind.

The Rains Come

1939 also saw the end of the Dust Bowl. The rains finally came, bringing vitality back to the parched plains. Those who had managed to hang on to their land were, generally, rewarded for their tenacity. With the end of the Dust Bowl came the opportunity to learn from their mistakes and start again, this time with farming practices that wouldn't leave the topsoil quite as vulnerable.

Unfortunately, the Dust Bowl had a lasting effect on America's farmers. For one thing, many of those who had lost their land to foreclosure or abandoned it to seek work as migrants were in no position to reclaim it now. Although the New Deal had improved their situation somewhat, it didn't necessarily give them the money they needed to buy back what they had lost. Other farmers were slow to adopt new practices, and their land continued to lose topsoil. Without topsoil, they could not grow crops or turn a profit on their land, which they continued to lose to taxes and foreclosure.

Some of the same factors that saved urban America doomed rural America. Rural America started losing its sons and daughters to the cities. It began with exciting new business and industry opportunities brought about by the New Deal, continued with World War II and, following the war, America's rapid urbanization. Many farmers who had fought to keep their farms through the Dust Bowl and struggled to learn how to keep them viable afterwards ended up losing them in the end because their children simply didn't want them. The farms ended up being sold, sometimes to the same banks that had already claimed so much land through foreclosure. It was the end of the era of the family farm and the beginning of industrial farming.

For Prometheans in urban areas, the Great Depression ended with the birth of a new era. It wasn't perfect, and it was born amidst war and inequality — but it was still a new beginning, a return to hope and optimism.

Rural Prometheans, on the other hand, witnessed the death of a way of life. The Dust Bowl broke the back of an entire society. Prometheans who lingered in the Midwest saw a generation gamely trying to carry on and regain what was lost, but ultimately those people found that none of their efforts could save them from the march of history. Prometheans who came into humanity in the Midwest, as this way of life fades away, struggle to find a place in the world, since many of the things they thought they knew about how humans live may not apply in the cities, factories, and battlegrounds that their futures hold. Whether such characters are able to nevertheless apply the wisdom of their Pilgrimage, however, is up to the player and the Storyteller.

The Supernatural

While America sank into the Great Depression, the supernatural beings that share the Earth with its humans had their own trials to face. Nobody could remain completely untouched as drought and famine ravaged the Midwest and the world economy continued to stagnate. Some supernatural creatures went to ground, surviving as best they could or leaving the country for friendlier climes. Some, either out of regard for the humans they cared for or concern that a food source would dry up, helped their communities as best they could. For the most part, though, there was nothing they could do. Vampires slept beneath the black earth, werewolves hunted across the plains, changelings eyed chain gangs and carnivals carefully, and mages tried in vain to reverse the drought.

Among all the supernatural inhabitants of the Chronicles of Darkness, though, it was Prometheans who bore the hardest burdens during the Dust Bowl. Other supernatural beings were more likely to have the money, influence, or supernatural ability to insulate themselves from the worst of the Depression. Prometheans, though, awaken to a whole new world that they don't truly understand. Most of the time, a Promethean's creator is only a little wiser than the new Created. Prometheans must go out into the world in search of humanity, usually with little more than the rags on their backs and whatever they can beg or steal from the humans around them.

Like America's human inhabitants in the 1930s, Prometheans must survive by their wits and their luck in a harsh and hostile new world. If they are lucky, they can make friends with others of their kind, like hobos riding the rails together; and if they are not, they must survive alone in the dusty ruin of a better age.

Pilgrims in the Time of Dust

The Dust Bowl is an ideal setting for **Promethean: The Created**. The Depression and the Dust Bowl forced ordinary humans to live like Prometheans. They wandered from place



to in a blasted wasteland, their relationships strained and on the edge of collapse, and all of this imposed by circumstances beyond their control and understanding.

Promethean: The Created is a game about misery. Each Promethean is tortured by his own incomplete nature, dominated by dangerous mood swings, and plagued by a gradual understanding of human culture and morality. The effects of Wasteland and Disquiet externalize this condition, forcing it on everyone around the Promethean. And if that weren't enough, even a Promethean who is wise and clever enough to avoid falling prey to the fear of humankind and entanglements with the Chronicles of Darkness's other semi-human inhabitants is hunted by Pandorans. The only possibility of escape is redemption. However, most Prometheans have to take it on faith that becoming human is even possible, and the way to redemption is littered with the corpses and monstrous parodies of those who failed.

At the same time, **Promethean** is a game about hope. Unlike some of the Chronicles of Darkness's other tortured inhabitants, Prometheans have a way out. All Prometheans are on the road to becoming human, though some may be distracted, even for years, and others might never reach that goal. As long as the Divine Fire still burns in a Promethean's heart — and it takes a great deal to extinguish that fire — the way is open. Even the most degraded Centimanus can turn his back on that dark path and try again. Prometheans can even cultivate relationships with particularly strong-willed humans, once they learn how to manage the Disquiet and work around the Wasteland.

The Dust Bowl brought out some of the worst in humanity. Brought low by desperation, Americans abandoned their families, took advantage of people who had been their neighbors, and lashed out at outsiders. As humans often do when times are tough, Americans indulged in racism, classism, and xenophobia, as well as the more personal vices of drugs, alcohol, and sexual exploitation.

For others, the Dust Bowl brought out the opportunity to show their best. Communities pulled together. People with barely more than they needed themselves organized their friends and neighbors to take care of those who had it even worse. As always, many humans rose to the occasion, helping their communities to survive in the face of economic and ecological disaster.

Prometheans always witness the best and worst in humanity. Their own natures push weak humans to behave even more poorly than they might otherwise. Strong humans, on the other hand, have the opportunity to rise above their natures and treat this strange, unnatural creature compassionately.

When times are hard and humans face down the best and worst in their natures, this question is brought into sharper focus. Are humans worthwhile or not? Are we rising out of a past of barbarism and cruelty, or is the human project doomed from the start? Prometheans and times of social and economic disruption both cast light on this question; together, they create the opportunity to tell truly striking stories about the strengths and foibles of human nature.

Milestones

Minor Milestones

- Witness for the first time one of the dramatic side effects of the Dust Bowl (a black blizzard, red snow, etc).
- Take advantage of the ecological disaster to settle in one place for a while.
- Survive a black blizzard without shelter.
- Scavenge in the remains of a completely depopulated community.

Significant Milestones

- Help humans to survive a black blizzard.
- Settle in one place long enough for the effects of the Wasteland to become noticeable despite the ongoing drought.
- Go into the wastes in an area particularly hard hit by the Dust Bowl.

Major Milestone

- Help a community to survive without disbanding in the face of the drought.
- Acknowledge the ongoing consequences of the Wasteland by leaving a settled existence.

It's also important to remember the way that the style of the Dust Bowl — its themes and visuals — connects to the experiences of Prometheans. Prometheans wander in an endless Wasteland of their own making, separated from ordinary humans by the effects of Disquiet and their own cultural ignorance. The Dust Bowl turned America into a wasteland, and the Great Depression turned people against their friends and neighbors.

Wasteland Within, Wasteland Without

On some level, the Wasteland is *Handful of Dust*'s least cerebral, most visceral theme. The Wasteland effect is an externalization of what a Promethean is: a dead and withered thing, ruined, scattered throughout with the wreckage of what came before, but with the potential to grow again into something new. The wasteland of the Dust Bowl makes this theme more real, more present, and forces everyone — not just Prometheans — to deal with it.

Some Prometheans might be able to exploit the Dust Bowl for their own convenience. The general ruination of the environment makes it easier for Prometheans to settle in one place for longer. After all, they can't make things much worse, can they? With the ability to stay in one place comes the opportunity to build deeper

Milestones

Minor Milestones

- Forgive a human who harmed or betrayed you.
- Witness wealthier and more secure humans taking advantage of the poor or migrants.
- Speak to humans who have given up hope thanks to the effects of the Dust Bowl and the Depression.
- Interact with a human who is actively trying to prevent other humans from giving up (ie. a soup kitchen volunteer or mission worker).

Significant Milestones

- Convince a Promethean who has given up to resume the Pilgrimage.
- Inspire hope in humans.
- Save a human's life from the consequences of the Dust Bowl.

Major Milestone

- Resume the Pilgrimage after having given in to despair.
- Help a human to survive the consequences of the Dust Bowl in defiance of terrible odds (or other humans).

and more complex relationships with humans, but it also increases the likelihood and danger of Disquiet.

Eventually, the Dust Bowl ends. If a Promethean's Pilgrimage does not end with it, he might have to make the choice to move on so that his human friends can enjoy the end of the long famine and the return to real life.

Becoming Human?

The Dust Bowl casts a different light on the quest for humanity. Prometheans are uniquely suited to survive the conditions of the Dust Bowl. Where humans require food and water, Prometheans can survive on scraps of organic matter, like wood and leather. The conditions of the Dust Bowl can cause many Prometheans to wonder if becoming human is really worth it. A Promethean might struggle and suffer for a hundred years, and for what? To die of starvation or disease? Spend her days in a bread line and go to bed hungry? Work at back-breaking labor for insufficient pay? What's the point of becoming a creature who can enjoy real and genuine connection with others if everyone is too focused on survival to care? What's the point of becoming a living being who can experience the miracle of childbirth, only to see those children die of pneumonia, polio, or malnutrition? Maybe it's best to step off the road for a while and see if things improve. Maybe it's best to abandon the journey altogether and just enjoy the power, durability, and long life that comes with the Promethean condition.

The desire to do good is even more insidious, because it preys on the potential humanity that elevates a Promethean above the clay and corpses he is made from. With so many humans suffering all around him, it could be easy for a Promethean to become entangled in their lives. A Promethean can fool himself into thinking that he could be a sort of guardian angel for the humans around him. He barely needs to eat, so he can stand in line at a soup kitchen and give most of his food to someone who can use it more. He has the potential to become incredibly strong and can endure nearly unending punishment, so why not work so that others can save their strength? Many Prometheans do this sort of thing as part of their journey, learning valuable lessons about compassion and heroism; but when a Promethean abandons the path entirely and uses compassion to cover his own fear of what comes next, he does a disservice to himself and to the humans he wants to help. The Dust Bowl is a human-made disaster, and humans are the ones who have to drag themselves out of it.

Alone on the Road

In the 1930s, a dusty outsider going from town to town is nothing new. Although hobos prided themselves on being fit members of society, many of them were mentally ill or struggled with addiction — the sorts of people who couldn't hold down normal jobs and regular lives. As a result, a Promethean's oddities might be overlooked, both by the hobos and the settled humans who see him as one. A Promethean could easily join a group of migrant laborers, a small group of hobos, or even take up with a traveling carnival (more on that later). A lone Promethean could pose as a hobo making his way alone. The classic hobo was a single man, so Prometheans who are lucky enough to have male bodies have a somewhat easier time posing as ordinary migrants. However, the Dust Bowl displaced men and women alike. While women weren't usually hobos — and were less likely to travel alone — a woman making her way from place to place in search of work wasn't too unusual a sight.

Hobos also invented the hobo code, marks that they left behind to warn the hobos who came after them about the situation they were walking into. Despite having never been formally codified and being used by hobos across the entire North American continent, these marks are surprisingly consistent. Hobo marks can indicate the attitude of a town — whether it's friendly or hostile to hobos — or the character of specific home, such as a cat indicating a nice lady, a cross showing a doctor who will treat hobos for free, or a stylized shovel and ditch indicating the home of someone willing to pay for household chores.

Hobo marks and pilgrim marks may have some history in common, though no one knows for sure which came first. Did America's hobos pass their symbols along to Prometheans,



Milestones

Minor Milestones

- Escape the domination of a powerful character (i.e. your creator) by taking to the road.
- Avoid something dangerous — like a nest of Pandorans — thanks to stories heard at a hobo campfire.
- Learn to read hobo marks.
- Go several months living only on what you can earn (cash or barter) by making your way as a migrant laborer.

Significant Milestones

- Adhere to the hobo code despite the threat of injury.
- Use hobo marks to help mundane hobos to avoid a supernatural danger.
- Join a group of hobos and be accepted as one of them.

Major Milestones

- Become an important hobo, respected by others in the community.
- Settle down in one place for more than a few weeks.

who then gradually spread the marks they had learned to Prometheans across the world? Or did America's hobos first learn to read a few of the simpler pilgrim marks, then invent their own?

"Step Right Up!"

The culture of sideshows and freaks is an ideal place for Prometheans to hide. The power of Azoth to disguise a Promethean's disfigurements is great, but many Prometheans still go through their existences with traits that humans might mistake for the sort of congenital deformities common in sideshows. A Frankenstein made from male and female parts could easily display hirself as a hermaphrodite, while another with mismatched parts could pretend to be microcephalic or a "pin-head." A Promethean with malformed or artificial hands or feet could display herself as a "scorpion-girl," or person with electrodactyly. Freak show audiences were not picky, and very few of them were knowledgeable enough to distinguish between "natural" and "unnatural" deformities, so many Prometheans invented novel acts based on their bodies' unusual characteristics.

Prometheans could also find a home among the other performers and hangers-on associated with a sideshow. Many Transmutations can help a Promethean to put on a good show, from catching the crowd's attention with Mesmerism to enduring pain and hardship with Corporeum to creating flares of fire and lightning with Electrification and Vulcanus. A Promethean who has yet to develop an instinctive sense of what is socially appropriate could be a gifted geek or wild man, menacing the crowd and biting the heads off chickens. Similarly, a Promethean could find it easy to master the skills of a sword-swallower or blockhead. Promethean fire-eaters are unheard of, however.

Prometheans who lack interest in or talent for performance could also find work as roustabouts, the skilled or unskilled laborers who helped to maintain the sideshow and/or associated carnival. Traveling shows are especially hospitable to Prometheans. The constant traveling mitigates the danger of the Wasteland, and the gradual turnover of crew and performers can limit the effects of Disquiet. Prometheans are free to interact with visitors to the show without any fear of Disquiet building to any significant extent.

Freak shows provide a Promethean with a wealth of potential milestones, and a context to interact with many humans, including performers, roustabouts, and the audience. Freak shows are

Milestones

Minor Milestones

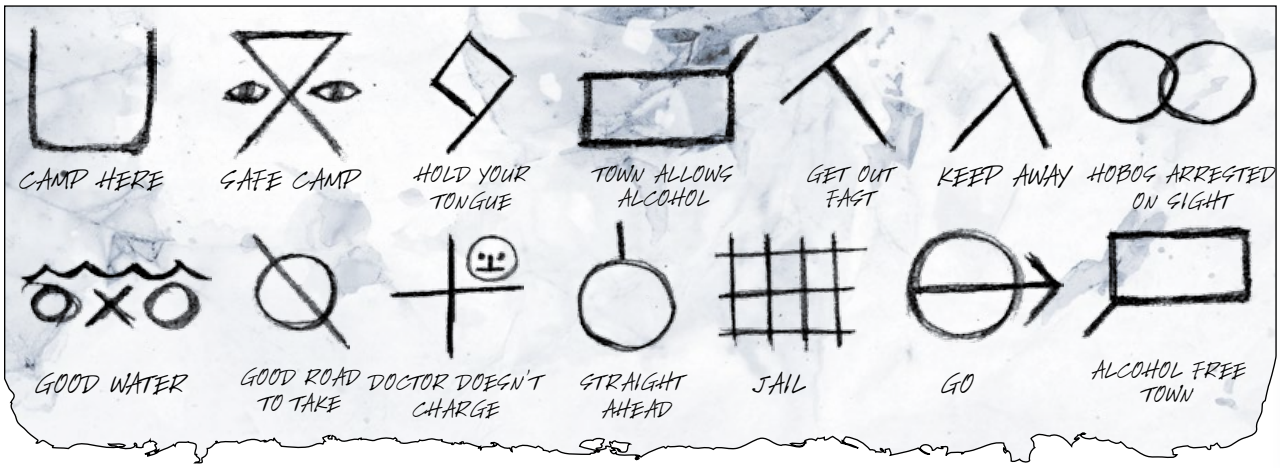
- Accept a job in a freak show or traveling circus.
- Use a Transmutation, Promethean-specific Merit, or other quirk of the Promethean condition to amaze and delight (and horrify and disgust) an audience.
- Contribute to the carnival by working harder and longer than an ordinary human could.
- Convince the rest of the circus that a Promethean deformity is actually a mundane scar or deformity.

Significant Milestones

- Take on a responsibility in a freak show or traveling circus that requires interacting with humans and successfully avoid (or manage) the Disquiet for a specified length of time.
- Form a friendship with a circus performer who uses her injury or deformity to perform as a freak.
- Demand a raise from the circus management — and get it.

Major Milestones

- Help the circus to survive a major threat to its continued existence.
- Become one of the ruling aristocracy of the circus (a skilled performer, specialized laborer, artist or manager).



a particularly good place for Prometheans to seek out human contact, because the performers and managers are already used to meeting the needs of humans with singular bodies and brains. Interacting with freaks could give a Promethean an interesting perspective on humanity, learning how even those struggling with deformities and disabilities still value their lives. One Promethean performer could learn to take some pride in her unusual body and the abilities it gives her; another could reject being displayed as an oddity as an insult to his dignity and leave the show. All of these could be steps on the path towards humanity.

A carnival is also a good place for a Promethean to hide her Ramble, whether it's in the form of a journal entrusted to a friendly human, a message scratched onto the inner wall of a wagon, or even a testament buried somewhere along the carnival's route. Prometheans know that traveling carnivals attract their kind, and they are sure to take advantage of that to leave their words behind for those who will come after them.

Chronicle Seeds

The Dust Bowl opens up a huge variety of possibilities for **Promethean: The Created** stories. What follows are a few story hooks that some troupes might find interesting.

"Come One, Come All, Witness the Created Man!"

Americans have always been fond of grand spectacle. Before television brought spectacle into America's living rooms and the spread of the automobile brought Americans to the spectacle, the traveling circus was king of the road.

The Dust Bowl made this form of entertainment even more popular. People had little to spare, but they were desperate to spend what they could on anything that could take them away from their exhausting and dreary existence trying to scratch a living out of the dusty soil. Desperation also swelled the ranks of carnies and performers — the tougher it got, the more people were willing to turn to more marginal ways of surviving.

As has already been discussed above, a circus is an ideal place for a Promethean to hide. However, what happens when someone else is already hiding among the freaks and carnies?

Ismael Hawker and Jacobi Jones

Ismael Hawker has been around since the beginning of the Dust Bowl, and a performer in the Carnival of Wonders and Curiosities since shortly thereafter. Ismael was originally a geek, grunting and biting the heads off chickens for the amusement of the crowd, but has since created a unique act that combines his extraordinary strength and durability with his unsettling aura.

Ismael is an Extempore — a Promethean without a creator, formed by the uncontrolled power of nature — and the Progenitor of a new Lineage (the Hollow, described in greater detail below). Ismael knows deep in his dry and dusty bones that the rains will come, one day, and that Divine Fire that animates him will be drowned. He has believed fervently that he can become human ever since he met another Promethean who told him it was possible. Ismael is convinced that if there really is one last secret that stands between him and humanity, he will find it in, or while traveling with, the circus.

Jacobi Uriah Jones has owned the Carnival of Wonders and Curiosities for five years. For him, it is the latest — and probably the last — in a long line of moneymaking schemes designed to separate the gullible from their money. Along with the rest of the staff and performers, the rides, and the attractions, Ismael came with the circus.

Jacobi could tell from the very beginning that something was odd about Ismael. Eventually, Jacobi convinced Ismael to reveal his secret nature. Since then, Jacobi has been hungry to learn more; Ismael, on the other hand, no longer trusts his employer. He believes — quite rightly — that Jacobi is determined to find some way to exploit the Divine Fire for his own benefit.

As a result, the two are locked in a cold war that has consumed most of the last several years. Jacobi maneuvers on one side, desperate to find some way to manipulate Ismael. Ismael, on the other hand, refuses to leave the circus until he has learned what he needs to become human before the rains come to snuff him out.

Over time, the circus has become populated by many of Ismael's children, making it a singular and bizarre show. It's a great deal for Jacobi, since the Promethean laborers and performers are willing to work for little or no pay as long as they continue to have the opportunity to interact with humans.



Jacobi Jones's Final Trick

Although he looks hale and hearty for a man in his late middle years, Jacobi is not. In fact, he is dying. A long life of abusing his body with cigars and alcohol, contracting venereal diseases, and generally living without a thought to the consequences has cost him dearly. It isn't anything in particular, it's everything: His heart and lungs are weak, his bowels trouble him, his hands shake, and he is sometimes incapacitated by blinding headaches. Jacobi doesn't know whether it will be a stroke, a heart attack, kidney failure, or something else that finally kills him, but he knows that when he dies, it will *really* be for all the sins he has committed in his long and unpleasant life — and he doesn't have that much longer.

Jacobi Jones has always been convinced that because he is smarter than everyone else, the rules don't apply to him. Why should death be any different?

After five years of traveling with Ismael and watching him create two Prometheans, Jacobi is convinced that Ismael is the key to immortality. As both a liar and a snob, Jacobi rarely believes that others are telling him the truth; even when he does believe them, he can often convince himself that he knows better, anyway. He vacillates between being convinced that Ismael is lying when he tries to explain that Prometheans aren't simply immortal and magically powerful versions of the people their bodies were in life, and thinking that Ishmael just doesn't know his own potential. Jacobi is deep in Disquiet, as well, but the primal, painful longing that Ishmael's Disquiet causes has simply reinforced Jacobi's need to live.

In the meantime, Ismael and Jacobi have a congenially tense relationship. Both of them know that some kind of confrontation is coming, but they have traveled together for too long to really hate each other. Once in a while, they even experience a moment of regret, remembering how much more friendly they once were. However, the rains are coming for Ismael, and death is coming for Jacobi, and neither of them feels that they have the time for sentimentality.

Caught in the Middle

Like all traveling circuses, the Carnival of Wonders and Curiosities is basically a traveling city. It has its own internal politics and economy. Below is a brief description of a few of the circus's inhabitants, including Ismael's Promethean creations.

- **Henry Dray:** The "chief foreman" of the circus's support staff — called "roustabouts" — is a big, heavy-set man who still speaks with the shreds of a deep Southern accent. Henry views himself as the circus's protector. He knows that Jacobi is much smarter than he is, but views himself as more sensible and, ultimately, a better and more compassionate person. People don't bring their problems to Jacobi; they bring them to Henry. Henry eventually investigates anything unusual happening in the circus. His first priority is the safety and well-being of the circus's employees.

- **Madeline Dray:** Henry's wife Madeline used to perform in the freak show, but she has since retired. Now she cooks and provides basic medicine for the circus's inhabitants. She is a slender woman, very graceful and well mannered. If Henry looks after the carnies' material needs, Madeline has taken it upon herself to solve their emotional and social problems, frequently acting as a mediator for offended parties. Madeline's role in the freak show was a "half-and-half." She was born male, but identifies as female, and found some comfort in expressing herself as between the two genders. Most people at the circus don't know about her past — the high rate of turnover has removed almost everyone except Jacobi and Ismael who ever knew Madeline Dray as Maxwell Spinelli the performer or Madeline/Max the sideshow attraction — and Madeline and Henry are eager to keep their secret.

- **Crocodile Jack:** This "lizard man" is actually a survivor of the Great War. A combination of burn scars and exposure to chemical weaponry have deformed his face and given his skin a bizarre scaly appearance. Although he never expected to find himself making a living by exhibiting his scarred body, he still tries to behave with as much of the honor and dignity of a United States Marine as is possible under the circumstances.

- **Verne Hinge:** Verne is one of the roustabouts. He's a borderline functional alcoholic who only keeps his job because he can sometimes be counted on to be sober when needed and because Henry continually advocates for him. What makes Verne extraordinary is that he has a shadow of Jacobi's gift. During that brief window between being drunk and blacking out, Verne can sense the Divine Fire, which he sees as a blazing white (for Pyros) or sickly green (for Flux) aura. For the time being, Verne identifies this as one of the side-effects of his drinking, but as the circus has more contact with Prometheans, Verne may come to more problematic conclusions.

- **The Bone Girl:** One of Ismael's creations who is still with the show is the Bone Girl. She appears as an incredibly skinny — almost emaciated — human female in her late teens. The Bone Girl is, of course, a Promethean and, like her creator, a Hollow. The Bone Girl's performance is a weird mix of strip tease, contortion, and exhibition. As she dances, she reveals more and more of her scrawny frame, twisting her bony limbs in impossible ways. She also covers her body with inked-on patterns that tell bizarre stories drawn from her patchy memories of her body's past life, bits of broken folk tales, and her own strange imagination. Jacobi bills the Bone Girl as "a savant, a modern day Medea bringing wisdom from beyond the veil of death." The Bone Girl herself is withdrawn almost to the point of autism. She listens a great deal more than she speaks, and understands more than almost anyone gives her credit for.

- **Galileo:** The first of Ismael's creations, Galileo is a big man with broad shoulders and a wide stance. Galileo's

body died of thirst, and it shows in his permanently cracked lips and red, irritated eyes. Galileo is canny and worldly, even more so than his creator. Galileo is sometimes frustrated that Ismael remains with the circus, even though Jacobi has shown himself time after time to be untrustworthy; but as long as Ismael stays, Galileo will stay, too, to protect him. Galileo is the circus's fortune-teller. His outsider perspective has made him talented at the cold read, though he sometimes draws inspirations from the cards themselves. Galileo used to use a standard tarot deck, but now prefers the strange, surreal cards that the Bone Girl made for him. It certainly gets a mark's attention when Galileo says that his significator, the Prince of Knives, is crossed by the Engine.

ISMAEL HAWKER

"You don't have the first idea what you're messing with, Jacobi."

Background: Ismael doesn't know if he really is the first person to die as a result of the Dust Bowl, but he feels like it should be true. His body's former life is a total mystery to him, so he doesn't know if he died of thirst or starvation or dust pneumonia or a broken heart.

Ismael spent the first year of his existence as a Promethean wandering the desiccated wilderness of Oklahoma before he first joined Jacobi Uriah Jones's Carnival of Wonders and Curiosities. He has been with the carnival ever since. His identity within the carnival has evolved with time — first a particularly weird and disturbing, but talented, green performer, and increasingly a seasoned and valuable member of the community — but except for a few Prometheans he has befriended, learned from, or taught over the years, he has no identity outside it.

When Ismael first joined the circus, he and Jacobi became friends quickly. Jacobi displayed an unusual resistance to the Disquiet, which relieved the young Ismael greatly. Even though that friendship has become strained with time, Ismael is unwilling to abandon it entirely. It's the first friendship he ever had, and he is attached to it.

On the other hand, Ismael is a hands-off parent to his creations. As far as he is concerned, they can and should look after themselves as soon as they have mastered the basics of movement and speech. His creation, Galileo, has taken on responsibility for teaching his "siblings" more about the world.

Description: Even though he no longer performs as a geek, Ismael still looks like a wild man. His hair is unruly, his brown skin deeply lined, with dust permanently ground into the creases. His light brown eyes however, almost hazel in the right light, burn with intelligence. Ismael's eyes, rather than his body, hold the hunger that characterizes the Hollow. They are intense, eager to take in the entire world. More often than not, Ismael remembers to move and talk like a civilized man — he even wears suits and puts on sophisticated manners — but when he loses control he reverts to bestial behavior.



Storytelling Hints: Ismael is anxious, eager for stability, and struggles to control his appetites. He is resistant to the depression that hovers at the edge of his consciousness, but when he falls, it is almost total. At his best, he is capable of acts of extreme self-sacrifice in the name of those he loves, but at his worst he is capable of almost solipsistic selfishness.

Lineage: Hollow

Refinement: Mercurius

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 6

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Enigmas 3, Investigation 2, Medicine 4, Occult 4

Physical Skills: Athletics (Endurance) 4, Brawl 3, Drive 2, Larceny 2, Stealth 2, Survival (Dust Bowl) 4

Social Skills: Animal Ken 3, Empathy 2, Expression 2, Intimidation (Bestial) 4, Persuasion 3, Socialize 2, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Allies (Carnies) 4, Elpis 3, Languages (German, Spanish), Repute 3, Resources 2

Willpower: 7

Humanity: 9

Virtue: Hope

Vice: Wrath

Initiative: 5

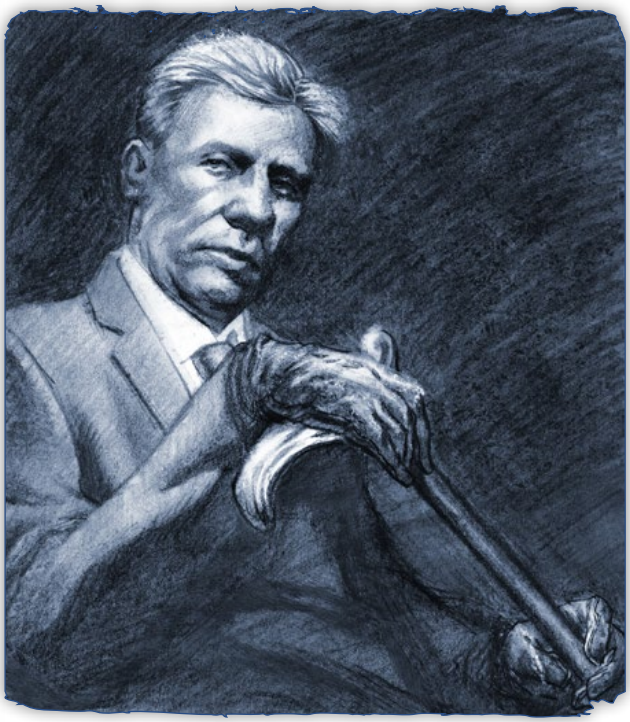
Defense: 2
Speed: 10
Health: 11
Azoth: 6
Bestowments: Hunger
Transmutations: *Alchemicus* — Identification (•), Degradation (••), Fortification (••); *Corporeum* — Autonomic Control (•), Regeneration (••); *Disquietism* — Scapegoat (•), Alembic (••), Soothe Disquiet (•••), *Vulcanus* — Sense Flux (•), Sense Pyros (•), Share Pyros (••), Fire Grasp (•••)
Pyros/per Turn: 15/6

JACOBI URIAH JONES

"Step right up, one and all, step right up! Come and witness wonders the likes of which have never been seen. We will tingle your spine, delight your eyes, and terrify your bowels. Step right up!"

Background: Jacobi Uriah Jones was the son of German immigrants, born and raised on a Pennsylvania farm. Far smarter than his peers, Jacobi grew up arrogant, assured of his own superiority. He knew that he was destined for greatness — university, business, politics, it didn't matter. His intellect gave him an edge, and he was determined to exploit it.

The Great War ruined all that. Jacobi watched his family throw away all signs of their heritage. They changed their name, discarded family heirlooms, and even tried to change how they walked and spoke, all to seem less German. Jacobi knew then that he had no interest in using his intelligence to contribute to society. This country didn't deserve him. He would simply look out for himself, and the consequences be damned. Instead of any noble pursuit, Jacobi turned his intelligence and charisma toward more selfish ends.



Since then, Jacobi has gained and lost several fortunes working as a con artist, a freelancer for organized crime, and a more or less legitimate businessman, though he has never shied away from shady business practices. The Carnival of Wonders and Curiosities is probably his last scam — though truth be told, it's not a bad way to retire.

Description: Jacobi is only in his late fifties, but he isn't a healthy man. A life of smoking, drinking, and hanging around with the wrong sort of people — there's a bullet lodged somewhere in his ribcage — has taken its toll. While Jacobi isn't on his last legs, his days of leaping over fences and winning fistfights are obviously over. He has blond hair — fading to gray around the edges — and very Germanic features. Jacobi is always well dressed, with immaculate tailored suits and a selection of silver-headed canes, which he uses as props, rather than supports.

Storytelling Hints: Is it true that Jacobi chose a conman's life out of resentment, or was he always just a selfish bastard? It doesn't really matter anymore — he has embraced this life whole-heartedly. Jacobi is unashamedly amoral, and his personal philosophy is based around the idea that the world is a pile of shit with no meaning or hope for improvement. If that's all the world is, the best one can aspire to is to be the king beetle, enjoying its tenure atop the pile for as long as possible. Jacobi knows full well that his sordid life does not exactly constitute a stint as "king beetle," but at least he gave it his best, and there's something meaningful in that.

Dice Pools:

- **Silver Tongue (9 dice):** Jacobi is a veteran con man and he is good at bringing others around to his way of thinking. It's remarkable how quickly he can smile, straighten his posture, and turn from somewhat oily and disreputable-looking to a friendly, genuine, and charismatic version of himself.
- **A Long and Sordid Tale (12 dice):** Jacobi maintains a variety of contacts among the dregs of society, including con men, criminals, hobos, and others. These people either owe him favors or are gullible enough that they can be convinced that they owe him favors.

Story Hooks

- **The Circus Comes to Town:** The easiest way to use the material described above in an ongoing Promethean story is for the Carnival of Wonders and Curiosities to arrive wherever the characters are, and letting Azothic radiance do the rest. Between the lessons a throng might learn from a Promethean as old as Ismael and the possibility of getting caught up in Ismael and Jacobi's cold war, this circus could be either an opportunity or a disaster for young, less canny Prometheans.

- **The Children of Ismael Hawker:** Some troupes might want to jettison some or all of the Prometheans described above and insert the players' characters in their place. The players take on the role of Prometheans Ismael has created or, if some of them want to play Lineages other than the Hollow, taken under his wing. As the battle of wills between Ismael and Jacobi comes to a terrible conclusion, Ismael's creations must struggle to survive and find their own way.

- **Fresh Blood:** Having seen what one Promethean can do for his circus, it could make sense for Jacobi to try to recruit more. A traveling circus is a good place for a Promethean to hide, after all, and hasn't the Carnival of Wonders and Curiosities already proven itself by providing a home for more than one Promethean? However, Jacobi is a dangerously greedy man, and his agenda is certain to bring trouble to any Prometheans who join the circus. Ismael has proven very stubborn, but new Prometheans might be easier to manipulate.

- **Jacobi Scorned:** The last few times that one of Ismael's children has tried to leave the circus, Jacobi has tracked them down and dissected them, reasoning that he can learn something that Ismael is unwilling to just tell him. Finding one of these grisly corpses could attract a throng of Prometheans to the circus. If Ismael were to discover these murders, it would destroy his last remaining sympathy for Jacobi and possibly drive him to violence.

- **The Magician:** Jacobi Jones is a liar and a thief, but the character described above only steals from his fellow mortals. What if Jacobi had the audacity to steal from the gods? What if he were a mage? As a wizard, Jacobi could have the power to enslave Prometheans. He could have any number of malicious intentions towards them, including experimenting on them, stealing the Divine Fire, or just using them against his enemies. Above all is Jacobi's hubristic desire to exploit Ismael and other Prometheans to find a way to immortality. Alternately, to avoid the complications inherent in a crossover game, Jacobi could simply be some kind of alchemist with a few powers similar to Promethean transmutations.

The Chronicles of Darkness

The Dust Bowl is a time and place of restlessness and entropy brought home to roost, and that reflects across the supernatural spectrum. **Vampires**, like any scavenger, feed well if carefully on the displaced, disempowered populace. Blood is plentiful, but so are disease, malnourishment, alcoholism, and opiate abuse.

The **Sin-Eaters** are busy during the years of the Dust Bowl, as the mass bankruptcies and evictions from family farms mean broken and displaced people dying far from their homes, leaving loved ones in dire financial circumstances. Souls don't rest easy in these conditions, and no one knows that better than the sin-eaters do.

The **werewolves** are horrified at the dust storms, viewing them as just punishment for the humans who raped the land without mercy, even as they too suffer under the scouring winds. Packs of Hunters in Darkness are particularly susceptible to the crazed rage of the spirits of storm and earth, carrying off whole caravans of desperate humans who dare venture into their territory.

The Gentry take advantage of the confusion and mass migrations as they always have, stealing away the most vulnerable and promising humans who stray from the fold. Everyone knows someone whose child took sick and died, or went missing, or just suddenly went cold to the world. **Changelings** know what this means, and are worried that the Hedge is encroaching.

At the same time, **mages** in the dusty lands find that the storms both interfere with their studies and provide interesting phenomena to research. Obrimos and Moros mages flock to study the phenomena and the people who are caught up in the unnatural storms, while other paths find reasons to move east and north away from the chaos.

Demons are likewise drawn to the mass migrations, eager to deal for covers and the detritus of lives no longer possible. It's easy to lose one's self in the masses of humanity and forget about the God-Machine for a while, hopefully forgotten themselves.

Beasts with Hungers for Ruin and the Hoard have found an source of sustenance in the Dust Bowl that they are unlikely to see repeated in their lifetimes; for some, it has meant their downfall. Hunting is easy and fulfilling, leading to sloth and carelessness, while Heroes rise from the masses and lead others to the Beasts' doorsteps in populist movements channeling all that anger and fear into lethal weapons.

Hunters see plenty of activity during the Depression. The Union's predecessors gather members who are lean and gaunt and sick of being kicked around by those who see them as nothing more than prey, while the zealots who later form the Long Night see the clouds of topsoil choking the land as evidence of the end times, and work to hasten them along.

THE HOLLOW



Everything has turned to dust. The land, the sky, the hopes and ambitions of men — all dust. The Hollow are the Prometheans who have risen out of that dust. But the Hollow have not come to wallow in despair. They are creatures of intensity. They will rebuild the world, starting with themselves, or they will grind themselves back into the dust from which they came.

To make a new Promethean, a Hollow must find a corpse that has died of deprivation. Hunger and thirst are the most likely candidates, but despair — deprivation of hope or any reason to keep on going — will do as well. The creator must make sure the corpse is even emptier than it was before by salting it, removing a few organs, or simply leaving it in the sun until the corpse has dried out a little. The creator must anoint the corpse's brow, chest, and hands with a handful of dust.

All this is just to prepare the corpse, however. In order to imbue it with the Divine Fire, the creator must place a spark of her Pyros into a drop of water and place it on the corpse's lips. With that touch of hope, the new Hollow is awakened.

Hollow Prometheans are defined by their hunger. As their name implies, they are empty, but they are aware of that emptiness and want to fill it. They want security, prosperity, fullness — humanity. Some Hollow learn to distract themselves from their real hungers with human things like food, alcohol or other drugs, or even sex. However, only progress towards humanity can really sate the hunger for long. Hollow also tend to be anxious about the future and prone to deep depression.

When the Torment takes control, the Hollow are dominated by her hunger. She tries to glut herself on whatever she craves, and lashes out violently at anyone who gets in her way. At other times, Tormented Hollows sink into depression and try to isolate themselves, but they are no less violent towards anyone who disturbs their sulk.

Progenitor: The first Hollow is Ismael Hawker, described above. He was born with the Dust Bowl and will, he believes, disappear with the rains, if they ever come. Ismael woke up alone, with no one to guide him, and has become convinced that he is an Extempore — a Promethean born from the furious elements, in this case the raging black blizzards and drastic ecological crash of the Dust Bowl — rather than a "normal" Promethean.

Other Nicknames: Skeletons, Beggars

Appearance: Hollows wear their hunger on their skin for all to see. One Hollow might always have chapped lips, denoting thirst, while another might be skinny to the point of emaciation, and a third might have a distressingly intense gaze. Hollow Prometheans have very little commonality beyond that; in these hard times, anyone can die of deprivation.

Disfigurement: When a Hollow's disfigurements appear, he becomes inhumanly gaunt with pale or ashy skin, chapped lips, and eyes so bloodshot they appear to glow red. His flesh draws back from his bones, dry and flaky, and may even rip so that onlookers can see through the gaps between his ribs.

Hollows rarely stink when their disfigurements are apparent. Their bodies are just too desiccated.

Humour: Sanguine and melancholic — Hollows are defined by spiritual hunger, a desire to possess and consume, but they have to constantly fight to hold deep depression and anxiety at bay.

Element: Earth and air — the Hollows are born of an age of drought. The earth itself has betrayed humankind, turning their hopes into so much dust floating on the wind.

Bestowment: Hunger

Refinement: Hollow Prometheans are angry and hungry creatures. As a result, they tend to gravitate towards the

Refinement of Tin. Hollows who feel secure and confident that their needs will be met might end up following any of the Refinements, though they tend to end up with Refinements that promise an immediate reward in terms of the power they need to maintain their security: Cuprum, Ferrum, and Aurum, in particular. Mercurius — and the more esoteric Refinements described in **Magnum Opus** — are too abstract to keep a Hollow's attention for long.

Character Creation: Hollows are made to survive all the rigors of life in the Dust Bowl, but whether that means that they are physically rugged, schemers, or smooth talkers varies from Hollow to Hollow. Whatever their specialty, Hollows tend to favor the Resistance Attributes: Composure, Resolve, and Stamina. When it comes to Skills, Hollows tend to be extremely practical. They usually focus on one or two strategies for survival and master that strategy before branching out. Hollows are almost never generalists.

Concepts: Traveling salesman, industrious migrant, sideshow freak, hobo, dirt farmer, miner, blizzard chaser, hired hand, beggar.

Quote: "Please. Just a drop. You can spare a drop from that jug. You can *spare* it, you son of a bitch."

Hunger

Hollows are creatures of devastating hunger. They are empty, devoid of flesh, blood, and soul — or at least that's how they feel. A Hollow can open himself up, sucking in pain, death, and rage from those around him, and take temporary solace. He can't hold it all for long, though.

Cost: 1 Pyros

Action: Instant

Transmutation Cost: Manipulation x 7

The Hollow can activate this power whenever he or someone near him (within 20 feet) is attacked. The Hollow's player rolls Manipulation + Occult to activate this power. This is a reflexive action.

Dramatic Failure: Azothic backlash temporarily opens the target's eyes to the truth. The Promethean's disfigurements become visible to the target for the rest of the scene, and any humans present must immediately check for Disquiet.

Failure: The Hunger does not take hold.

Success: The Hollow absorbs any damage from the attack, and converts it directly into Pyros or Willpower, in an combination the player chooses. The Hollow (or the intended target, if the Hollow absorbs the damage from someone else) doesn't take the damage. At the end of the scene, the Hollow suffers *all* accumulated damage. If the majority of the damage was bashing, he takes it all as bashing. If the majority was lethal or aggravated, he takes it all as lethal damage. The Hollow can absorb multiple attacks in a turn, but the player must activate the power and roll for each one.

Exceptional Success: As above, but at the end of the scene, the Hollow suffers only bashing damage, regardless of the original type of damage.

The Hollow Children

The Hollow are creatures of the Dust Bowl and the Depression and have no place in the modern America. What happens to them when the rains fall?

Some of them are ready. When the rains come, they mark the end of their Pilgrimages and the beginning of their human lives. They shrug off the dust of the road and walk forward into a brighter future.

Others are overwhelmed. The world changes around them, and they can't change with it. The rains come and they are washed away, their Divine Fires snuffed out.

Those few Hollows who survive the rains without becoming human are almost all trapped in an endless, broken Pilgrimage. The ritual that creates new Hollows stops working once the rains fall. It doesn't create Prometheans and it doesn't create Pandorans; it does nothing. Those Hollows who never got around to making creations of their own are stuck wandering the Earth until something kills them or their Divine Fires finally gutter and go out. Unlucky Hollows created in the fall of 1939 — just before the rains fell — could still be around in the year 2039, or even later.

Most of the surviving Hollows leave the USA, hoping that they can find redemption in some other arid and desolate corner of the world. They are never seen or heard from again, and the Rambles of America's Prometheans say nothing more of them.



Dust Devils

Sometimes, when a Hollow tries to make another of her kind, something goes wrong. The body starts to twitch, but the twitches don't gather together into rational movements. The body rips itself apart as the Flux inside it grows, eventually collapsing into several writhing whirlwinds. These are Dust Devils — Hollow Pandorans.

A dust devil is a small whirlwind ranging from about three feet wide and six to ten feet tall to more than 30 feet wide and thousands of feet tall. They are formed by swirling updrafts of air caused by warm, sunny weather. The name "dust devil" comes from the fact that they are strong enough to pick up dust or sand, becoming visible as well as tangible, though they are rarely strong enough to harm people or property.

Most cultures view dust devils as at least slightly sinister: ghosts, evil (or at best just vengeful) spirits, or minor demons. A pillar of dusty wind that seems to rise up for no earthly reason, swirling around, growing larger and larger, before finally blowing itself out and vanishing is just creepy.

Unlike many other Pandorans, Dust Devils don't have the attention span to capture Prometheans for later consumption. Dust Devils prefer to simply incapacitate a Promethean, eat their fill, and then wander off. The cleverness and cruelty of these creatures means that a Promethean who survives the feeding might find himself pinned to the tracks by railroad spikes though his ribcage, without the thumbs to pull the spikes free, or at the bottom of an abandoned mine shaft with no eyes and gnawed-off stubs for feet. Although Dust Devils don't have the attention span to come back for their captives later to finish the job, they do seem to take it personally if those captives escape, and attack them more aggressively if given the opportunity.

Dust Devils — especially, but not exclusively, those who have consumed a ghost — are fascinated by humans. They are outsiders looking in on humans, and they find what they see weirdly compelling. When it comes to their actions, however, Dust Devils are inconsistent and capricious. The same Dust Devil that suddenly decides to help a human by blowing debris against the window to warn her of prowlers outside might then harass her by hiding important objects or ruining her sleep with unearthly moaning.

When it comes to Prometheans, on the other hand, these Pandorans are consistently malicious. Like all Pandorans, Dust Devils covet the Divine Fire and hate Prometheans for possessing it. However, their fascination with humans sometimes leads them to ignore the Promethean whose aura awakened them for a little while, taking advantage of their activity to watch and harass humans or digest their ghosts.

A Dust Devil has two distinct forms. When a Dust Devil pulls itself together to create a single body, it looks like a ragged homunculus made of dust, dirt, corn husks, desiccated wood, and the bones of small animals. Dust Devils rarely have perfectly humanoid forms. They usually incorporate some alien or animalistic elements. Some even have plantlike traits.

Most of the time, however, Dust Devils look like their namesakes: pillars of swirling wind, dust, and other detritus. Dust Devils use their "whirlwind" forms to cover ground more quickly.

Dormant Form: A dormant Dust Devil looks like a greasy pile of dirt. Dust Devils resist being scattered or cleaned up — even if swept up or strewn around the room, the pile will reform.

Dust Devils have an option available to them that other Pandorans lack. Pandorans in their whirlwind forms are immune to dormancy. Perhaps it is because of their strange Extempore origins, or perhaps it is because humans — especially the humans of the American Midwest during the Dust Bowl — are already used to seeing dusty whirlwinds, but whatever it is about a human's regard that forces Pandorans to become dormant simply slides off Dust Devils.

Bestowment: All Dust Devils posses the Arid Discorporation (•••••) and Ghost Eater (•••) Pandoran Transmutations.

Sublimati: Dust Devils often become *sublimati* when they consume a ghost. All Dust Devils develop a heightened sense of purpose while they have a ghost trapped inside them, but for some this state lingers even after the ghost is gone. Other Dust Devil *sublimati* come about for the same reasons as other Pandorans.

Dust Devil *sublimati* are no less alien and capricious than than their non-sentient cousins, but they are much more driven. They become obsessed with people, places, objects, and ideas. They gather collections — red things, teeth, keys, pieces of paper with writing on them — and spend hours admiring their collections. Then, for no reason, they abandon their collections and move on to something else. More disturbingly, they do the same thing with Prometheans. One Dust Devil *sublimati* might start a collection of Prometheans of a certain Lineage or Refinement, or Prometheans with bodies of a certain sex, or even with certain hair color, or eye color, or some trait that is only meaningful to the Pandoran's mad, idiosyncratic sensibilities.

Like normal Dust Devils, *sublimati* are just as likely to move on completely at random, leaving their collection of unlucky Prometheans stranded somewhere dangerous and inaccessible.

Weakness: These Pandorans are creatures of the arid, drought-stricken Dust Bowl. Water forces a Dust Devil to take on a solid form and affects them like acid. A wet Dust Devil takes two points of aggravated damage per turn — automatically, no attack roll required. A truly drenched Dust Devil takes four points of aggravated damage per turn, and immersing a Dust Devil in water deals eight points of aggravated damage per turn, almost certainly killing it. Even a dormant Dust Devil can be brought low by nothing more than a housewife with a pail of soapy water intent on clearing away that pile of greasy dirt cluttering up the corner of her garage. Fortunately for Dust Devils, in the areas worst hit by the Dust Bowl, many people had more important things on their minds than housework.

Furthermore, Dust Devils are warded off by healthy vegetation. A Dust Devil cannot cross a line of germinated seeds and cannot move through thick undergrowth. If a character wields living plant matter as a weapon — a branch freshly broken from a living tree, for example — then her attacks deal aggravated damage.

These weaknesses are why Dust Devils do not persist for long after the end of the Dust Bowl. Between the end of the drought and the return of agriculture, Dust Devils have nowhere to flee. There might be a few aging creatures in the arid parts of northern Texas or Arizona, but every year rains and encounters with Prometheans take their toll, and without the Hollow, no new Dust Devils are created to replace them.

THE FORT COBB DEVIL

"Can't catch me! Can't catch me!"

Background: Times are tough all around, and the hardy folk of Fort Cobb, Oklahoma didn't expect to be spared. When the banks came sniffing around, calling in debts, when the topsoil lifted up in the wind and blew away, the people of Fort Cobb did their best to shoulder their burdens and carry on.

As time passed, however, things got worse, and it became apparent that Fort Cobb was destined for more than its fair share of trouble. The town was wracked by strange fevers that passed through month after month, incapacitating the town and taking one or two souls with them each time. Some of the wells went dry and others were tainted, becoming bitter and poisonous. Even the nearby stream sometimes turned black and bilious, the fish washing up on the banks with strange tumorous growths distorting their bodies.

The strange black man who came to town last spring said that he could help them — something about an evil spirit that he said he could deal with. Since he disappeared, though, things have gotten worse. Some of the older inhabitants of Fort Cobb fear that the town is haunted — cursed, even — and with the strange winds and the mocking voices that everyone hears, even by day, even the most skeptical townsfolk are beginning to wonder if they might be right.

The Fort Cobb Devil was born in the first dry summer of the Dust Bowl, and has been tormenting the town ever since. The "strange black man" was an Ulgan Promethean, which the Fort Cobb Devil tricked into a cave and then trapped with a carefully orchestrated cave-in. The Fort Cobb Devil visits him once in a while, flowing through the stone to bite off little pieces of flesh and Pyros to sustain itself. Mostly, however, the Pandoran is delighted by the side-effects of the Ulgan's Wasteland, which brings more and more spirits and — better yet — ghosts to Fort Cobb

Description: As a dusty whirlwind, the Fort Cobb Devil is little different from any other dust devil, except a little thicker, a little grittier, and with a malevolent aura that puts animals on edge and terrifies the town's more superstitious inhabitants.



When it pulls itself together to form a body, the Fort Cobb Devil is the size of a large toddler with a roughly human-shaped body. Its head is a raven's skull and a doll's head peeks out from its chest, partly submerged in the dirt and grit that forms its body. Various animal teeth form the fingers on its left hand; its right hand is made of gnarled and desiccated plant roots.

The Fort Cobb Devil can speak in an eerie, high-pitched voice. It isn't truly intelligent, though, and its vocalizations have more in common with echolalia — obsessive repetition — than actual speech. Like a parrot, it is often capable of getting its point across by stressing certain words or repeating a phrase whose meaning it has memorized.

Storytelling Hints: The Fort Cobb Devil isn't really all that malevolent, but it does like to watch people squirm. There's something fascinating about the way they behave under pressure. The Pandoran doesn't really understand that it is hurting people when it poisons their water or infects them with yet another disease, but it does so love to watch them try to pick themselves back up again.

The Promethean is different. He tried to get in the Devil's way, so the Pandoran retaliated by tricking him and binding him under the earth. The Pandoran still visits him once in a while, but only because he is so delicious. The squirming humans in the town are much more interesting.

The Fort Cobb Devil hasn't eaten a ghost yet, but with all the ghosts coming into the town now, it's only a matter of time. The Pandoran likes to spend most of its time swirling around in the dusty graveyard on the north side of town, waiting for the ghost that feels right.



Mockery: Dust Devil

Rank: 3

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 4, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Mental Skills:

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Larceny (Pranks) 3, Stealth (Lurking) 4

Social Skills: Animal Ken (Terrifying) 2, Intimidation (Unearthly Noises) 3, Subterfuge (Imitation) 2

Willpower: 5

Vice: Envy

Initiative: 7

Defense: 4

Speed: 7

Size: 3

Health: 5

Transmutations: *Pandoran* — Small Stature (•), Flux Within the Shade (••), Lithargous Body (••), Withering Touch (••), Fever Dreams (•••), Plague Cibation (•••)

Bestowment: Arid Discorporation (•••••), Ghost Eater (•••)

Pyros/per Turn: 10/1

New Pandoran Transmutations

Most of the Transmutations described below are intended to flesh out the Dust Devils above, providing the game mechanics to back up their unique abilities. The "Withering Touch" Transmutation is also detailed because it gives Pandorans (and Prometheans following the Refinement of Flux) the ability to do something that is truly horrific to the survivors of the Dust Bowl: attack the vitality of the land itself.

Withering Touch (••, ••••, or •••••)

Pandorans are imbued with Flux, the fire of entropy and decay. A Pandoran with this Transmutation can focus Flux outwards, creating an ultraviolet flame that causes organic matter to decay.

Cost: 1 Pyros

Dice Pool: Strength + Resolve

Action: Instant

This Transmutation can only be used to damage objects made of once-living matter, like wood or leather. Promethean flesh counts, as do the bodies of vampires. The Pandoran inflicts one point of Structure or lethal damage per success, bypassing Durability (but not armor).

The four and five-dot versions of this Transmutation can be used to attack living organic matter (i.e. flesh) and operate just like the two versions of the Crucible of Flesh Transmutation described in **Promethean: The Created**, p. 246.

The four-dot version of this Transmutation can also be used to blight a field making it incapable of supporting plant life. The effects of this use of the Transmutation are left up to the Storyteller. The Pandoran can poison a well, spring, or other source of water in much the same way. Successes indicate how deep the poison goes — each success poisons the waterway for one month — with a Toxicity equal to the Pandoran's Rank. Damage is rolled once per day.

Ghost Eater (•••)

All Pandorans can infect the physical world with their corruption, but some are so potent that they can even reach into the immaterial world. Although they cannot affect spirits, they can easily interact with ghosts, which have an affinity with the chaotic, entropic energies that animate Pandorans. A captured ghost grants the Pandoran power, strength, and focus.

Cost: 1 Pyros

Dice Pool: Strength + Resolve – Resistance

Action: Instant

Pandorans who develop this Transmutation have an inherent ability to see ghosts. The action described above represents the Pandoran's effort to consume the ghost. If a Pandoran successfully captures a ghost, it gains the following benefits:

- **Heightened Intelligence:** The Pandoran adds the ghost's Finesse score to its Intelligence. If this increases the Pandoran's Intelligence to 2 or more, the Pandoran can be considered a *sublimatus* until the ghost finally dissolves. Sometimes — at the Storyteller's discretion — the Pandoran remains a *sublimatus* thereafter.
- **Ephemeral Flesh:** The Pandoran gains the benefit of the Ephemeral Flesh Bestowment (see **Promethean: The Created**, p. 116).
- **Ghostly Powers:** The Pandoran can use any Numina that the ghost possessed (see the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**, pp. 136-138, for a description of some Numina). These powers always cost 1 Pyros to activate.
- **Secrets of the Dead:** The Pandoran knows everything that the ghost knew in life, though the degree to which its alien intellect can make sense or use of that knowledge varies.

A ghost trapped inside a Pandoran lasts for one day per point of Willpower (the ghost's, not the Pandoran's) after

which time the Pandoran's chaotic Flux breaks it down completely.

Arid Discorporation (••••)

The Pandoran's body breaks apart into tiny motes of dust, bones, and other debris, swirling about under its own power.

Cost: 2 Pyros, 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

This Transmutation operates almost identically to the Vaporous Form Transmutation described on p. 249 of **Promethean: The Created** — including immunity to Dormancy and the ability to move through obstacles and cause Disquiet in humans and animals — but with a few key differences.

A Pandoran under the effects of Arid Discorporation remains in control of its movement. Rather than using the Transmutation merely to travel to a specific location, declared when the Transmutation is activated, the Pandoran remains in full command of itself and can move about as it sees fit. The Pandoran also remains fully aware of its surroundings. A Pandoran in the form of a Dust Devil can even manipulate objects, albeit at Strength •. The dust storm's Strength is insufficient to do direct harm, though it might be able to flip a switch or knock a jar off a shelf and onto someone's head.

A Pandoran using this Transmutation can only move at its normal Speed score, and cannot improve its Speed by running.

This Transmutation lasts until the Pandoran voluntarily ends it. Some Pandorans — especially Dust Devils — enjoy spending most of their time as swirling funnels of dust because it gives them the opportunity to observe humans.

Story Hooks

- **The Saviors of Fort Cobb:** The Fort Cobb Devil and the situation described above is one way to use Dust Devils. The characters could easily pass through Fort Cobb on their way through Oklahoma. To further complicate the situation, one or more of the characters could have milestones waiting for them in Fort Cobb, like living humans who knew the people who once inhabited their bodies. Alternately, the Ulgan who is described above as the Pandoran's victim could, instead, be a Centimanus manipulating the monster to his own ends. Depending on how many years into the Dust Bowl your story is — and the power level of the players — the Storyteller might want to scale the Fort Cobb Devil up or down in rank.

- **A Friendly Ghost?:** A Dust Devil approaches the throng with a strange story to tell. The creature claims that not only has it consumed the ghost of one of the Promethean's component bodies, but it the soul's strength of personality was such that it was able to wrest control of the Pandoran. It wants the Promethean's help finding enough Pyros to sate the creature's hunger and keep its automatic functions from dissolving the ghost inside. In return, it promises to share the details of the life of the Promethean's body. Is the Pandoran telling the truth, or is the throng the victim of a Dust Devil *sublimatus* running a long con?

- **The Ghost-Eater:** A Promethean might want to consult the wisdom of the dead for many reasons. While a Promethean is not, in any way, the person whose flesh she is made of, many Created have a hard time realizing this. Few Prometheans (outside the rare Refinement of Silver) have any capacity for interacting with ghosts. A "friendly" — or at least bribable — Dust Devil could provide a throng with a way to access the memories of the dead, provided they are willing to pay the Pandoran's price and consign innocent ghosts to destruction in its gullet. Of course, any Promethean could simply learn the Ghost Eater Transmutation, though delving into the Refinement of Flux always leaves the Promethean changed.

The Traveling Salesmen

He comes to town in a white truck decorated with a black sun. He sells all sorts of things out of the back of that truck: jewelry and farm equipment and medicine and books, and all at prices that everyone can afford. But nothing ever turns out as it should, and not long after he leaves, the blood and screaming starts.

The Dust Bowl does strange things to a person's mind. Humans emerge from the black blizzards telling stories of screaming ghosts and howling demons, but in the light of day, dry and unpleasant though it be, those stories seem less credible. Prometheans know, however, that creatures wander the Midwest that defy explanation.

Mr. Henry Thomas Dusk — the traveling salesman — is one of those creatures. Is he a *qashmal* on some extended and incomprehensible mission? A fae spirit inflicting alien "justice" on humans? An angel, or a demon, or something else entirely? Only Henry Dusk knows for sure, and he isn't telling.

MR. HENRY THOMAS DUSK

"Don't fret, my boy. I have exactly what you need, right here in my truck."

Background: This being's ordained role is to punish mortals for surrendering to their Vices. Why has it come to this particular town? That is something for Mr. Dusk itself to know, and no other. Perhaps some mortal here has already given into his or her Vice in a particularly cruel and

deviant way and deserves to be chastized. Perhaps the town itself has committed some kind of communal sin and needs to be taught a lesson. Or perhaps this town is in danger of falling into Vice in the future, and this is a preemptive strike.

Description: Mr. Dusk drives a white truck decorated with a black sun on the hood and side-panels. Ornate lettering announces the arrival of "Mr. Henry Thomas Dusk's Miraculous Emporium." The truck holds all manner of subtly magical wonders. It is certainly larger on the inside than it is on the outside.

Mr. Dusk itself appears as a tall and handsome man in his early 40s. He is somewhat travel-worn, but still healthy and vigorous. Mr. Dusk dresses conservatively, in a severe black suit, and wears a tall top hat. However, his friendly eyes and comically waxed mustache create an altogether unintimidating effect.

When Mr. Dusk takes his true form, man and truck merge together into a single terrifying whole. Mr. Dusk's true form is a humanoid torso emerging from the neck of a truck-sized reptilian body with slick black scales. Six restless wings emerge from the creature's back, moving constantly, even when it is at rest. The human body atop the dragon's neck is unmistakeably Mr. Dusk's, though young and hale, rather than old and weathered, and completely hairless.

Storytelling Hints: It is Mr. Dusk's responsibility to gaze into the hearts of mortals and see the cruelty and venality there, and it relishes the opportunity to punish them. Sometimes being polite and ingratiating with humans exhausts Mr. Dusk, but it knows that it cannot chastise them with the chaos they deserve unless they invite it into their town and its creations into their homes.

When Mr. Dusk encounters humans of particularly strong Virtue, it reacts with a mixture of frustration, watchfulness, and grudging respect. It is compelled to reward such a person with gifts that help her to survive (see below), but it eagerly awaits her fall from grace, hoping that it will have the opportunity to exploit her flaws and render monstrous judgment.

Mr. Dusk is an alien creature that doesn't really understand the sins that it punishes. The term "proportionate response" isn't in its vocabulary, and it is equally happy to punish mortals for crimes both grand and petty.

Attributes: Power 5, Finesse 6, Resistance 5
Willpower: 10
Virtue: Charity
Vice: Wrath
Initiative: 11
Defense: 6
Speed: 21 (species factor 10)
Size: 7
Corpus: 12

Numina: Animate Firetouched (as the Vulcanus Transmutation; 11 dice), Clockwork Servant (as the Pandoran Transmutation; 11 dice), Command Pandoran (11 Dice), Echidna's Blessing (11 Dice), Fever Dreams (as the Pandoran Transmutation; 11 dice), Firebringer (as the Mesmerism Transmutation; 11 dice), Flux Within the Shade (as the Pandoran Transmutation; 11 dice), Just Gift (11 Dice), Materialize (11 Dice), Plague Cibation (as the Pandoran Transmutation, four-dot version, 11 Dice); Pyros Drain (11 Dice);

Echidna's Blessing: Echidna's Blessing is resisted by the target's Stamina. If it is successful, this Numen renders its victim monstrous, imposing strange physical mutations. The victim is afflicted with Pandoran Transmutations (dot ratings totaling Mr. Dusk's Power). If the victim does not normally possess a Pyros score, these powers are activated with Willpower rather than Pyros. Nothing prevents Mr. Dusk from using this Numen over and over again, rendering its victim increasingly vile.

These mutations last until Mr. Dusk leaves town. If a human has more than twice his Morality rating in Pandoran Transmutations, he cannot return to his normal form and is rendered freakish forever.

Mr. Dusk uses this power on humans who have already given in to his cursed gifts (see below), rendering them into monstrous parodies of themselves. Mr. Dusk has a cruel sense of humor, and tends to gift his victims with mutations that mock the Vices that drove them to this state. For example, someone seduced by a mirror that played on his vanity (and Pride) might find his entire body rendered pustulant and stinking except for his perfect, smooth-skinned face.

Just Gift: Mr. Dusk activates this Numen when selling something to one of his victims. The roll for this power is opposed by his victim's Composure.

Just Gift imbues the item with strange and wonderful powers, the details of which are up to the Storyteller. However, the power is always tied to the victim's Vice or some other flaw in his or her personality. For example, a mirror given to encourage someone's vanity (and Pride) might allow him to enjoy the benefits of the Striking Looks (••••) Merit for any day in which he spends more time gazing into the mirror and attending to his looks than he does attending to the needs of his friends and family.

Once the victim has started to become dependent upon the item's gifts, it becomes more demanding. The mirror might go from merely requiring that its user indulge his Pride by ignoring his obligations to requiring him to lash out at others, asserting his superiority. The item continues to become more and more demanding — lashing out at others might turn into physically harming them, or gazing into the mirror for hours and ignoring obligations might turn into skipping meals to stare adoringly at the mirror — until the victim has become a slave to the item and his Vice.

At the same time, the powers granted by the item grow as well. The item might go from merely granting the Striking

A Note on Traits

The traits given are for this being's true form. When it materializes, it usually takes on innocuous and purely human shapes.

To reflect this form, Mr. Dusk should have Size 5, which reduces its species factor for Speed to 5 (and, correspondingly, its final Speed score) and Corpus to 10.

Mr. Dusk prefers to stay in an innocuous form when dealing with humans, but it is not above taking on its terrifying true shape and wreaking some old-fashioned, Old-Testament vengeance when it is necessary.

Looks Merit to giving a huge bonus to Social dice pools, or even giving the user access to mind-controlling abilities resembling Mesmerism Transmutations. Storytellers with can also use the powers in other Chronicles of Darkness book for inspiration.

It's important to remember that Mr. Dusk's *modus operandi* is to sell these cursed wonders to everyone in town. Even if only two or three people give into their Vices and become monsters, it is enough to create chaos.

Mr. Dusk sometimes gives away presents that feed on their user's Virtue rather than her Vice. These objects are usually oriented towards protecting the bearer from the chaos that is about to erupt in the town — such as a necklace empowered by Temperance that allows its bearer to become invisible or a pistol that fires with terrifying effectiveness as long as its Just bearer is acting n defense of others — as more and more of the inhabitants give in to their Vices and become monstrous parodies of themselves. Mr. Dusk will grudgingly give these presents to mortals who impress it with their virtuous natures.

Both kinds of items — cursed items empowered by Vice and blessed items empowered by Virtue — remain potent even after Mr. Dusk departs the material world.

Story Hooks

- **The Magic Mirror:** What gives an unfair advantage to a human might be just enough to help a Promethean along in his pilgrimage. However, the cost — indulging in Vice — remains the same. When a friend of the throng — or perhaps one of its members — finds one of the magical items Mr. Dusk left behind and quickly becomes enthralled, the throng must seek out the salesman and ask him to withdraw his power before it's too late.
- **Trial by Fire:** Although Mr. Dusk is usually sent to test and punish humans, it is entirely possible for it to be aware of the Prometheans in the town and have devised a test for them, as well. This test could take the form of a cursed item, sold to a Promethean or merely left where he or she could find it, or perhaps just a scenario devised to force the throng to push the boundaries of their humanity. The reward could come in the form of a blessed item, or a milestone, or a clue as to where to travel next on the Pilgrimage.

Inspirations

The Dust Bowl has captivated Americans for a long time. Modern Americans grew up with grandparents who survived the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl, and whether it made them generous or stingy, eager to find the joy in everyday life or impossible to please, it left an indelible mark on their psyches. The Dust Bowl fascinates us as a time that Americans had the opportunity to be their best, and their worst. As a result, there is a wealth of media, both fiction and non-fiction, to inspire Storytellers and players alike.

Literature

Almost anything by John Steinbeck serves as quintessential Dust Bowl literature, but *Of Mice and Men* and *The Grapes of Wrath* come highly recommended. If you haven't read them since high school, give them a look (or watch the movies).

Out of the Dust (Karen Hesse) is a novel telling the story of an ill-fortuned family in the Dust Bowl. The novel is interesting in that it is told entirely in free-verse poems.

For a non-fiction account, try *The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl* (Timothy Egan).

Movies

Although much lighter in tone than most Promethean games, *O Brother Where Art Thou?* does a great job of portraying the culture and — in its own way — the desperation of the Dust Bowl.

The documentary *The Dust Bowl* is nonfiction, but Ken Burns brings the time period to life. Storytellers who want to explore the historical realities of the Dust Bowl might find it interesting.

Television

Carnivale only lasted two seasons, but the themes and atmosphere are perfect for a Promethean game. The general air of ignorance — most of the characters seem to have very few hard facts about what's going on — is particularly well suited to a Promethean game.



It's a nasty business, ghosts, and no mistake. Even for those who face the steely jaws of death and come back, it's a nasty, dangerous, and sorry business. Matter of fact — especially for those people. And I should know, because I'm one of 'em.

Sgt. Ned Poindexter's my name, and I've been a Kauwaka – that's what locals call a Sin-Eater — for going on twenty years. I dare say I'm probably the only one of the Bound here in God's own country that's been through as much as I have, and I can tell you it's been all-go from start to finish.

Back then, before the war, in our proud little West Coast town of Klynham, you wouldn't think that ghosts and spirits and the horrors of the "Mystic East" would be the subject of much conversation, and you'd be right. All of it was going on right under our noses, but it didn't poke its bloody head up until Salter the Sensational came to town, the murderous devil. We put pay to him, or so we thought, but the body that ended up tossed in the rubbish tip was just the earthly vessel of something much more sinister.

It was back then, too, that I was beaten near to death by the Lynch gang, those older boys who were responsible for everything delinquent in Klynham. Oh yes, to everyone else my recovery seemed like a foregone conclusion, but let me tell you something — that was almost the end for me. If it hadn't been for the Macrocarpa Man, you'd be reading my name on a headstone in the bone yard on the road to Te Rotika.

The Macrocarpa Man was probably a West Coast gold miner or flax cutter or something like that, about a hundred years ago, but he's none of that now. Now he's an atua, part ghost, part spirit, part something else. The way he appears to me, he's all burned up and smoking, arms and legs like twisted tree branches. Even when I'm not drawing on his power, I can smell ash and soot and murder on my breath, taste it like I was breathing it in.

At any rate, he brought me back, helped me recover, became a part of me, gave me powers from beyond the grave. Even after Salter was dealt with, by misfortune more than competence, I knew that I'd seen the tip of the iceberg. I was just a kid, but years rolled by after that where I spent sleepless nights putting an end to one murderous ghost after another, all of them coming in to town by the rails. Those bloody trains, carrying ghosts and the dead to small towns like ours, dropping them off to cause mischief and mayhem, bringing misery and ruin.

Once I realized it was the railways that were the problem, you can bet I did what I could to put a stop to it. I got a job on the train to Operenho — to the freezing works and let me tell you that's not a pleasant place — and later, to Wellington and then the main trunk line up and down the North Island between Auckland and the capital. I met more poor beggars like me, Bound to spirits of vengeance and redemption and darkness and luck. Showed a lot of them how to do what I'd been doing, and I'm certain we held off more than we missed.

When the war came, and our boys shipped out to fight Jerry and Mussolini's fascists, I went with 'em. I saw hell, and the dead that spill out of it, but even that nightmare wasn't enough to darken my spirits. It wasn't until I got back to New Zealand, a veteran of foreign wars, that I realized just how bad things were getting. Gates to the underworld, those spots we used to open up and shove the dead back into, were blocked, or gone. More of us were cropping up, season by season. And I lost a bunch of us, too. Too much sin for the Sin-Eaters.

It's a dark, unforgiving, and miserable business, this. I wouldn't wish it on anyone. I sometimes wish the Macrocarpa Man had just left me there to die in the shed, like the Lynch boys would have liked. But then, me and the boys stop another Kehua from setting fire to a school full of kids, or talk a taniwha out of sinking another ship, or kick Salter the Sensational's specter out of another lousy body, keeping a young girl from being his next victim. And I figure, no worries. I've got a few more years left.

It's a nasty business, all right, but it's my bloody business. Kia kaha, nga iwi!

God's Own Country

God's Own Country frames the experience of playing Sin-Eaters in New Zealand of the 1950s, a time of post-war prosperity and growth, concealing a maelstrom of spiritual and supernatural unrest beneath. For almost 200 years, the rich sacred traditions of the indigenous Maori people have been forcibly integrated with European beliefs and cultures. As a result, the cycle of life and death has been disrupted; the cenotes and gates to the Underworld are choked with restless dead, angry ancestors, and belligerent spirits. The Gauntlet is weak, and powerful nature spirits that feed on this unrest and conflict are growing in strength. This Dark Era brings its own Themes and Moods to complement or build on those of the core **Geist: The Sin-Eaters**.

Give me, give me God's own country! there to live and there to die,

God's own country! fairest region resting 'neath the southern sky,

God's own country! framed by Nature in her grandest, noblest mould;

Land of peace and land of plenty, land of wool and corn and gold!

–Thomas Bracken, *God's Own Country*

Themes

The core theme of *God's Own Country* is that of **Colonialism**, especially as an expression of **Geist: The Sin-Eater**'s theme of Transition. The Maori are no longer a predominantly rural and tribal-centered people; they are born, grow old, and die in a country dominated by European settlers. As a result of the Treaty of Waitangi, relations between the New Zealand government and the *iwi* or tribal coalitions of the Maori are better, on the surface, than in most colonized nations. Even so, the Maori culture has been forever altered, and this in turn generates deep-seated unrest, isolation, and resentment.

Similarly, descendants of white European immigrants, or *Pakeha*, run into conflict with Maori cultural beliefs and embody the culture of oppression, despite having no active desire to continue their forebears' colonial attitudes. This is in large part because the *Pakeha*, not the Maori or other Polynesian members of society, enjoy the strongest benefits of New Zealand's progressive society in the 1950s. *Pakeha* ghosts often carry the full weight of these attitudes with them, long after death.

A related theme in the post-war period of the 1950s is **Loss**. Many New Zealanders, including a significant number of Maori, fought and died in World War II. Their campaigns in North Africa, the Middle East, Italy, and the Pacific alongside Allied forces made widows and orphans of those they left behind. All of that lost potential stands in stark contrast to the progress being made in the years that follow. What would have happened if those men and women had returned home? How much stronger could the nation be had they not left their homes and families?

Even those who returned from the war carry this theme of loss with them into this next decade of prosperity. As New Zealand rebuilds and recovers, and new government initiatives herald an increase in employment, education, and innovation, war veterans remember those who fought alongside them and died. Shell-shocked and, in some cases, brought back from the dead by battleground geists, these veterans of World War II have great difficulty integrating back into peacetime.

On a cultural and spiritual level, loss is felt deeply by many in the Maori community. During this period of New Zealand's history, Maori tribes experience great upheaval, with families beginning a migration from rural communities and into urban centers such as Auckland and Wellington to improve their lives and earn

money. Although new communities are created in the process, the loss of immediate sacred and cultural connection to ancestral homelands is a tangible and long-lasting consequence. Spirits and ghosts are unfettered from long-established sacred ties, and become twisted and angry.

Mood

The dominant contrasting mood of *God's Own Country* is **Trepidation**. Far and away from the Day of the Dead carnivale mood of the core **Geist: The Sin-Eaters** setting, New Zealand in the 1950s is tense with unease and uncertainty. While the Bound are indeed given a second chance at life, and thus compare this with the bleakness of death, the real contrast lies with a prosperous yet sleepy provincial atmosphere that covers an impassioned, bloody confluence of spiritual tension beneath it like a makeshift bandage. New Zealand may seem peaceful, even idyllic, but at any moment a violent outburst, horrific crime, or nation-shaking disaster can break this peace and create shockwaves through the Underworld.

Depending on where any story is set, this mood of contrasts may be more or less obvious. In the urban centers, where hundreds of thousands of New Zealanders live and work close to one another, the undercurrent of spiritual anguish surfaces more often. The tragedies it causes are just as often covered up again, however, leaving few visible scars. Perhaps the New Zealand Herald mentions it below the fold on the front page, or the newsreels let moviegoers hear about it for all of five minutes.

On the other hand, in a small rural community along the West Coast or in the South Island, where the most exciting thing to happen to anyone is an out-of-town visitor or a new movie serial playing in the theater, a crime of passion or a horrid accident breaks the peaceful illusion for much longer. A story centered on such an event involves everyone in the town. Investigators from the big city interrupt daily routines. The absence of those who die is felt for months, even years.

The mood of **Isolation** is parallel to this one. New Zealand is a small country, all things considered, but when you understand that every rural or urban center is separated from the others by railways, stretches of water, or dirt roads, the illusion of distance is enhanced. It can take a while for word to get around. Main trunk lines for the telephone system can fail or need repair. New Zealanders have no television — not until the next decade — and even the mail can take as much as a week depending on how far it has to go. The country is poised on the edge of great change, but during the 1950s, anywhere you are in New Zealand certainly feels like a long way from anywhere else.

The Bound of New Zealand are isolated, too, not just because of geography but because so many fewer of them live here than in practically any other civilized nation. Their connections to krewes in Europe and the United States, even Australia, are few. They are on their own, and the sheer weight of their duty may soon overwhelm them if they can't find some way to reach out to each other and, perhaps, across the divide of nations.

A Brief Lexicon of the Bound

Because *God's Own Country* takes place in a time and place other than the modern USA, many colloquial terms used by the Bound are different. Here's a short list of mostly Maori words that have been co-opted by New Zealand's Sin-Eaters.

***Atua*:** A word for God, gods, or powerful ancestor spirits. Geists are referred to as *atua* by *tohunga* who have become Sin-Eaters, and it is a common word used to refer to them; other powerful entities, including angels, are also referred to as *atua*.

Godzone: From "God's Own Country," a phrase used since the turn of the century to describe New Zealand. The Bound use it to refer to the collected spiritual and physical nation.

***Iwi*:** The Maori word for tribal group, used specifically in New Zealand politics and by Maori to identify which tribe they are belong to or descend from. Traditionally, your *iwi* also tells you which great canoe (*waka*) your ancestors arrived on from Hawaiki. For *Kauwaka*, an *Iwi* would be the term for a Tier Three krewe (i.e. a Conspiracy) but there are none of this size in New Zealand in 1954.

***Karakia*:** Chants or prayers used in Maori traditions. In the Sin-Eater lexicon, it refers to the Ceremonies known by the Bound.

***Kauwaka*:** Literally, spirit canoe. This is a word that is used to describe a medium or one who channels spirits; it's the term *tohunga* use for the Bound, and has been adopted by Sin-Eaters in many cases.

***Kehua*:** The Maori word for ghost. It applies in almost all cases to standard ghosts of Rank 2 or greater, but not to geists. Particularly malevolent or wicked ghosts, often those associated with disease or plague, are known as *aitua*.

***Mana*:** The Maori term for Essence or spiritual power. Places, people, and objects may possess *mana*, especially those with significance and influence. Any ephemeral creature or supernatural being with spiritual resolve similarly possesses it. For Sin-Eaters, *mana* associated with the dead is equivalent to plasm; otherwise it is subsumed within Willpower.

***Marae*:** A carved meetinghouse, the central location in any Maori community. It's where funerals (*tangi*), weddings, spiritual education, important tribal meetings, and so forth are all held or conducted.

***Mauri*:** The Maori term for a person's essential "life spark" or animating force, as apart from their *wairua*. Animals, plants, and even inanimate objects can be considered to have mauri, depending on the context.

***Pa*:** The Maori term for fortified village or settlement, often a hillfort. Many pa sites are now little more than terraced hills, and archaeologists excavated a great number of them in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Others have been incorporated into modern townships or left simply as places for sheep and cattle to graze. In Twilight, some pa are still entirely visible as ghostly echoes.

***Po*:** The Maori term for night or darkness. Kauwaka use it as a term for the Underworld.



Reinga: The afterlife, often assumed by Europeans to be the equivalent of heaven in Maori. This is where your *wairua* is supposed to end up after it separates from the body and travels north to the tip of the North Island at Spirits Bay.

Tangi: A funeral. Maori traditions governing the conduct of *tangi* vary from *iwi* to *iwi*, but the intent is to ease the spirit's transition after death and bring closure for the *whanau* of the deceased.

Taniwha: An elemental or nature spirit of great power, usually inhabiting lakes and rivers. They are able to interact with ghosts as well as other spirits, making them potentially very dangerous. Some have consumed vast numbers of ghosts to increase in Rank, especially following natural disasters that they may or may not have had a hand in.

Taonga: An heirloom, treasured item, or birthright. In Sin-Eater parlance, a Memento. Many *iwi* have *taonga* that possess considerable *mana* and spiritual power, much of it unknown of by their owners. Such items are often weapons, god-staffs, carved hooks or symbols crafted from whale bone or greenstone, and even entire meeting houses (*whare taonga*).

Tapu: A location that, through the blessings and *karakia* of a *tohunga* or from some great event or supernatural influence, is considered sacred. This is essentially a Condition that prohibits certain behaviors, inhibits or enhances supernatural effects, and generates great *mana*.

Tikanga: The collected rituals, laws, and traditions of the Maori. When used by the Bound, it also includes the knowledge and understanding of *karakia*, or Sin-Eater Ceremonies.

Tohunga: A skilled expert, usually referring to a priest or individual skilled in the rites and traditions of Maori sacred culture. *Tohunga* are taught from an early age and possess great *mana*.

Wairua: The soul or inner self. When somebody dies, their *wairua* separates from their body and passes along the path of spirits or *Te Ara Wairua* to Spirit Bay (also known as *Te Rerenga Wairua*) at the tip of the North Island, then to the afterlife. It is clear that one's *wairua* is different from a *Kehua* or ghost that remains afterward; the Bound experience the rare sensation of their *wairua* returning to their body after merging with an *atua* or geist.

Whanau: A person's family, including unrelated friends and associates. The term has become used by some Sin-Eaters to describe their group, in place of the word "krewe." When specificity is needed to distinguish it from other uses of the word in conversation, the term is extended to *whanau atua* or "god family."

What Has Come Before

It's 1954.

Around 600 years ago, Polynesian explorers arrived in great canoes called *waka*, or so the legends say. They hunted, they settled, they made war on one another, and they gathered stories and tales of their ancestors together. They were the forerunners of the Maori, and they called their land *Aotearoa* — Land of the Long White Cloud.

Over 300 years ago, Dutch explorer Abel Tasman sighted Aotearoa from his sailing vessel, and set forth to map its coastline. Some of his crew encountered the Maori in a sheltered bay in the northernmost island, and were killed. Tasman's men shot back. He left, and later named the islands New Zealand.

Less than 200 years ago, Captain James Cook made sail to New Zealand in the *Endeavour*. He completed the maps Abel Tasman started, and was the first of many other sailors and explorers, seal hunters, and gold miners. They brought civilization, education, Christianity, and settlers. They brought dogs, pigs, vermin, disease, muskets, and more war.

A little over 100 years ago, the tribal chiefs of the indigenous Maori people of New Zealand signed a treaty with the representatives of the British Crown at Waitangi, an act that lead to the annexation of the island nation by the British, and eventually to sovereign independence and entry into the British Commonwealth. It did not stop the fighting, but it marked the first effort toward ending it.

More than 50 years ago, women gained the right to vote, the nation became a Dominion, and the Tohunga Suppression Act was enacted to force the Maori to accept modern medicine instead of tribal healers and cultural traditions.

A generation ago, New Zealand's armed forces shipped off to fight in the Middle East, Turkey, and Europe. They die in Gallipoli, the Western Front, and at the Battle of the Somme. They were buried, row on row, their graves marked with poppies. The nation remembered. Nationwide radio service and electricity are ushered in.

Over a decade ago, New Zealand sent its armed forces once again to war alongside Britain, France, Australia, and the United States. Many died. More came back. Life goes on. The nation remembered. An automotive industry roars to life. New Zealand gains independence.

Last year, the Queen of Great Britain, Elizabeth II, visited New Zealand on one of her first tours of the subject nations in the British Commonwealth. She was newly crowned, young, and very popular. During her time here, the worst railway disaster in the history of the nation took place.

A Nation of Conflict

The Treaty of Waitangi remains a contested document, given that it covers not just the transition of Maori lands to British ownership, but parcels out fishing rights, tribal land, and other matters that were at the time of little importance to the Maori but which have become highly significant. It was also signed twice, once in English and once in Maori, and the two documents are not identical. The Maori translation, for instance, never fully ceded sovereignty of the Maori to the Crown.

As a form of constitution or founding document, the Treaty sought to end the constant conflict in New Zealand between the Maori and the British Crown, largely by bringing the country under British rule. It is important to understand the role this document plays in the ongoing undercurrent of spiritual tension that boils beneath the otherwise peaceful surface of society. Even the dead recognize the laws of the living, to some degree. However, the *mana* or power of the Treaty has made it more than just a document. It binds and links together places of power and persons of authority, often in ways that were not expected. It is both a reason that the nation knows peace, and a reason that the nation could at any moment rise up in spiritual and mortal unrest.

Of course, conflict is not just between the natives and the colonists. The Maori Wars were for the most part fought between tribal groups, or *iwi*. Powerful and charismatic chiefs formed alliances and fought against each other, emboldened by the new technology brought to their land by the Europeans. Muskets made even the smallest and least populous tribal groups capable of causing great harm to their enemies. It would be a mistake to think that the Maori are a united group, just like it would be foolish to think that all Europeans get along.

A Nation of Progress

New Zealand is a small nation, but innovation and advances in technology and society are hallmarks of its history leading up to the 1950s. It was one of the first nations in the world to grant women the right to vote (in 1893). It is home to Earnest Rutherford, a pioneer in physics and chemistry. Many argue that New Zealand aviator Richard Pearse flew a controlled flight before the Wright Brothers. And its labor unions and workers rights movements were well ahead of their time.

In 1954, however, the greatest technological and social advances are yet to take place. Television won't be introduced for another six years, for example. The Treasury won't adopt the first computer until around the same time. Capital punishment has yet to be abolished. New Zealand has no international airport or a major oil refinery. Women, Maori, and children have rights that are yet to be recognized.

And yet, it is certainly true that for the bulk of the working and middle class of New Zealand, history has delivered unto them a nation of great progress and prosperity. Compared to the rest of the world, New Zealand is above average in 1954. This, one might argue, makes the tempest of spiritual energy surging beneath the surface all the more dangerous.

Where We Are

God's Own Country takes place in a snapshot of New Zealand in the middle of 1954, some months after the famous Tangiwai Disaster, the Royal Visit of Queen Elizabeth II, and around the time of the murder of Pauline Parker's mother by Pauline and her close friend Juliet Hulme. Life, death, and the outside world are not far from the public consciousness.

Familiarity with other countries in the 1950s, such as Great Britain or the United States, certainly informs the manner of dress and global cultural changes that have influenced New Zealand and its larger neighbor Australia. However, while that serves as a useful baseline, much about mid-20th century New Zealand exists to set it apart.

The Tangiwai Disaster

Late in the evening of December 23rd, 1954, the night express train from Wellington to Auckland approached a bridge over the Tangiwai River, located in the center of the North Island. Only minutes before, a lahar — millions of cubic feet of water, ice, and mud — had slammed into the pylons of the bridge, weakening it enough that when the train passed over it, the structure collapsed, sending the passenger cars plunging into the river. At the time, it was the eighth-worst railway disaster in the world, and certainly the worst in New Zealand's history. 151 of the 281 passengers died, and news of the wreck took days to reach the rest of the country because of the Christmas holiday. The lahar was reportedly caused by the giving way of Mt. Ruapehu's crater lake, but natural disasters such as this are also attributed to elemental spirits such as *taniwha*, angered by the actions of mortals.

Population

New Zealand is a small Pacific nation of approximately two million people. About 120,000 of them are Maori, and even fewer than that are Pacific Islander or of some other ethnic group. English and Maori are the official languages, and Christianity is the dominant religious tradition, mostly Protestant with some Catholic. New Zealanders of European descent come from families that were established two or more generations ago, most of whom came from England, Scotland, or from Scandinavian countries. Immigration has slowed, and the post-war "baby boom" has resulted in significant domestic population growth, especially among the Maori.

The **Maori** are a Polynesian people who arrived in New Zealand in the 13th century and established an indigenous culture related to those of Samoa, Hawaii, Fiji, and Tahiti. Their name essentially translates to "normal" or "ordinary." Maori traditionally claim tribal relationship to one of several *iwi* or tribal groups, further divided into *hapu* (sub-tribe or clan) and then into *whanau* (extended family). More and more Maori live in the cities following World War II, as labor and industry thrive and become more appealing than rural life.



White New Zealanders are known as ***Pakeha***, a Maori word that may or may not be interpreted favorably. A popular explanation of the word is that it derives from the legend of *pakepakeha*, a mythical humanoid race of supernatural fair-skinned beings, though some white New Zealanders suggest that it is an insulting term connected to pigs. Regardless of its etymology, *Pakeha* is the name the Maori people use for those who are light-skinned and not Maori or Pacific Islander.

The largest population centers are in the North Island, including Wellington, the nation's capital. About 70% of the population lives in these cities and the surrounding towns. Auckland is the most populated urban center, and continues to grow and expand as the first state highways are paved around it.

Geography

New Zealand may be divided into two major islands, the North and the South Islands, with Stewart Island thrown in right at the bottom. Overall, New Zealand is roughly the same length as Great Britain, although with its southern mountains and glaciers it invites comparisons to Denmark or Norway as well.

The New Zealand climate is mild in the north and much colder in the south. Auckland, the largest urban center, enjoys mild rainy winters and moderately warm summers. Wellington, at the bottom of the North Island, is much windier and colder; Christchurch, located roughly halfway down the South Island, sees snow. When immigrants from Scandinavia arrived in the South Island to work as laborers in the 19th century, they hardly noticed any change in the climate, and indeed Scottish settlers in Dunedin felt that they had exchanged one blustery cold land for another.

Prior to the arrival of Europeans, most of New Zealand was covered in native forest. Over the past 200 years, logging and the spread of civilization has thinned out these woodlands, and in places they have been replaced by imported pine forests principally used for paper and lumber. Marsh and swamp lands were reclaimed, fields cleared for grazing livestock and farming, and dams built on rivers to harness electricity. Even with all of this environmental impact, New Zealand in 1954 is full of untouched wilderness, majestic mountains, and shining rivers and lakes. The average New Zealander is unlikely to see much of it in his or her daily life, but for many years it has been a compelling draw for tourism and an inspiration for literature.

As an island nation, New Zealanders are never too far from the sea. The coastline offers countless bays, inlets, coves, and estuaries. The coastal waters are clear and bright in the summer months, dark and often stormy in the winter. Fisheries make up a considerable percentage of the nation's food industry, and fishing rights are a key element of the Treaty of Waitangi's provisions. Maori folklore is rich with aquatic and oceanic imagery; the monsters and great beasts of legend are *taniwha*, or water spirits, and even the Maori word for the spirit or soul, *wairua*, is derived from the word for water, *wai*. Recreational water sports, beach vacations, and fireside tales of shipwrecks and sea monsters are a part of New Zealand culture.

Story Hook: Aftershocks

A magnitude 7.3 earthquake struck Tauranga in the North Island's Bay of Plenty in September of 1953. There were no recorded fatalities, but the records are wrong. A handful of tourists — including at least one Greek man whose family had died in a similar earthquake a month earlier and halfway around the world — were killed by falling rocks. Miraculously, they walked away from the rubble, alerting nobody to their apparent death and resurrection. They are each Bound, joining a growing *whanau* of Sin-Eaters driven by their geists to bear witness to volcanic and seismic events. What greater purpose does this serve? Are their *atua* tied to disasters of the past, or is there a sinister element of premonition tied to their return to the land of the living?

In contrast to the cold southern climate and the abundant waterways and coastal regions, New Zealand is a product of volcanic activity, and sits astride the boundary of the Indo-Australian and Pacific plates. The North Island hosts numerous volcanic fields, such as the Taupo Volcanic Zone in the center of the island, which include three volcanic cones that remain active, and the Auckland Volcanic field, where more than 40 craters and cones make up the land upon which the city of Auckland rests. The latter hasn't experienced an active eruption in over 600 years, but the Taupo field and several offshore islands are constantly rumbling or letting off steam. This, too, attracts tourism, but invites considerable danger as well. One of the North Island's most popular destinations in the 19th century, a part of Rotorua known as the Pink and White Terraces, was literally destroyed overnight when Mt. Tarawera erupted in 1886.

Earthquakes are also common in New Zealand. The islands were nicknamed the Shaky Isles by early settlers who were shocked to experience tremors that knocked over buildings and caused livestock to flee. While the occurrence of temblors and other seismic events is no more frequent than in other locations along the Ring of Fire, such as California or Hawaii, they are nevertheless a cause for great concern in such cities as Wellington, Hastings, and Napier. In fact, in 1931, an earthquake measuring 7.8 on the Richter scale devastated the city of Napier and the surrounding Hawke's Bay region, killing 256 people and injuring thousands of others.

Culture

New Zealand culture is fundamentally similar to that of Great Britain in terms of food, drink, sports, and other cultural associations. The key difference is in dialect and in the adoption of various Maori traditions. An English immigrant would find life in New Zealand to be provincial and perhaps



a little backwards — New Zealanders would not find this surprising, as the English immigrant is clearly altogether too posh and stuck-up and should relax and have a beer.

With the signing of the ANZUS agreement in 1951 by Australia, New Zealand, and the United States, the influence of American culture is on the rise. Music, movies, and literature from the USA have begun to make inroads in what was for the last hundred years almost exclusively a society fed by British culture. This new surge in American ideals has brought with it American fears, as well — communists, rock n' roll, and juvenile delinquency are the concerns of every corner gossip and champion of morals.

Maori culture is of course quite different from that of the European settlers who now make up the dominant population. Every *iwi* has its own regional stories and folklore, but all Maori share common ancestral customs that in the 1950s have blended together along with certain mythic threads from early Christian missionaries and educators to produce a somewhat homogeneous set of traditions. Maori communities, even some of the urban ones, center around the *marae* or meeting house; here, elders and officials conduct tribal business, celebrate special occasions such as funerals and weddings, and impart education and spiritual practices to those young Maori who remain interested. Sadly, a great many Maori have left their heritage behind, or at best travel to a *marae* only on the occasion of a death in the *whanau*.

Family life in the 1950s for *Pakeha* and those Maori who have grown up apart from traditional communities is typical of most English-speaking countries. Children attend school from around the age of five until they pass their exams in high school or leave to take up an apprenticeship or find other work. Most adults marry early and have families with two or more children, with mothers staying home while fathers work. This has changed in recent years, especially with the post-war boom in labor and industrial work and the need for women to play a larger role in the workplace.

Stores and businesses are always closed on Sundays, and very few are open on Saturdays, usually just the morning. Everything — even the public houses — closes up at night. This creates a sharp distinction between night and day as far as commercial activity goes; unless you're a drunk or a policeman, it's unlikely that you'll be walking the streets after hours. Of course in small rural towns many of the adult men are at the local pub drinking into the wee hours, the publican keeping watch for the police. So it goes.

New Zealand has a thriving artistic tradition, including a great number of Maori craftsmen who create the carved wood, greenstone, and bone items that European travelers are so enamored of. Poets, vocalists, and musicians are also numerous, and become local celebrities. Every town in New Zealand has one or two offbeat writers or artists who capture the spirit of their community in prose or song.

During the 1950s, with the influence of the USA, young performers such as Johnny Devlin (AKA "The Satin Satan") give older generations fits and lead to cries of



Story Hook: Daughters of Heaven

Swept up in sensational news reports of the Parker–Hulme case, the characters learn of the existence of many other cases of violence carried out by young women and girls, unreported or hidden from the media. Over the course of many years, time and again, ghosts of people killed by young women remain trapped by anchors in fantasy worlds the girls have created, locked into delusionary phantasms the Bound can see but others cannot. The only way to free them lies in convincing their teenage killers to release their own hold over the bright, optimistic fantasies and take on remorse in their place. Can the characters resolve these situations while staying out of the spotlight? Is there some larger conspiracy at work to bring about this cruel fate, and if so, what happened with the Parker–Hulme case to bring it to the light?

moral corruption of the youth. Newspapers point to the prevalence of so-called "milk-bar cowboys" gathering in city centers, riding motorbikes and wearing leather jackets. These "bodgies" are the biker gangs of the day, carrying out anti-social behavior and alarming the population with motorbike races and the consumption of liquor.

An official report in 1954 claims that these bodgies are responsible for all manner of problems in society, although anyone who reads it with the perspective of history might note that crime and misdemeanors on the streets of urban New Zealand are, in this era, a good deal less widespread following the war than they had been in the 20 years prior. This does nothing to make the authorities happier, but it does shine a light on the progress and optimism that characterizes the surface level of society. Deep below, of course, isolated incidents of horrific violence, brutality, and murderous passion wait to erupt.

The best example of teenage murder is of course that of Pauline Parker and Juliet Hulme, who conspired to murder Pauline's mother in the early winter months of 1954 (June 22nd, to be precise). This incident took place in Victoria Park, Christchurch, and shocked the nation. It was, perhaps, remarkable in that it was so widely publicized despite the snail's pace of information, and that two young girls carried it out. As is often the case, similar murders and assaults have and continue to take place in towns and cities throughout New Zealand, buried or covered up by officials who don't want to incite a mob of rioters or a storm of controversy.

Story Hook: The Eternal Mayor

George Herbert Foster, mayor of a small town several miles away from Upper Hutt, near Wellington, has been mayor for over 30 years. It's a common joke among the people of his town that he hasn't aged a day since he won political office, but he's done such a great job of running the place that nobody really bothers to put two and two together. After all, he's survived so many unfortunate accidents — that fall from the train, the car that lost its brakes, and the collapse of the stage at his sixth inaugural gala. Surely he's just living a charmed life. Or is something else going on here? And what became of all the political opponents he's faced off over the years? They seem to vanish off the face of the earth....

Government

New Zealand is a constitutional monarchy, established in 1852 as a result of an Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom. Prior to that it was a colony; since that date it has acquired successive degrees of independence from Britain, most recently in 1947 with the Statute of Westminster Adoption Act. New Zealand recognizes Queen Elizabeth II as Sovereign, although she acts under the advisement of a Parliament and is represented in New Zealand by a Governor-General.

Every three years eligible voters elect new Members of Parliament from one of two or more political parties in a national election. The party with the most elected members and thus the greater representation in Parliament is considered to lead Government, with the other party standing in Opposition. The ruling party also elects one of its members as Prime Minister, who in turn works with a Cabinet of Ministers to run the country. New Zealand's current Prime Minister in 1954 is Sidney Holland, leader of the National Party.

The Governor-General acts as the representative of the monarch. His role is largely signatory and tied up in formal traditions; he does not have a role to play in the daily conduct of government. Governors-General in recent years have all been military veterans, such as Baron Freyberg (the previous Governor-General) and Lord Willoughby Norrie (the current one). Bearing the Seal of New Zealand, the Governor-General summons and dismisses Parliament in the Queen's stead, but like many other functions this is largely a formality.

Local electoral districts have a Member of Parliament to represent them. Towns and cities also have mayors and councils to carry out important local government duties. Because New Zealand is not a federation but a unitary government, the creation and assignment of regions is up to the central government, not vice versa. For this reason, over

Story Hook: The Royal Tour

Queen Elizabeth II and her husband, Prince Phillip, have been engaged in a tour of New Zealand for months. They bring not only their considerable entourage, but also a host of attendant spiritual power — what the *Kehua* of New Zealand recognize as *mana*. This is directly influencing the sovereign balance of the nation's spirits, already stirred up by the many blockages and ghostly conflicts spilling out of the Autochthonous Depths and Avernian Gates. The seething mass of potential chthonic energy is trying to find outlets — the Tangiwai Disaster, caused by a lahar washing out a railway line, might have been one such instance. The player characters need to follow along in the wake of the Royal Visit, correcting or settling what they can, before something even worse takes place.

the years as certain populations increase and cities expand in size, regional boundaries have similarly altered and changed. This has meant that, often, rural areas have become grouped into the same region as an influential urban center, pulling discretionary funds away from smaller towns and allowing city politics to dominate. Visitors to smaller towns and farming communities never hear the end of this; cunning politicians figure out a way to make the farmers happy rather than ignoring them.

With its system of districts, territory authorities, and counties, the political division of New Zealand is somewhat complicated and the various areas are too numerous too list. Generally, an area with a significant population such as Auckland, Wellington, or Christchurch has more pull in government simply because it has more people and more votes. Other areas rely on their important resources or particularly vocal Members of Parliament to achieve influence and notice. At the end of the day, however, New Zealand is still a much smaller nation than its global peers. What affects one part of the country affects the others, no matter how indirectly.

Economics

The currency of New Zealand in 1954 is the New Zealand pound (£), equivalent to that of Great Britain and many other Commonwealth nations. The pound is divided into 20 shillings (s), each of which is divided into 12 pence (d). Shillings and pence are commonly listed as numbers divided by a slash, so that eight shillings and sixpence is written as 8/6 or "eight and six." The Reserve Bank of New Zealand issues coins as well as bank notes. Coins come in denominations of ½d (a hapenny), 1d (penny), 3d (thruppence), 6d (sixpence), 1s, 2s, and 2½s. Bank notes are issued in 10s, £1, £5, £10, and £50.

The average weekly wage in 1954 is about £8; and with everyday items such as a loaf of bread in 1954 costing around 7d or a dozen eggs 2s, households that budget well might keep the larders stocked. Entertainment, such as a movie at the local cinema or a ticket to a football game, costs a few shillings. The really expensive household items were appliances, such as washing machines or refrigerators. Even in 1954, only about half of New Zealand homes has one of these, more in the cities and fewer in rural areas. Iceboxes, wringers, and other earlier methods of washing clothes and preserving food are often more prevalent.

New Zealand exports are largely comprised of sheep, wool, dairy, timber, and other domestic products. This in part helps the government maintain state subsidies for many consumer goods and even housing; the welfare system provides benefits for widows, orphans, low-income families, the elderly, the sick, and many others. The previous Labor Government established social security legislation and other welfare reforms that, under the current National administration, have remained in place. Post-war prosperity feeds into every area of the economy, and most families have seen an overall increase in how far they can stretch their income on a weekly basis.

Notable Locations

Although sightseers and tourists might rattle off whole lists of places to visit in New Zealand, few of them have any real bearing on daily life for its residents. Hot springs and geysers in Rotorua; fiords and glacier lakes in Queenstown; and long white beaches and peaceful forest glades along the Coromandel Peninsula are best left for holiday vacations.

Instead, the following locations are of interest either because of their geographic and demographic importance or as noted landmarks. Further research and inquiry about them or, for that matter, the tourist spots mentioned above, is encouraged.

City of Auckland

Auckland is located on an isthmus between two harbors, on land that was formed from a volcanic field that has produced more than 50 volcanoes. Lava flows and expanding volcanic cones shaped the landscape long before the Maori settled here, excavating and terracing some of the mounds to use as fortified *pa* (or villages). Out in the Auckland Harbor, the dormant volcanic island of Rangitoto may be seen from almost every elevated point in the city; it last erupted centuries ago, but serves as a reminder to Aucklanders that they live on borrowed time.

With the largest population in the country, Auckland was the nation's capital for 25 years following the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. Although this title was subsequently given to Wellington, Auckland has remained a key



population center and home to arts, industry, commerce, and transportation. During 1954, Auckland leads the way in adopting newer approaches to motorized transport, with many of its residents choosing to eschew trains and trolley buses in favor of motorcars as a means of getting to and from work.

Waikato

The breadbasket of the North Island, the Waikato region is dominated by farming communities and small towns along the Waikato River and its many tributaries. New Zealand's dairy industry is at the forefront in this part of the country, notable for its wide, flat expanses and a distinct lack of coastline. Hamilton, the largest inland city in the country and the population center of the region, straddles the river and serves as a central stop for the long trip from Auckland to Wellington by rail.

Waikato was the location of many battles during the period of the New Zealand Land Wars, fought between Maori tribal groups and British (and later New Zealand colonial) armed forces a generation after the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. The wars were primarily fought as a means of establishing central control over the region and unseating the Maori King. While the wars failed to do this, the Maori King has no actual sovereign power and is considered only a figurehead by the government. Even so, Koroki Mahuta, fifth in line of Maori kings, maintains his reign over those Maori who accept him here in the Waikato.

Hawke's Bay

This region of the North Island is notable for being the location of one of the first meetings between Europeans and Maori following Captain James Cook's expedition to make sense of Abel Tasman's maps. Its two main population centers are the city of Napier, site of the nation's worst natural disaster in 1931, and Hastings, its twin city and one of the fastest growing cities in the country in the 1950s. Napier has a major seaport, and exports of apples, pears, stone fruit, wool, and especially wine are all made through here.

Tongariro, Ruapehu, and Ngauruhoe

Located at the center of the North Island, these three peaks are the culmination of over 200,000 years of volcanic activity. They continue to be active, as evidenced by occasional steam venting, mudflows, and minor quakes. Despite this, they are a popular destination for skiing and getaways, for their slopes are covered in snow year-round and they are convenient to most of the North Island's population centers. The volcanic field that they belong to stretches east, west, and north, encompassing many other geothermal regions as well.

The entire area is traditionally regarded as *tapu* (or sacred) as a result of a declaration by Chief Horonuku of the Ngati Tuwharetoa in 1887, thus ensuring that the area would become a national park and preserve. Accordingly, and partially on account of threats of volcanic eruption, it remains untouched by more than the lightest of civilization and development.

City of Wellington

Located at the bottom of the North Island alongside a natural harbor and beside Cook Strait, the body of water that separates the North and South Islands, Wellington is the nation's capital and seat of government. Power shifted to here in 1841 as a result of concerns that the South Island's growing population, principally driven by a gold rush, might form a separate British colony. It is now the second largest city in the country and the location of many important government buildings and offices.

Wellington, like Auckland, has been expanding over the past few years. After the war, the suburban Hutt Valley area began to accommodate new worker families. Efforts to bolster the inter-island ferry system have shown marked improvement in travel from the North to the South Island and back. Still, Cook Strait is treacherous in bad weather, and Wellington's port of entry has seen its fair share of shipwrecks and disaster. High winds and a history of severe earthquakes — one in 1855 measured 8.2 on the Richter scale and raised a section of the harbor permanently up out of the water — also cast something of a pall over what is otherwise a prosperous city.

City of Christchurch

The third-largest city in the country and the largest in the South Island, Christchurch is famous for its cathedral and for being the departure point for several Antarctic expeditions. It lies on the Canterbury Plain, halfway down the eastern coast of the South Island and near the Banks Peninsula that juts out into the Pacific. With cold winter nights and mild summer days, Christchurch's oceanic climate and weather patterns make it much cooler than the other larger cities.

Established by a Royal Charter, Christchurch has a strong Christian heritage that is perhaps best displayed in its cathedral, built over a period of 40 years from the laying of its foundation stone in 1864 to the completion of its transepts and sanctuary in 1904. Earthquakes have repeatedly damaged it, most recently in the 1930s. It remains a focal point for Christians, especially those belonging to the Church of England.

Outside of agriculture, dairy, and related industries, Christchurch is also one of the nation's leaders in heavy engineering, producing steel for major public works like dams and span bridges. In the post-war era of development, this makes Christchurch an important player in the growth of the economy and infrastructure.

Otago

This southern district encompasses a large area of alpine mountains, fertile wine-producing valleys, and the major city of Dunedin, home to the University of Otago. The University was the first in the nation, founded in 1869 by Scottish settlers who likewise built up the city around them in honor of their Northern Hemisphere homeland.

Otago features a climate that is comparable to the north of Great Britain, with snowy winters and cool summers. This is no doubt why it attracted the Scots, but migration to Otago was also encouraged when coal and other natural resources were first discovered in the region. While in the 1950s the city is still growing and not as populous as others "up north," the university and its medical school ensure that Dunedin will remain an important urban center for many years.

Included in the region are the tourist town of Queenstown, home to sparkling lake waters and chalets that bring comparisons to Switzerland. Only a handful of miles away from this rich destination, however, sheep farms and coalmines make it clear that this is, like most other tourist spots, the exception rather than the norm.

What is to Come

It's the middle of the 1950s in New Zealand, a time of great prosperity and innovation, of population growth and internationalism. The National Party has the reins of government, which it will continue to hold until the end of the decade. Indeed, for the next few years, New Zealand's idyllic illusion of peace and progress holds firm, at least to outside observers and the international community.

However, when the decade draws to a close, the nation's newest ally in the global community, the United States of America, exerts the powers of the ANZUS treaty. When war begins in Indochina, the USA enters into conflict with the communists of North Vietnam. Although actual ground troops aren't sent until 1964, 10 years from the date of this Dark Era setting, the political and social threads of involvement in the war extend much earlier.

This is New Zealand's first major international conflict without its traditional ally, Great Britain. Despite limited initial protest to the conflict, by the time hundreds of dead and wounded began to come back from South-East Asia the opinion of the average New Zealander will be heavily swayed against any further involvement.

Closer to home, the arrival on New Zealand's shores of television brings a sweeping change to society and, in turn, the spread of information. Even more so than radio, when TVs begin to appear in the early Sixties, New Zealanders feel connected to a wider world. This only underscores the horror and dismay at the Vietnamese conflict, as images and footage of the fighting appeared from time to time. But it also brings a new wave of entertainment, both from Great Britain and from the United States.

Transportation continues to be a booming industry, although with the rise of the motorcar and expansion of air travel, the railways begin to decline in use and popularity. These new avenues of getting from place to place come with their own problems, of course, from strikes and union issues to crashes and fatalities both on highways and in the air. In 1963, a DC-3 airliner crashes in the mountain ranges near the Bay of Plenty, killing all aboard. Five years later, the ferry *Wahine* en route to Wellington from the port of Lyttleton on the South Island strikes a reef in the midst of a cyclone and 50 passengers are killed; it remains the worst maritime accident since the wreck of the *HMS Orpheus* 100 years earlier.

Throughout the remainder of the 20th century, New Zealand continues to expand its horizons and establish stronger relations with the rest of the world. Isolation becomes a thing of the past, but in its place the quaint pastoral image of an island nation, the jewel of the Pacific, is surely dulled by international incidents, further tragedy, disputes over nuclear vessels, and war in the Middle East.

From the point of view of the Bound, of course, joining the global village can only open up the opportunities for a second chance at a life worth living in the pursuit of greater ambition. In 1954, however, they are not there yet, and the only path toward that brighter future lies through a maelstrom of spiritual warfare and conflict that escapes history's account. Before New Zealand can open its borders to greater prosperity and greatness, the Bound must address the wounds of the past and dig up the anchors that keep the worst of the nation's ghosts in place.

Story Hook: Seacliff Asylum

Built in the 19th century in response to growing demand for the treatment of mentally ill patients, Seacliff Lunatic Asylum is a sprawling Gothic monstrosity located some 20 miles north of Dunedin. Turrets and cupolas ring its outer walls, and a single tall observation tower dominates the property. While the hospital's founder Truby King established policies that seemed progressive at the time — fresh air and exercise as treatments, having the patients work on a communal farm rather than remain locked up in cells — Seacliff is nevertheless infamous for its often brutal treatment of those unfortunates who come to be here.

Seacliff's most famous resident, who in 1954 remains a patient undergoing routine electroshock treatments, is the writer Janet Frame. She admitted herself seven years ago and only escaped a lobotomy because of the publication of her short stories. Other less-famous residents are over 40 ghosts, anchored to the asylum by strong emotional fetters. Most of them are the ghosts of women who died in a horrific fire that consumed a hospital ward in 1942. Together with an unstable foundation that will eventually cause tragic collapses of the building's foundations, it seems clear that Seacliff Asylum is a knot of powerful ephemeral activity and an ideal destination for those Bound operating in the South Island — whether they go there as patients or investigators.



The Supernatural

With a sacred tradition that extends back for hundreds of years, Aotearoa not only boasts a substantial number of Avernian and Shadow Gates but also many manifested and incarnated spirits. Hawaii, Fiji, Samoa, and other Pacific islands have their own specific peculiarities, of course — Easter Island, for example, has a number of yet unsolved spiritual mysteries — but in the mid-20th century God's Own Country rises above the Pacific in loci, gateways, and dangers hiding in Twilight.

Perhaps the most important supernatural phenomenon that affects how New Zealand in the 1950s produces stories for Sin-Eaters is the Maelstrom. This is discussed further in this section, but the gist of it is simple: As a result of tremendous emotional energies that have built up over time, bled off from the living and their pursuit of prosperity or fed by cultural conflict, a section of the Underworld has effectively migrated over into the realm of the living. Dangerous psychic storms arise around the nation as a result, forming bottlenecks in the Avernian Gates to the Underworld proper.

Awhawhiro: The Maelstrom

To the experienced Sin-Eater or *tohunga*, the Twilight world of New Zealand is constantly buffeted by the ghostly remnants of tropical cyclones long past. These ephemeral storms strike the shores of New Zealand in what amount to seasonal surges, doing their part to keep many of the nation's ghosts and spirits from traveling far beyond the boundary waters. Because they are associated with Whiro, the *atua* of evil and malice, they are known as Awhawhiro. Most Sin-Eaters call the storms the Maelstrom.

Some believe the Maelstrom to be a by-product of huge Avernian sinkholes, or soul-stuff whirling out of the Underworld. In truth it is an incursion of the Underworld into the physical, cloaked in Twilight, creating an emotional backlash fueled by grief, suffering, and pain rather than a true meteorological event. Indeed, with so many doorways to the Underworld blocked in recent years, as more and more ghosts fail to descend the negative energy they carry with them from their deaths is only getting stronger.

Awhawhiro affects spirits that have passed through the Gauntlet as well. Many oceanic spirits such as mighty *taniwha* are capable of seizing the reins of these storms and bringing them onto land, with the consequences in the mundane world being periods of fear, paranoia, emotional unrest, or even actual physical disasters. Fortunately, other *taniwha*, partnering with certain *tohunga* in coastal regions prone to the Maelstrom's worst, keep these storms at bay. This happens almost entirely unnoticed by the living, but as Maori are forced to migrate toward the cities and the dead choke up the small towns and seaside communities, efforts to keep the storms from landfall are becoming more and more difficult to maintain.

Sin-Eaters are most likely to encounter trouble with the Maelstrom if they go out to sea, either on an ocean liner to another Pacific Island nation, Australia, or even the United States. Some *Kauwaka* report to their *whanau* that traveling during such a Twilight storm makes them physically ill, if not anxious or agitated. Many find that their Manifestations are harder to produce, degeneration chance is stronger, and the Synergy between the *Kauwaka* and their *atua* or geist is weakened. Ceremonies that affect ephemera or Twilight, and especially the Cold Wind or Passion Keys, are useful in protecting the Bound from the ravages of the Maelstrom.

Travel by air is much less likely to produce dramatic results, but the Maelstrom seems to extend at least half a mile upwards when it is at its most turbulent. Sin-Eaters taking international flights by airplane report feeling as if their souls were being ripped out of their bodies as their geists fight to remain coherent. With sufficient readiness and protection, outcomes like this are rare.

Awhawhiro also occasionally manifests in the form of volcanic eruptions or earthquakes, alongside those events in the physical world. Those can persist for much longer in Twilight, or perhaps even go entirely unnoticed to the living but wipe out Twilight structures and entities with ephemeral rivers of lava or temblors that reduce ghostly buildings to rubble.

Awhawhiro

Awhawhiro is a Level 2 Extreme Environment as found in the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**. It affects only Shadow, the Underworld, and Twilight, manifesting as a hurricane-like storm within those realms. Affected characters suffer a –2 penalty to all actions. Characters subjected to Awhawhiro for a number of hours equal to their Stamina suffer two points of bashing damage per additional hour they are exposed to the Maelstrom. Spirits within Awhawhiro are afflicted as appropriate.

In addition, Awhawhiro strengthens Avernian Gates and makes it much harder to open them or create new ones with Keys. Characters who attempt to open or close gates in Awhawhiro receive an additional –2 to their attempts.

Awhawhiro can be temporarily calmed by *tohunga* who perform the Lull the Winds ceremony.

Although **Geist: The Sin-Eaters** has not been revised to include the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook** revisions, the inclusion of Awhawhiro as an Extreme Environment is a minor change that translates easily into **Geist** without requiring further rules adoption.

Lull the Winds (••)

The spirit winds of Awhawhiro buffet everything they touch unceasingly, cutting through spirits and Sin-Eaters alike with raw, razor-edged rage and grief. A Sin-Eater with

this ceremony, however, can calm the storm for a brief time, chanting the winds to sleep within the sound of her voice and giving a brief respite to those trapped within the Maelstrom.

Performing the Ceremony: The Sin-Eater must be affected by the storm of Awhawhiro. Taking a carved wooden bowl, the *Kauwaka* must fill it with water to the brim. She must then stir the water, creating a vortex in the middle, while chanting to the winds who she is and who her geist is, affirming her authority. At the end of this, the *tohunga* must pour flaxseed oil with aromatic herbs into the water while expressing sympathy for the storm's pain. The oil calms the water into stillness, calming the storm at the same time.

Dice Pool: Psyche + Presence

Action: Extended (target number of 5)

Time Increment: The Sin-Eater can roll for this ceremony once every minute.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: All successes are lost. The storm intensifies to a Level 4 Extreme Environment, raising difficulty levels and damage accordingly. The Sin-Eater performing the ceremony must make a Synergy roll to avoid discord.

Failure: No successes are gained.

Success: Successes are gained. If the target number is reached, then the storm subsides within a 50-yard-diameter circle for 10 minutes per point of Synergy the Sin-Eater currently has, and all Awhawhiro-based penalties are removed.

Exceptional Success: Successes are gained. If the target number is reached, the storm is calmed for 30 minutes per point of Synergy and the Sin-Eater also regains a point of plasm.

Kehua: Ghosts of New Zealand

Maori folklore has it that when a person dies, his *wairua* separates from his body and travels north to the very tip of the North Island, at a place known as Spirits Bay. There, it departs the land of the living and joins the deceased individual's ancestors in *Reinga*, or afterlife. Some *tohunga* have differing thoughts on the matter, but whatever the case, tribal custom has it that the living never see this aspect of the dead again.

An individual person is more than her *wairua*, however. The emotional spark, or *mauri*, lingers after death and carries with it all of the pain and suffering of the living body. It becomes a *Kehua*, and must be sent on its way before it creates problems for the deceased individual's *whanau*. Family members gather at the *marae* (meeting house) to hold a *tangi* (funeral), at which point those familiar with the proper *karakia* and prayers dispense with the *Kehua*'s negative emotions, allowing it to properly move on.

Obviously, the *Pakeha* residents of New Zealand have their own customs that their ancestors brought from Europe. At a dead person's wake, friends and family gather to share their memories of their beloved, priests commit the soul to the afterlife and judgment of God, and so forth. Tales of the





ghosts of dead white people concern those who were not properly consecrated, or had something they had to remain behind for. It's the standard tradition, largely unaffected by the geographical relocation.

All of this is to say that the people of New Zealand, whether Maori or *Pakeha* or of some other ethnic background entirely, have their way of saying goodbye to the souls of the dead. The problem in New Zealand is that for at least the last 50 years or more, none of this has made a lick of difference.

Every passing year since the turn of the century, ghosts bearing all of the emotional energy of the living have lingered longer and longer, incapable of passing through Avernian Gates, forming chokeholds at mortuaries, graveyards, and the places where they died. Not everyone that dies stays around; there's no good way to know for sure, but it's at least more likely if the person who died was emotionally charged at the time. The majority of these ghosts are Rank 1 ephemerals whose sole function seems to be as Essence-farms for the more powerful and dangerous *Kehua*, who establish dominion in Twilight and form strong anchors.

Most active *Kehua* are at least Rank 2, but may gather even more Essence despite having not passed into the Underworld. The conditions in New Zealand are such that the dead seek to avail themselves of the prosperity of the living, and in doing so only intensify their own longing for connections to that living world. Some more actualized ghosts realize that they can steal or harvest Essence from lesser ghosts and from places of great sacred potency or *tapu*, and thus come in conflict with spirits who have reached across the Gauntlet to do likewise. Ferocious battles between monstrous *Kehua* who have transcended their former existences and creatures such as *taniwha* have been blamed for natural disasters, widespread sickness, a rise in violence or depression, and so on.

Tohunga and other experts in the supernatural or occult have traced most of this to an imbalance in the nature of the Avernian Gates in New Zealand and the Pacific region overall. While ghosts have definitely been around for as long as any *tohunga* knows, the introduction of Western customs and traditions, and possibly even the importing of non-native spirits, souls, and *mana* has led to blockages — or, perhaps, an inability for most of the dead to properly enter the afterlife in any meaningful sense. Of course, the real reason is that the Avernian Gates have spewed forth a dominion of the Underworld that acts as the ideal catalyst for building up negative emotional energy and empowering *Kehua* and other Essence- or plasm-fueled beings.

Systems

Overall, *Kehua* follow all of the standard rules and use the systems presented in the **Chronicles of Darkness** rulebook and **Geist: The Sin-Eaters**. The primary exception is that since a large section of the Underworld seems to have migrated up to the mundane world's Twilight in the form of the Maelstrom, and subsequently blocked off many Avernian Gates to the rest of the Underworld, ghosts are able to feed off Essence without entering the Underworld and thus grow in power in the land of the living without the need for Anchors or Fetters.

Kehua without an Anchor or Fetter are more likely to congregate or Manifest in places of *tapu*, in remote areas, or along passages or conduits from one populated center to the next. As a result, rivers, railways, and roads are where an intrepid *Kauwaka*, *tohunga*, or ghost hunter is most likely to encounter unanchored or unfettered ghosts. Through the use of abjurations, Sin-Eater Ceremonies, and Manifestations, these *Kehua* may be weakened, driven off, or perhaps fettered to objects or anchored to remote locations to keep them out of the way. Ideally, an Avernian Gate is created and forced open to admit these restless ghosts, but the Maelstrom's presence makes that much more difficult.

Kehua who do have Anchors, Fetters, or have managed to Possess a living host are capable of drawing not only on those usual channels for Essence but also to feed on lesser Rank ghosts as well. It is therefore in their best interests to create situations that promote accidents, murders, sickness, and worse; beneficial or well-meaning ghosts are rare, or at the very least are confined to urban areas where the need to go above and beyond the normal channels to gather Essence is least.

Kauwaka: The Bound

New Zealand doesn't produce a great many Sin-Eaters, but when an *atua* does approach somebody at death's door and gives her a chance at a new life, the newly created *Kauwaka* is immediately immersed in an active supernatural world. With the Maelstrom keeping so many of the dead out of the Underworld, empowering the more malicious or ambitious of them with abundant Essence, *atua* function as a form of opposing force when partnered with a willing mortal vessel.

Kauwaka are brought back to deal with the funereal mess that the living have created over the years, to settle the restless dead, and to drive back the worst of the denizens of the Underworld. Many make the decision to do something else with their lives, of course, but their *atua* always reminds them of the price that must be paid to do so. Their Manifestations and Ceremonies are essential tools in this undertaking.

Atua

Not all *atua* are so heroic in nature. Many may even have once been *Kehua* who attained such power and influence that they were transformed in the process. Some go on to seek worship as minor gods, or at the very least command the respect and reverence of crazed mortals. Maori folklore is rich with examples of hero-deities, potent gods, and elemental powers that are, in retrospect, clearly examples of *atua*. Others bind themselves to dying mortals in an effort to create Sin-Eaters who will further their own petty causes, with the Maelstrom but a backdrop for their ambition. Some

malignant geists, or whiro (named after the *atua* of that name credited with secrets and wickedness), directly subvert the activity of the remainder of the *Kauwaka* in New Zealand and are perhaps their most dangerous opponents.

An *atua* isn't necessarily a "Maori geist." Large numbers of them were probably once European ghosts, for example, and some Sin-Eaters are veterans of foreign wars who acquired their geists before they came back to New Zealand. Even these geists adjust or adapt to New Zealand's supernatural climate. Occasionally, friction arises between the *atua* that brings back the Sin-Eater from the dead and the new host; other times, there's a distinctly foreign attitude that gives the Sin-Eater cause to worry.

Because of New Zealand's unique situation regarding the Underworld and the Maelstrom that has arisen from it, many *atua* are free agents, acting without a mortal vessel and Manifesting from time to time in the form of ancestral spirits. In such cases, whole groups of mortals, believing the *atua* to be a god, angel, or some other divine emissary, act according to these "visions." The Reformed Theosophical Suffrage Society, an organization led by covert Sin-Eaters, has made unearthing and wiping out these cults a priority in the 1950s.

Whanau

Groups of *Kauwaka* are known as *whanau*, not krewes; this is a Maori loan word, used even by *Pakeha* Sin-Eaters or those have who arrived from other shores. With so few active *Kauwaka*, organized *whanau* are rare also. Two of the most notable *whanau* are the Railway Battalion led by Sgt. Ned Poindexter, and the Reformed Theosophical Suffrage Society, which was originally a Victorian-era occult women's group that in the last few years began to accept men. Other *whanau* come together and then disperse, usually on account of their founding members meeting their final fates or, in some cases, degenerating into the Wretched after struggling against their personal *atua*.

New Zealand has no active *whanau* of a size greater than Tier One. There's no reason why a group couldn't grow in size and numbers, other than pure demographic limitations, but as of 1954 the largest *whanau* still only have memberships in the single digits. This gives players and Storytellers room to expand, grow, or build upon the "normal" state of things for their own *God's Own Country* chronicle. True to Maori linguistic tradition, a Tier Two group would be known as a *hapu*; a Tier Three group, should it ever arise, would be known as an *iwi*.

Whanau have the same basic qualities and characteristics of krewes, including rites of initiation, a loose relationship with one another, and a shared channel by which they codify and recognize spiritual matters and the power they reap from the Underworld. One thing they all have in common is an association with one or more Maori *iwi*, customarily through a partnership or relationship with a *tohunga*. From time to time, purely European-centric *whanau* are formed with no Maori traditions or loanwords adopted. Such groups tend to grow more isolated than any others, and either link up with another *whanau* or dissipate after years or even months.

The Railway Battalion

The New Zealand Railways Department operates over 100 branch lines throughout the nation, connecting every populated area and employing thousands of workers. The railways are the premier method of transporting goods as well as travelers, and their presence is a part of everyday life for even rural Kiwis out in the sticks. The North Island Main Trunk is easily the busiest and most profitable branch of the railways, and it is along this stretch of over 400 miles of track that the *whanau* of Sin-Eaters known as the Railway Battalion carries out its vigil against murderous ghosts and malignant spirits.

The Battalion formed in the early 1930s prior to World War II, under the leadership of Edward "Ned" Poindexter, a young railway conductor who had been dealing with dangerous train-riding ghosts for several years on his own. A chance meeting with two other *Kauwaka*, including a former *tohunga* named Henare Te Raupata and a middle-aged ex-serviceman named Willy Askwith, led Poindexter to declare a "club" dedicated to monitoring the railways and using their powers as Bound to counter threats from the "other side" (or "Po" as Te Raupata would call it.) Poindexter left the *whanau* in the hands of Te Raupata for several years while he fought overseas in Italy and North Africa as part of the New Zealand Army, but on his return he took up his leadership role once again and has held it ever since.

The Railway Battalion has accumulated considerable knowledge and first-hand experience of dealing not only with *Kehua* and clusters of Rank 1 ghosts ("sweeping out the cars" as they call it) but also ephemeral entities of many kinds, such as *taniwha*, the body-jumping abmortal Hubert Salter (AKA "Salter the Sensational"), and various mystical maladies that threatened to spread from one urban center to the other. Poindexter has established useful connections with officials in the New Zealand Railways Department, including General Manager H.C. Lusty, who is himself a previous victim of ghostly terrorization (and was rescued by Poindexter's companions).

Any *Kauwaka* who travels by train in the North Island (and to a lesser extent in the South) stands a good chance of meeting up with one of the Railway Battalion's key members or their mortal assistants or associates. Word travels swiftly along the tracks, and so player character *Kauwaka* may be given the opportunity to meet Poindexter or one of the others in a story that runs along the rails. Ned may not know everything there is to know about the Underworld, but he's as close as you can come to an expert in New Zealand on the Twilight world of rail transport.

SGT. EDWARD "NED" POINDEXTER



"Don't be a mad fool. Yuh can't take on a whole carriage full of spooks by yerself, for Chrissakes. That's why we're here. That's why we're the Railway Battalion. We do it together or we die again, and this time, no grave-dirt ghoul's going to come back and pick us up to fight on. We do it together."

Background: Ned grew up in the small town of Klynham, along the West Coast of the North Island. The son of a so-called "antique dealer," he and his family dealt with an alcoholic uncle, desperate poverty, and finally a serial killer named Hubert Salter who arrived in town bringing dread and corruption with him. During the period in which Salter was preying on local girls, Ned and his boyhood friend Les ran afoul of the town's juvenile delinquent gang, the Lynch Mob, who were interested in Ned's pretty older sister Pru. During an attempt to protect Pru's honor, Lynch and his cohorts beat to Ned within an inch of his life.

The *atua* known as the Macrocarpa Man made a bargain with Ned: He would bring the boy back to life, and help him exact justice on the Lynch gang, but in turn he would be called upon to use his newfound powers against creatures such as Salter. As it turned out, Hubert Salter was actually a form of disembodied spirit that leaps from body to body, filling that vessel with sadistic desires and psychopathic urges before exhausting it. Although Ned (with the help of his drunk uncle and older brother) put an end to Salter's reign of terror in Klynham, it wasn't the last time Ned would have to deal with him.

When Ned was old enough, he signed on to the railways as an assistant conductor and general-purpose laborer, climbing the ranks and broadening his experience of the world outside his rural upbringing. He dealt with more ghosts, most of them anchored to train carriages, sections of track, or even possessing passengers. Over time he formed the Railway Battalion and, once he returned from the war, set about establishing a larger network not just of additional *Kauwaka* like himself and his friends Willy and Henare, but those whose lives he had personally saved and then recruited.

Appearance: Ned is a skinny, awkward looking *Pakeha* man in his late thirties. He's been a Sin-Eater for over half his life, and the emotional and physical toll is evident in his sunken blue eyes, constantly messy brown hair, and the creases on his forehead. He's clean-shaven, although he has let his sideburns grow out more than he probably should. When on duty, he's smartly-dressed in official NZ Railways uniform — dark woolen coat, blue shirt, cufflinks, pressed pants, peaked cap — but on his off days he can be seen leaning on a pub counter with his sleeves rolled up and a cigarette dangling from his lips.

Ned's *atua* is a shadowy, smoky figure with limbs like twisted tree branches and eyes that smolder in the hazy darkness of his face. Known as the Macrocarpa Man — it refers to a species of cypress introduced to New Zealand from California in the 19th century and used as windbreaker trees on farms — this *atua*'s power is expressed mostly as resilience, strength, and resolve against the furious storms of the Maelstrom. To those who can hear or understand the Macrocarpa Man, his basso voice and slow, ponderous choice of words underscore just how tough this old tree really is.

Storytelling Hints: Ned has seen horrific things in his life, starting from when he was a teenager and through World War II to now. He has overcome great obstacles with a steely-eyed determination that seems iconic for the "good keen man" of New Zealand in the '50s, but underneath that he feels his identity slowly eroding the longer he does what he does. Whole days go by in which Ned's personality is subordinate to the Macrocarpa Man, giving his fellow *Kauwaka* in the Railway Battalion cause to worry about him. When he's called on to be himself, however, Ned usually rallies.

For the past six months, Ned has experienced great feelings of guilt for not being able to stop the Tangiwai Disaster that claimed so many lives in December of 1953. For all the times that he and the other Railway Battalion members have driven off a machine-antipathic *Kehua* or a *taniwha* upset at a river bridge being erected without the proper *karakia* performed in advance, Ned feels this failure keenly, for he was assigned to that train only to take leave hours before in order to spend Christmas holidays with his extended family. Ned hasn't spent time with his family since, doubling down on his commitment to his supernatural duty.

Archetype: Gatekeeper

Threshold: The Torn

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Investigation (Crime Scenes) 3, Occult (Ghosts) 2, Politics 2, Science 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 3, Firearms 1, Larceny 4, Stealth 3, Survival 2

Social Skills: Animal Ken 2, Empathy 3, Expression 2, Socialize 2, Streetwise (Railroad) 4, Subterfuge 4

Merits: Contacts (Pub Owners, Railways) 2, Fighting Style: Boxing 2, Resources 2

Willpower: 8

Synergy: 5

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Gluttony

Initiative: 7

Speed: 10

Size: 5

Defense: 3

Health: 8

Psyche: 5

Manifestations: Boneyard 4, Oracle 3, Rage 2

Keys: Cold Wind, Industrial, Pyre-Flame

Ceremonies: Krewe Binding, Listening to the Spectral Howl, Lull the Winds, Warding Circle, Warding the Household

The Reformed Theosophical Suffrage Society

New Zealand was the first nation in the world to grant women the right to vote, after years of efforts on the part of organizations such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union. In 1893, after a failed attempt by the sitting Premier to overturn a proposed suffrage bill, women cast their votes for the first time. Instrumental in gathering support for this historic moment were certain women involved in the Theosophical Society, which was itself progressive in that it had women in prominent positions. The Society, a spiritual movement founded by Madame Blavatsky 20 years prior, embraced numerous esoteric traditions and synthesized them to promote enlightenment and knowledge. In New Zealand in the last decade of the 19th century, it was also very influential among those who pulled the strings of power.

In part to promote suffrage and also to align greater forces toward the benefit of women, a splinter group of the Society arose known as the Reformed Theosophical Suffrage Society (RTSS). The group's founders, Amelia and Geraldine Bancroft, quickly made enemies among the occult scene in Wellington who included several highly placed politicians. Weeks before the election and passage of the bill, a conspiracy to poison the Bancrofts at a ladies' luncheon partially succeeded; Amelia succumbed to the venom, but Geraldine appeared to cling to life. In truth, a spider-like *atua* known as the Elder Katipo brought her back as one of the Bound, and Geraldine's wrath against the conspirators was swiftly exacted. One by one, occultists opposed to the suffrage bill dropped dead or fled the country. On Election Night, Geraldine was able to finally release her sister's *Kehua* and see the bill's passage.

In the years following, Geraldine acquired more and more knowledge and understanding of the truths underlying Theosophy and related spiritualist traditions, as well as native Polynesian and Maori insights revealed by the Elder Katipo. She recruited more women and eventually some men to the RTSS, subtly altering its mission to counter the use of spiritual forces against progressive groups and keep such manipulation out of the national government. She also sought out other *Kauwaka*, mentoring them and giving them access to her inner circle. When she finally died in 1929, the RTSS was lead by a group of six Sin-Eaters, all channeling Bancroft's own idealized belief system.

On at least three occasions, the RTSS has fought malicious intervention by occult groups, including an effort by alchemists to replace the Prime Minister with a homunculus. Each time, the RTSS has suffered a degree of setback, but a period of recovery follows. The most recent crisis facing the Society came in 1951, when dockworkers went on strike in what became the nation's longest and most contentious labor dispute. As "wharfies" protested against unfair pay and the ruling National Party took the hard line against them, tremendous negative energy was stirred up, invigorating certain malignant spirits and weakening the Gauntlet; a *taniwha* in Wellington Harbor was only just beaten back by a group of *tohunga* backed by the RTSS. The Society's inner circle was divided however, and after five months of near-constant battle against conflicting ephemeral backlash the RTSS fell apart. The dockworkers were demoralized and finally accepted defeat, but not before the RTSS expunged or lost half of their members.

Today, the Reformed Theosophical Suffrage Society is a shadow of its former self. Only three *Kauwaka* currently hold office as the inner circle, and none of them have been active as Sin-Eaters for longer than six years. One of them, Phyllis Leahy, is the current vessel for the Elder Katipo, the very same *atua* who bonded with Geraldine Bancroft 60 years ago. With a new national election coming up in November of 1954, this new leaner and younger Society hopes to keep the country's government free of any new supernatural influence. With the Maelstrom growing month by month, this may prove to be an almost insurmountable challenge.

PHYLLIS LEAHY

"We cannot let the Powers beyond the Veil govern our lives. We must be armed with Knowledge, steeled by Faith, and principled in Unity against wickedness, ignorance, and patriarchal conspiracy, whether alive or dead."

Background: Youngest daughter of a wealthy Wellington family, Phyllis Leahy saw little hope for independence in her future until she began experiencing precognitive dreams. Knowing her family wouldn't understand, she turned instead to the Theosophical Society, leaving home at the age of 18. She was swept under the wing of a local Society director, Ernest Geddy. She and Geddy were romantically involved for a short time, but the other members of her chapter were increasingly suspicious of her talents. After lacing her headache medicine with strychnine, the chapter's members were shocked when she turned up alive the next day, apparently unharmed. The *atua* Elder Katipo had brought her back much as it had once brought back Geraldine Bancroft, and using her new Manifestations Phyllis revealed the corrupted chapter members as poisoners. The greatest betrayal, however, was that Geddy had aided them in their plans, something her visions hadn't revealed to her. She turned them all over to the authorities, heartbroken but now driven by a new purpose.

Phyllis reached out through channels that the Elder Katipo had helped establish decades ago, and discovered the Reformed Theosophical Suffrage Society. When the Society's inner circle learned about her *atua*, they immediately gave her entry and waived the initiation period. Phyllis was active during the 1951 dockworker's dispute and ultimately sided with the government, whom she felt were supporting the nation's best interests. This put her at odds with others in the inner circle, but Phyllis was able to invoke the Elder Katipo's seniority against the *atua* of the others. A fierce battle with *Kehua* near Auckland at the tail end of the dispute forced her to end the life of Sin-Eater Leonard Masterson, who had been exploiting the *Kehua* to foment more unrest on the waterfront. When the smoke cleared, other *Kauwaka* had died or left, leaving Phyllis in charge of what remained of the Society.

Appearance: Phyllis is a dark-haired, green-eyed *Pakeha* woman in her late twenties. She is pear-shaped and rare to smile, instead defaulting to a look of consternation or worry. When she represents the Reformed Theosophical Suffrage Society, she dresses exclusively in black dresses or smocks, with a shawl and very little jewelry or accessories. Outside of the Society, she tends to keep her clothing muted and plain, albeit expensive.

The Elder Katipo is Phyllis' *atua*. It is an enormous, spindle-legged black spider with a bulbous abdomen marked with red *moko* (or tattoos). The katipo spider is a relative of the black widow, one of the only poisonous native species in New Zealand; the Elder Katipo embodies this unique predatory aspect together with a haunting, alien countenance. When the Elder Katipo speaks, however, it is with an old woman's voice, soft and confident, rather than savage or primal.



Storytelling Hints: Phyllis is young, but no longer truly comfortable among the youthful. Indeed, she never really was, despite being the baby of her family. She is neither shy nor lacking in confidence. She is always concerned about the situation at hand, serious and deliberate. It is through her actions that her resolve is typically measured, and her actions are never undertaken impulsively.

Phyllis embraces Theosophy's synthesis of spiritual traditions, and her identity as a *Kauwaka* brings her even closer to ghosts in general, so she often talks directly to spirits and ephemerals. She enjoys being the go-between when *Kehua* need to reach out to their living relatives, or when spirits must communicate to those who have angered or upset them.

The bond between Phyllis and the Elder Katipo has heightened her personal aura of authority and influence to the point that she can walk into a room and immediately position herself as one of the negotiators or arbiters of any disagreement or conflict; usually, she likes to isolate any ambient *Kehua* or spiritual echoes first and find a way to bring them into harmony with the living that they share space with. A side effect of her talents in this area is that Phyllis rarely attends meetings or gatherings that aren't directly affected by her work as a *Kauwaka*. She's afraid that she'll simply end up as the chairperson or organizer by default.

Archetype: Necromancer
Threshold: The Stricken
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 5, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 3, Crafts 2, Investigation (Hauntings) 3, Medicine 2, Occult (Ceremonial Magic, Spiritualism) 4, Politics (Suffrage) 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Stealth 2, Weaponry 1

Social Skills: Empathy 3, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 3, Socialize 4, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Allies (Suffragists) 3, Contacts (Occult) 1, Inspiring, Status: Reformed Theosophical Suffrage Society 4

Willpower: 6

Synergy: 7

Virtue: Prudence

Vice: Wrath

Initiative: 5

Speed: 10

Size: 5

Defense: 2

Health: 9

Psyche: 5

Manifestations: Caul 2, Oracle 4, Shroud 3

Keys: Passion, Stillness, Stigmata

Ceremonies: Dumb Supper, Krewe Binding, Lifting the Scales, Pass On, Plumbing the Depths, Speaker of the Dead, *Tapu* Invocation **(p. 519)**

Tohunga: Experts of the Sacred

Every indigenous culture has its priests or shamanic practitioners, and the Maori are no exception. The keepers of Maori lore, tradition, and spiritual practice are known as *tohunga*, although the specifics of this knowledge will differ from *iwi* to *iwi*, from tribal group to tribal group. One *tohunga* may carry with him the collected stories and folk tales of his forebears, using them to keep these narratives alive for the next generation, while another dedicates his life to instructing the young in rites designed to protect their community from malevolent forces.

In *God's Own Country*, *tohunga* represent a potential background and status for *Kauwaka*, a means of expressing the spiritual potency and expertise that a Sin-Eater might have access to through channels that are shaped by Maori tradition. This does not mean that all *tohunga* are *Kauwaka*. The majority of them are the equivalent of mystery cult initiates, religious leaders, or educators, armed only with lore and status within Maori society.

Kauwaka who bear the title of *tohunga* may be of any adult age and from anywhere in New Zealand, but they must be Maori. No *Pakeha tohunga* exist, although it is certainly possible for a New Zealander of European heritage to have studied the lore and make use of rites and *karakia* that the *tohunga* use. The difference is that *tohunga* claim legitimate status and are thus granted significant *mana*, and their understanding of these ceremonial traditions extends beyond the academic.

In early pre-European Maori society, the *tohunga* safeguarded not only customs and traditions, but the spiritual, social, and physical well-being of the *iwi*. When the *Pakeha* arrived, some *tohunga* welcomed the new cultural exchange, especially with European religious leaders or academics; others, however, fought against any influence that the West may have brought to Aotearoa. To this day, many *karakia* rites and spiritual practices are kept hidden from *Pakeha*, even though those who know them are dying out, unwilling to share their knowledge with an unworthy young population or with those who might expose the sacred secrets.

A *tohunga* undergoes years of education, training, and practice. He is required to observe *tapu*, although he can lift, alter, or affect such sacred spaces; he is usually required to abstain from certain everyday activities, although in this day and age few *tohunga* are as orthodox as all that. If the *tohunga* is a *Kauwaka*, he is recognized as a vessel or medium for his *atua*, and the *atua* is always an ancestor or other indigenous geist. When a *tohunga* dies, his *atua* frequently seeks out a replacement, and always within the *tohunga*'s immediate *hapu*. Some *Kauwaka* who bear this title have the same *atua* as their grandfathers, and their grandfathers before them, skipping generations at times but carrying the ancestral lore onward.

Systems

In game terms, "*Tohunga*" may be a Profession for the purposes of the Professional Training Merit (Asset Skills of Academics and Occult, the equivalent of a Religious Leader), which is sufficient for most; certainly, 90% of *tohunga* are adequately handled in this manner, and most *Kauwaka* who are also *tohunga* won't need anything more than this, as their own Manifestations and powers as one of the Bound cover the remainder of their spiritual talents.

Tohunga who are not *Kauwaka* may have Supernatural Merits such as Medium, Omen Sensitivity, or Unseen Sense (Spirits or Ghosts). Obviously, *Kauwaka* may not have any of these Merits as they are technically supernatural creatures and all such Merits go away when the character becomes a Sin-Eater.

Being a *tohunga* is one requirement for placing, lifting, and otherwise altering a Condition of *Tapu* on an area, item, or person. *Kauwaka* who possess the Warding Circle or Warding the Household ceremonies may accomplish something similar. See Tapu: The Sacred Law (p.518) for more information.

A *tohunga* who is also one of the Bound tends toward the Gatekeeper, Necromancer, or Pilgrim archetypes. The nature of her death is usually unrelated to her role as a *tohunga*; in fact, many were *tohunga* before they became *Kauwaka*. A rare few seek out an *atua* before they have themselves died, undertaking a ritual deprivation in order to induce death and bring the *atua* to them. This is not always successful, for an *atua* may decide that the *tohunga* has rejected his teachings and the sanctity of life.

WIREMU TANGAROA-A-MAKUTE



Quote: *We came from Hawaiki-the-Great, on our waka, created by our own hands, entrusted to our children, and their children after them. This is our land, given to us by the Atua, passed down to us by our fathers, and their fathers before them. You cannot take it, you cannot despoil it, for we shall not allow it. Our time is not past. You see. You see.*

Background: Born William Hobson at the turn of the century in a small community north of Auckland, Wiremu Tangaroa-a-Makute's family were members of the Muruwhenua tribes of Northland. However, they were no more interested in their heritage than Wiremu was in becoming a doctor like his father or a schoolteacher like his mother. As a child, he fell in with a group of Maori youth who were taught many of the *karakia* and folklore of Muruwhenua by a *tohunga* living at the edge of town. This group gave him purpose and structure, and by the time he had decided to give up on school, Wiremu had chosen his true Maori name and contributed to the restoration of the *marae* and other traditional sacred spaces in his community.

Wiremu avoided military service during the Great War because he was frequently ill; throughout his youth and well into his early twenties, he would succumb to bouts of coughing and pulmonary disease that kept him bedridden. On one such occasion, Wiremu was visited by an *atua* who manifested as a Morepork, a kind of spotted brown owl native to the region. The *atua* did not bond with Wiremu as it might one who lay dying, but instead lifted the scales from his eyes and bestowed upon the young man the ability to see into Twilight. From that point on, Wiremu's second sight would be the primary motivator for his training as a *tohunga*.

During the 1930s and 1940s, Wiremu rose to prominence in Northland as a *tohunga* of great insight and knowledge. He was consulted by elders in matters connected to tribal politics, visited Wellington to represent his community in parliamentary debates, and even ran for office, narrowly losing to the incumbent. At no point during this time did Wiremu see the Morepork *atua*, nor did any other *atua* visit him. He met Sgt. Ned Poindexter in 1948, however, and this was a revelation to him — the first of the Bound he had encountered, more than just a case of a *Kehua* possession.

Since becoming aware of the Bound, Wiremu has been obsessed with forming such a bond himself. He has sought after the Morepork *atua*, hoping to summon it with powerful *karakia*. He has also investigated the nature of the Maelstrom and those who struggle against it. He does not want to do anything rash, such as induce his own death, but his collection of Maori and Polynesian ceremonial texts are gradually putting together enough pieces that he may attempt to just force such a bond, if the occasion presents itself.

New Zealand's active *Kauwaka* community, such as it is, is aware of Wiremu. From time to time, they consult him on spiritual matters relevant to the Northland, but it's clear he doesn't have the power or supernatural talent to do more than observe their activities and grow more and more envious. It's possible that a *whanau* of Sin-Eaters may soon find themselves the target of Wiremu's obsession, and play a part either in his rise to power or a nasty epilogue.

Appearance: Wiremu is a middle-aged Maori man with short, wavy black hair, brown eyes, and deeply creased features. He dresses conservatively, usually with a white button-up shirt, trousers, and suspenders. As a *tohunga*, he carries a *taiaha*, a wooden staff-like weapon that serves as his badge of office, should it be required. When conducting ceremonies, he also drapes a woven flax cloak called a *kaitaka* around his shoulders to indicate his prestigious status.

Storytelling Hints: Wiremu is gifted with great presence and intelligence, but it is soured by his arrogance and ambition. He speaks with gravity and power, but if confronted or challenged swiftly becomes angry and boastful of his place. When talking to *Kauwaka* or even other *tohunga*, Wiremu seeks to interject his own opinions and anecdotes whenever possible to secure

the impression that he is competent and deserving of notice. If snubbed or called upon to change his behavior, Wiremu tends to leave the gathering and find a way to exact political or societal revenge on the party who slighted him; given his great reach in local politics, this is not something to take lightly.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 4, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics (Political Science) 2, Crafts 2, Investigation 4, Medicine 2, Occult (*Karakia*, Maori Folklore) 3, Politics 4, Science 2

Physical Skills: Brawl 1, Drive 2, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Animal Ken 2, Empathy 2, Intimidation 3, Persuasion 3 (Debate), Socialize 2, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Contacts (Northland *iwi*, Politics) 2, Encyclopedic Knowledge, Fame (*Tohunga*) 1, Language (Maori) 1, Status 2

Willpower: 5

Morality: 6

Virtue: Justice

Vice: Greed

Initiative: 5

Speed: 10

Size: 5

Defense: 3

Health: 7

Taniwha: Mighty Spirit Guardians

A *taniwha* is an ancient ephemeral spirit that embodies qualities of elemental water, guardianship, primal opposition to external forces, and so on. They are universally large and potent spirits, manifesting as reptiles, whales, even octopuses and squids. Occasionally they will also adopt insect-like or bird-like traits, depending on their chosen places of residence and the specific archetypal traits they have acquired over the centuries.

Maori folklore is filled with stories of *taniwha*, who coil up to sleep beneath large rivers such as the Waikato, or beneath coastal mountains and under volcanoes. Every bay, inlet, cove, and harbor in New Zealand has a *taniwha*, protecting the people who live in the area and from time to time causing havoc when driven mad by supernatural assaults, breaches of *tapu*, and other triggers.

Taniwha speak fluently in Maori and other Polynesian languages, and most have also learned to speak English and other outsider tongues. They communicate with deep, resonant voices that sound like rushing water, grinding stones, or thunderstorms, when they speak at all; many *taniwha* are so ancient and have been fixed in place so long that their voices are too slow and deep for mortals to comprehend them.

Taniwha occupy an interesting place in the hierarchy of spirits in Aotearoa. They can interact with ghosts and other ephemeral creatures equally, and have been known to consume lesser spirits and ghosts in order to satisfy their hunger. Yet, they are also the spirit guardians of the nation, and thus in most cases they act as gatekeepers to Gates that reach into Shadow or the Underworld, especially those near the sea or at the mouth of rivers and lakes. A *taniwha*'s presence is often felt indirectly in an area, tied into the *tapu* of the location and the general mood and emotional levels of the people and spirits nearby. It is only when the location is threatened, unbalanced, or upset by mortal activity, exotic spirits, or the surges of the Maelstrom that a *taniwha* reveals itself to its full extent.

Kauwaka are likely to encounter a *taniwha*'s servants, allies, or even foes long before they encounter the creature itself. Some *taniwha* speak through small lizards, fish, or birds; others even speak through humans. All of this is accomplished via Fetters and other standard Manifestation effects, visible and detected in short order by a *Kauwaka*'s senses. These servants typically list the various conditions of *tapu* in the area, the people that the *taniwha* protects, and how many varied and terrifying ways the *taniwha* might exact punishment on those who transgress it. If the servants are ignored or attacked, or if the *Kauwaka* deliberately seeks the *taniwha* out (perhaps by following the servants back to their master), only then will the *taniwha* emerge in earnest.

Taniwha can bring all manner of environmental assault upon a target, should they choose to. They might also resort to physical violence, with claws and teeth and spines and other sundry implements of disaster. But it is the *taniwha*'s supernatural prowess that a *Kauwaka* must be wary of, and indeed most confrontations with a *taniwha* should either end in a negotiation (in which the *taniwha* has the advantage over the *Kauwaka*) or the brief and violent end to the *Kauwaka*.

Ureia, Guardian Taniwha

This is a large and powerful guardian spirit of the Ngati Maru, near the Hauraki Gulf. For many years its essential nature was bound into a *whare* or meetinghouse, protecting the tribal meetings and lashing out at invading war parties, and then later threatening gold prospectors and settlers arriving in the region. For the past several decades, Ureia has coiled its long, serpentine body at the mouth of the Waihou



River, rising once a year to speak with other spirits along the Coromandel Peninsula before returning into hibernation.

Resembling a cross between a sea serpent and a spiny rockfish, Ureia's tongue is long and hollow and it has been known to lash out with it, piercing its foes and drawing both their life force and their essential fluids out in seconds. Otherwise, Ureia prefers to manipulate waters around it to send localized floods, waterspouts, or tidal waves against its enemies.

A wooden carving that once stood in a meetinghouse in Thames represents Ureia. The carving was later returned, and is now housed in the Auckland War Memorial Museum in Auckland.

Rank: 3
Essence: 20
Attributes: Power 9, Finesse 6, Resistance 7
Corpus: 15
Willpower: 10
Initiative: 13
Defense: 6
Speed: 15
Size: 8
Bans: May not attack a *tohunga* of Ngati Maru; may not bring harm to children, dogs, or pigs; must respond to the summons of the chief of Ngati Maru or anyone who invokes his name at the carving in the Auckland War Memorial Museum
Banes: Greenstone jade; a blessed *taiaha* in the possession of a *tohunga* of Ngati Maru
Influences: Water 3
Manifestations: Fetter, Materialize, Shadow Gateway, Twilight Form
Numina: Awe, Blast (Water), Essence Thief

Tapu: The Sacred Law

In Maori spiritual tradition, a person, place, or object that has been placed under *tapu* has been made inviolate, and it is forbidden to touch, interact with, and sometimes even approach it. This is a practice that is common in indigenous Polynesian and South-East Asian populations and which in the past formed the backbone of Maori life: when something is *tapu*, it must be left alone, and in turn this creates a series of requirements or constraints that the community as a whole must abide by.

Prior to the arrival of European settlers, Maori elders relied on *tohunga* as well as some old women (*ruahine*) to maintain that which was sacred. It was the role of the *tohunga* or *ruahine* to declare a place sacred and thus *tapu*, or to place an object or even a person into *tapu*. In everyday life, this helped to protect scarce resources from exploitation, served as both punishment and protection for certain individuals, and guided the administration of funerals, marriages, childbirth, food preparation, and practically everything else.

Like many things that have a supernatural component to them, belief and rigorous practice helps to strengthen the power of *tapu*. In the current era, many New Zealanders have little cause to worry about *tapu* objects, people, or places. As a result, *tapu* doesn't impair or limit as much as it may once have, but depending on the emotional strength of the *tohunga*, *ruahine*, or *atua* that placed the *tapu* to begin with, the effects may manifest in often striking ways.

Mortals may not regard *tapu* as important, but *Kauwaka*, *tohunga*, and most other supernatural creatures are fully aware of its potency. It is often implemented as part of a ban or even bane for a spirit or *Kehua*, and one of the Bound can detect the borders and placement of *tapu* as a result of her geist-granted senses.

Systems

Tapu is highly variable but almost always involves a warding barrier or quality coupled with a negative effect that is triggered when the warding barrier is breached. The specifics of the *tapu* are decided when the *tapu* is placed; *tohunga* and some other supernatural entities may alter these specifics or even lift the *tapu* entirely.

Common restrictions include: cannot be eaten, cannot be touched or manipulated, cannot be spoken of, cannot be looked upon, cannot be removed, and so forth.

Common effects include: mental anguish or despair, physical ailments such as boils or intestinal distress, alerting a powerful *taniwha* guardian or *tohunga*, paralysis, unconscious desires to leave the area, and so forth.

Tapu is charged with Essence. When connected to places of death or the dying, it can be charged with plasm; it can also be coupled with a channel to the Underworld or to the Shadow, depending on the nature of the *tapu*. In many cases, a location that is *tapu* has a *taniwha* or some other guardian spirit or spirit folk connected to it, and such creatures use the *tapu* as a source of Essence that regenerates on a routine basis.

The Maelstrom may weaken or otherwise disperse *tapu* on people or objects if they enter into a location where the Maelstrom is highly charged or active. *Tapu* acts as a shield against the Maelstrom if it is placed upon a location, although sustained buffeting by the Maelstrom's winds can wear down even the most sacred of places, albeit temporarily.

Mortal *tohunga* can declare something *tapu* using the abjuration rules (**Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 140), with the exception that there is no minimum Morality score required but they must have received training from another *tohunga*. Kauwaka can declare something or someone to be *tapu* by using the *Tapu* Invocation ceremony. Note that the individual invoking tapu is not immune to the conditions it lays, and the ceremony or abjuration is required again to remove the designation.

Tapu Invocation (•)

This ceremony guides and shapes New Zealand's supernatural landscape. Invoking *tapu* on an object or person places a restriction on interaction with that target. Violating those restrictions calls down curses upon the individual, punishing him for ignoring sacred boundaries.

Performing the Ceremony: The Sin-Eater must chant over the target while touching it with a twig from a native tree, invoking the spirits as witnesses and listing the restrictions and the punishment for violation. The Sin-Eater does not need the individual target's consent, but the target cannot be actively resisting the ceremony.

Dice Pool: Psyche + Presence

Action: Extended (target number of 3)

Time Increment: The Sin-Eater can roll for this ceremony once every minute.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: All successes are lost and the ceremony rebounds on the Sin-Eater, who becomes *tapu* according to the restrictions he was trying to invoke. Sin-Eaters affected by *tapu* must find someone else who can remove the condition in order to end it.

Failure: No successes are gained.

Success: The Sin-Eater invokes *tapu* on the target. Individuals who violate the stricture suffer the effects for 10 minutes per dot of Psyche the Sin-Eater has.

Exceptional Success: No additional benefit.

Patupaiarehe and Ponaturi: Spirit Folk of New Zealand

The Maori are not the only natives of the Land of the Long White Cloud. In *God's Own Country*, spirit folk deeply connected to the Shadow and — in death — the Underworld, are a common rural or wilderness antagonist for *Kauwaka*.

Patupaiarehe

The *Patupaiarehe*, also called the *pakepakeha*, are a pale-skinned tribal folk who are organized into *iwi* much as the Maori are, even to the extent that they hunt, gather, and form kinship groups like mortals. They are nocturnal, however, and their villages and hunting grounds are deep within the forested mountain regions of New Zealand, away from civilization and humanity. In the current era, they are almost all in Twilight, trapped on this side of the Gauntlet by the Maelstrom. In the distant past, they would venture across into the mortal realm, engage in fleeting encounters with the Maori, and then disappear. Their Shadow Gates were located in misty glades or forest springs known only to them. Now, of course, everything is different.

With the arrival to Aotearoa of the *Pakeha* (who some have said were named after the *Patupaiarehe*, sharing their pale skin and tendency toward reddish hair) the mountain fairies soon found that their secret places were being discovered and overcome with settlements or conflict. As the Maelstrom rose, the Shadow Gates began to overlap with the Avernian Gates that also manifested, cutting the *Patupaiarehe* off from their homes in Shadow. Ghosts, storms of negative energy, and other dramatic changes to the supernatural landscape have driven many fairy tribes to violence or mischief; others have simply dispersed, incapable of living off the meager Essence left to them.

PATUPAIAREHE MISCHIEF-MAKER

This is a typical individual of the mountain fairy folk, crazed with negative emotions and ready to cause havoc among mortals.

Rank: 2
Essence: 15
Attributes: Power 4, Finesse 6, Resistance 5
Corpus: 9
Willpower: 10
Initiative: 11

Defense: 4
Speed: 10
Size: 4
Bans: Cannot enter a site that is made *tapu*
Banes: Firelight or bright sunlight
Influences: Forests 2
Manifestations: Materialize, Reaching, Twilight Form
Numina: Dement, Mortal Mask

Ponaturi

The *Ponaturi* are the aquatic or sea-going relatives of the *Patupaiarehe*: wispy, teal-colored spirits who formed coastal settlements and occasionally took a Maori man or woman for a spouse, dragging them off into the deep. Much like the *Patupaiarehe*, the *Ponaturi* have experienced significant change with the rise of the Maelstrom and the arrival of Europeans. The sharp increase in shipping, fisheries, and tourism has cut the *Ponaturi* off from their own Essence sources, and now that they are trapped for the most part on this side of the Gauntlet, their mysterious society is rapidly dying out.

PONATURI SHORERUNNER

This is an ocean fairy that haunts coastlines near settled areas at night, stealing items from the houses and businesses close to the seashore. It can whip the air or water up around objects, carrying them over to its waiting grasp; this is especially useful if the *Ponaturi* wants something inside a well-lit building or near a source of flames.

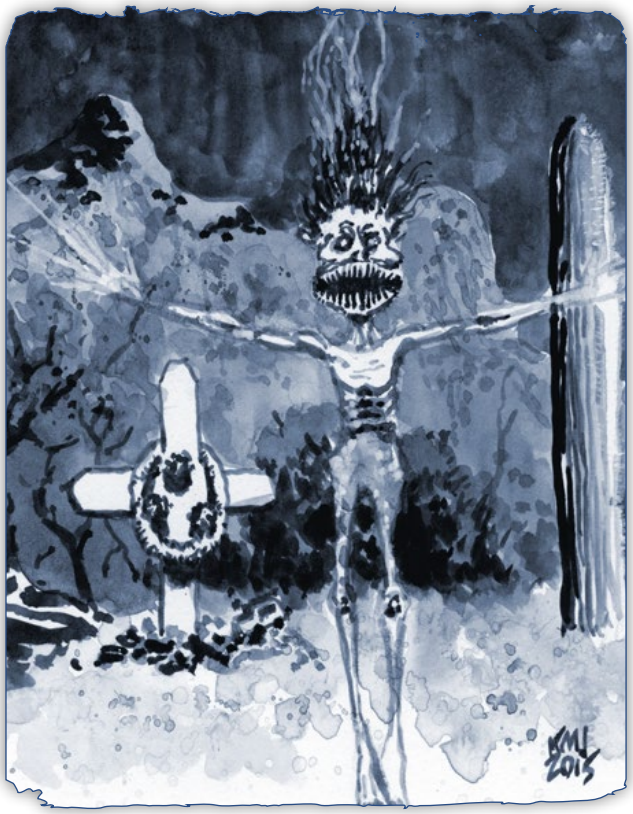
Rank: 2
Essence: 15
Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 7, Resistance 5
Corpus: 9
Willpower: 10
Initiative: 11
Defense: 3
Speed: 10
Size: 4
Bans: Cannot enter a site that is made *tapu*
Banes: Firelight or bright sunlight; blessed fishing nets
Influences: Oceans 2
Manifestations: Materialize, Reaching, Twilight Form
Numina: Mortal Mask, Telekinesis

Kahukahu

Maori folklore includes stories of the Underworld creatures known as *kahukahu* coming into contact with isolated communities, but their existence wasn't proven until the 19th century. These wretched ghosts began to plague Maori villages that had broken *tapu* related to the *Patupaiarehe*, or were encroaching on previously unsettled areas of forest. Soon, the ghosts were appearing in European settlements as well, often deep into civilized areas such as cities. They are the twisted echoes of *Patupaiarehe* and *Ponaturi* as reflected in the Maelstrom, ghosts of the spirit folk, empowered by the negative energy that grows year by year.

A *kahukahu* manifests as a deathly-white figure, skin tight upon its bones, mouth unnaturally wide and filled with sharp teeth. Many of them have fiery red hair, while others are simply hairless. A *kahukahu* is often drawn to sites where innocents or other childlike individuals have suffered or died, to torment the living relatives or those who live nearby using phantasms of the deceased child to exact more grief and despair.

Kahukahu are as afraid of light and fire as the *Pautupaiarehe* and *Ponaturi* are. If the light creates a shadow behind them, they screech and flee into it, disappearing from sight. Most locations can be warded against *kahukahu* by flooding the space with as much bright light as possible, or by having a *tohunga* or a *Kauwaka* with the right rituals make it *tapu* long enough to resolve the situation.



NURSERY ROOM KAHUKAHU

This malevolent spirit lurks in nurseries where children have died in their sleep or from sickness. When new children are brought in or new residents repurpose the room, the *kahukahu* terrorizes them at night using horrific hallucinations and moving objects.

Rank: 2
Essence: 15
Attributes: Power 6, Finesse 6, Resistance 6
Corpus: 10
Willpower: 10
Initiative: 12
Defense: 6
Speed: 12
Size: 4
Bans: Cannot enter a site that is made *tapu*
Banes: Firelight or bright sunlight
Influences: Anchor (Nursery) 2
Manifestations: Materialize, Twilight Form
Numina: Drain, Essence Thief, Hallucination, Telekinesis

Playing the Game

God's Own Country presents a setting for **Geist: The Sin-Eaters** that focuses on stories that are more intimate in nature and yet potentially much larger in scope. For purely geographical reasons, stories set in New Zealand won't range much further than a few hundred miles at the most, yet the Pacific region of which New Zealand is but one isolated corner harbors a powerful, primal spirit world that is deeply entangled with the Underworld. The supernatural world is unbalanced. Sin-Eaters stand against a potential onslaught of ephemeral beings with only a handful of allies, while the mundane world appears at its most prosperous.

Who Are You?

Who becomes a *Kauwaka*? What is it like to be active in New Zealand in 1954? Along with the information presented earlier about New Zealand culture, geography, and society, the following section provides guidelines and suggestions for properly fleshing out your Sin-Eater as one of the Bound of Aotearoa in *God's Own Country*.

The Prelude

Whoever you might become, every *Kauwaka* begins as a mortal, one who may have been born with a caul or experienced moments of extraordinary insight as a child. Every *Kauwaka*'s story begins long before the *atua* comes to her in her moment of death. In *God's Own Country*, there are as many backgrounds as there are ferns in the forest, but here are a few that provide a strong connection to the setting and the period.

Urban Backgrounds

Characters who grew up in the big cities — Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, or Dunedin — are overwhelmingly white, middle-class, and work or have family who work in the manufacturing sectors. They're used to driving cars, riding trams, and living in row houses or even city apartments. A Sin-Eater who comes from a city is likely better educated, used to more immediate news and entertainment, and belongs to a social club, sports team, or church group.

Obviously the exceptions are often the root of any interesting character, so consider a recent immigrant from Great Britain seeking work in the growing field of electronics, a veteran of the Korean War trying to make a go of it on military benefits, or a public school teacher fighting the encroachment of standardized curriculum. Think of the downtrodden or poor residents of any city, struggling with mental illness or a lack of family support, eking out an existence conducting the tram lines in downtown Auckland or cleaning the offices of Parliament in Wellington.

Although more of the population is beginning to accumulate in cities, the towns just outside the city limits are suburbs-in-the-making. A young couple, he with an Army discharge check, she with a decent job at the switchboard, commutes into Auckland on a city train, coming home each day to a bare street with few trees and rows of sparsely-decorated new houses. Public funds pave over gravel roads to open new business and new residents to the neighborhoods of tomorrow, pushing farmland and native forests out, and all of this with government workers.

The strongest attraction to playing a character from an urban background in *God's Own Country* is the degree of familiarity it provides. A New Zealand city in the 1950s is much like a city in Britain, or the West Coast of the United States, or in Australia. The biggest difference is that urban folk in Aotearoa aren't nearly as crowded from day-to-day — but this will change. Otherwise, it's not too difficult to imagine a pre-information age city-living person, if only because television and movies give us so many examples.

Rural Backgrounds

The rest of the country lives in small towns or on farms, connected by railway tracks, unpaved motorways, and —if you're lucky — telephone lines. To be a rural character is to



grow up in a farmhouse or a cottage by the railway tracks, attending a school with both *Pakeha* and Maori kids, spending long, hot summers keeping sheep out of the wrong field or constructing forts in the bush by the river inlet. Communities are tightly knit, with everyone in each other's business, despite the conservative attitudes of the time; gossip is a currency, you can't hide a family secret forever, and you'll band together when the folks from the city come into town or on the farm looking for that escaped convict or that terrified runaway.

Consider the small town constable, who might have the best car in the district and spends most of his time trying to get the drunks home from the pub at closing time. War vets who return to a rural community are local heroes, elevated quickly to positions of influence, such as deputy mayor, or a councilman. Others are left to their own devices, nursing war injuries at a day hospital on the edge of town, or drowning their sorrows at the pub next to the TAB. Many sports heroes come from such pastoral beginnings, as do many politicians. And if you're living in a farming community but you're not a farmer, then you're probably catching a very early train to travel several miles to a factory on the coast — the freezing works, or one of those new car manufacturers turning out Holdens and Vauxhalls, Morris Minors and Chryslers.

The appeal of playing characters from small towns, Maori *pa*, or farming collectives, is that you're automatically set up with a manageable home base, a location that isn't as busy or crowded as a city, a place you can easily occupy an important role. You're also closer to the supernatural and the mystical, such as it is — certainly, there's a great deal of untouched wilderness, whether it's forests, mountains, glacier parks, or empty stretches of beach. It's also not true that rural characters are country bumpkins. Every town in New Zealand gets radio broadcasts, every town has a newspaper, and it really isn't considered a problem to be a "good keen man" from the country. Matter of fact, you might just have a lot more common sense.

Ethnicity and Cultural Considerations

While it's true that the majority of the population in 1954 was *Pakeha*, this shouldn't mean that the same is true for *Kauwaka*. New Zealand's spiritual landscape is a tumult of Polynesian traditions blended with European ones, but the essence of the Maori spiritualism dominates. After all, many more Maori have historically died in New Zealand than *Pakeha*, but that's changing more and more every year. The simple fact that most *atua*, too, are derived from ancestral spirits creates a tendency for *Kauwaka* to be Bound to geists that present with indigenous or native thematic aspects.

Playing a foreigner is an excellent alternative to being either *Pakeha* or Maori. In the 1950s, over 125,000 immigrants arrived on New Zealand's shores, following the post-war boom across the Commonwealth and departing their stifled job markets in England, Scotland, and Australia to start a new life in Aotearoa. If these people were already Sin-Eaters, then there's a wealth of roleplaying potential there to adjust to the radically different Twilight world around them. If they died and came back as Sin-Eaters after immigrating, then the culture shock is a delightful hook in its own right.

New Zealand also has immigrants from India and Pakistan as well as a few from South-East Asia. The Pacific Ocean connects to many countries, and there's ample opportunity for a character to hail from overseas, whether recently or as a child of immigrants. The key thing to remember is that everyone who migrated to New Zealand was given a visa on the condition that he or she knew a trade or were readily employable. It's much less likely that a foreign national would arrive in New Zealand as a homeless vagrant.

Archetypes and Thresholds

Although Bound of all Archetypes and Thresholds exist in New Zealand of the 1950s, as a Sin-Eater you are likely to be one of only a handful, potentially even the only one of your particular circumstances. The nature of the times and the particulars of the setting provide a stronger emphasis on some Archetypes over others, and the same is true for Thresholds. Some suggestions on how this may affect character concepts follow.

Archetypes

All Sin-Eaters adopt archetypal roles that connect in a primal manner to the Underworld, creating a channel for plasm to flow into them. In *God's Own Country*, the circumstances surrounding the gates into the Underworld and the rising tide of restless dead dictate that some channels are more prevalent and thus inspire more occurrences of certain Archetypes.

Gatekeepers are perhaps the most common of all Archetypes, for the pathways between life and death are being challenged, and ghosts are influencing the world of the living in more ways than simple manifestation. Sin-Eaters who are also educated in the traditions of the *tohunga* know full well the sacred boundaries between life and death must be enforced.

Advocates attempt to resolve what anchors Aotearoa's growing population of the dead to the world of the living, freeing them from their responsibilities and mortal ties in order to move on. When this fails, which is more and more common, Advocates seek out allies among Necromancers and Pilgrims, hoping to use either traditional lore or methods of abandoning concern entirely to ease their consciences.

Necromancers may arise as a response to the spiritual Maelstrom, seeking hidden secrets within the Maori oral traditions or those of other cultures to solve the problem of so many restless dead. This aligns them with Gatekeepers and Advocates, who likewise understand that it's a problem.

While the prosperity of the 1950s in New Zealand may seem to support **Celebrants**, any Sin-Eater who catches a glimpse of the state of things around Haunts and places where the Underworld should be accessed would think differently.

Celebrants are more likely to appear among the youthful Bound, those who prior to dying were involved in teenage "milk-bar cowboy" gangs, rock n' roll, or street racing. Others were wealthy before they died and, on return, hope to make the best of their fortunes rather than leave them to others.

Pilgrims are challenged by the howls and storms of ghosts around them and respond by trying to weaken the influence the dead have on the living as best they can. By pushing grief-stricken families to move on, eliminating physical anchors, and even creating distractions in the media or in politics from news of death and the dying, Pilgrims firmly believe that the crisis at the gates of the Underworld can be taken care of.

Bonepickers and **Mourners** are equally uncommon among Sin-Eaters, although representatives certainly could exist. Their obsession over either the remains of the dead or the dead themselves doesn't stand up to scrutiny in times like these.

Lastly, the **Reapers** are more likely to present as antagonists in *God's Own Country*, numbering only among the Bound who are actively creating more problems among the dead than resolving them. They can come between any one of the other Archetypes and a solution; they are only feeding the Maelstrom, despite being convinced perhaps that their role is a sacred duty.

Thresholds

As a Sin-Eater, the means by which you died created a resonant quality within you when you returned to life as one of the Bound. In *God's Own Country*, certain Thresholds stand out as more thematically relevant. Certainly, everyone still dies in all of the ways that the Thresholds represent; but of those whom geists seek out and offer a second chance, victims of certain circumstances are perhaps more likely than others to attract New Zealand's spectral partners.

The Forgotten: Victims of transportation accidents, especially railways, have produced the greatest numbers of the Lightning-Struck in New Zealand. One or two people always seem to make it out alive under otherwise fatal conditions. Are they Sin-Eaters, or just those whom Fate has smiled on?

The Prey: Nature claims its fair share of victims in New Zealand, from mountain climbers and glacier explorers to those unfortunates who stumble into limestone caves while hiking in the bush. New Zealand has fewer predatory animals than any other nation — no wild cats or wolves or snakes — but the venomous katipo spider, found in crevices and along beaches, is New Zealand's answer to the black widow and just as deadly.

The Silent: Starvation and hunger are not common causes of death in the prosperous post-war period, but alcoholism, drug abuse, and tobacco are easily the leading killers among the Starved Ones. Others come from the ranks of those who could not live without family members and loved ones who died in the war, and simply wasted away from depression or heartbreak.

The Stricken: An influenza epidemic claimed the lives of many in 1918, and despite the advances of medicine since, similar outbreaks have erupted in isolated communities from time to time. Jonas Salk has not yet discovered the polio vaccine, and many other diseases that the 21st century no longer fears are still killers in 1954.

The Torn: Foreign wars, domestic abuse, and homicide are all too common origins for the Bleeding Ones. Returned from a violent death by being bound to a geist, these Sin-Eaters often participate in covering up the incident, out of guilt or revenge. Veterans have returned to New Zealand with geists that they acquired on foreign soil, adding to the pervasive feeling of being an outsider among friends and family.

Anachrotech Modifiers Table 1950s

What's old and disused in 2014 is cutting edge in 1954, so Sin-Eaters active in the 1950s who make use of the Industrial Key may find that they're most capable of working with early Victorian era technology. The term "anachrotech" is unlikely to be in much use; rather, Sin-Eaters jokingly refer to it as "vintage."

Dice Modifier	Invention Date
+3	More than 100 years old
+2	Before 1860
+1	Before 1880
0	Before 1900
–1	In the 1910s
–2	In the 1920s
–3	In the 1930s
–4	In the 1940s
–5	In the last four years

Sin-Eater Traits

Your choice of Keys, Manifestations, and other Traits is unchanged in *God's Own Country* for the most part, as derived from your Archetype and Threshold. The important distinction to be made when considering how these interact with your concept and how they are used in play is to remember that it is 1954, around 60 years prior to the default time of **Geist: The Sin-Eaters**.

Keys

The Industrial Key in *God's Own Country* considers the 1950s as "modern." See the nearby Anachrotech Modifiers Table for more information on how this affects the Industrial Key. This chart updates the one on page 111 of **Geist: The Sin-Eaters.**



Similarly, because of geography, the Primeval Key draws most heavily on birds, reptiles, and insects when considering animal life or aspects of fauna. It is rare that anyone with this Key would manifest the traits of larger predators, for example.

The other Keys are unaffected, outside of general accommodations for geography, history, and location. Note that influencing volcanic activity falls under the Pyre-Flame Key, but the Grave-Dirt Key more correctly influences earthquakes and temblors.

A Second Chance at Life, and What It's Like

As one of the Bound in mid-1950s New Zealand, quite apart from the life you once led, your day-to-day existence is governed by the certain fact that you are one of only a handful of people like you. You have a responsibility to the supernatural world that extends beyond your own upbringing and background. You can't simply return to your old life as if nothing had happened. The Maelstrom and the sheer number of ghosts, *Kehua*, native spirits, and other ephemeral flotsam and jetsam make this impossible. So what is this second life like?

A Whanau Born of Death

Sometimes, the Bound are created in small groups, sharing a terrible fate, and thus have that much in common. *Atua* are nominally tribal, or at the very least social spirits; because the Underworld has been dredged up and floods the land of the living, just out of sight, many *atua* are or have been free-roaming entities for years, gathering together in some cases to form clusters of like-minded spirits who share an interest in opposing the growing Maelstrom. These *atua* are drawn to group deaths, or are present when such an event is caused by supernatural events. In part because they feel some responsibility, and in part because they have mysterious and unknowable goals of their own, these *atua whanau* bring back several individuals at a time, Binding to them and presenting them with new responsibilities.

Solitaries

More often, however, a *Kauwaka* is brought back to life with a bargain, a solitary *atua* choosing her as its new instrument in the war against Whiro's storms. In this case, no one is around to explain it, and no useful mentor is readily apparent. The first few months of a *Kauwaka*'s new life are spent trying to make sense of it, trying to block out the chorus of spectral voices, to look away when walking down a street only to have ghosts stare noiselessly at them from windows, from fields, from cemeteries. It's only after a period of painful adjustment that the *Kauwaka* meets another of her kind, a desperately needed meeting with another person who knows just what it's like.

When the dust settles, a *Kauwaka* has the option of assuming her former life, or starting over somewhere else. Whatever she decides, her circle of friends has grown to include one or more *Kauwaka*, potential ghostly contacts, the occasional revenant or crazed spirit, and a strong likelihood that mortal spiritualists, occultists, and "ghost hunters" have her name in a book or on a list somewhere.

Getting Around

Kauwaka and their *whanau* have limited options in terms of how far to travel and how to do it. The primary method of transport in New Zealand in the 1950s is either to drive or take a train; the wealthy could afford a small private plane or a chartered DC-3, but it's quite rare. The impediment presented by the Maelstrom means that setting off on a boat carries risk of being caught in a negative energy storm, although river travel is not affected in the same way.

Automobiles and trucks aren't terribly sophisticated, tend to be of the American type, and are either imported in pieces and assembled in New Zealand plants or built here entirely. Most New Zealand families have a car or wagon by this point in history, and thus the same is certainly true for a *whanau* of Sin-Eaters. It's probably just the one, though. The likelihood that every *Kauwaka* has his or her own car is still relatively small, so some characters need to get used to the idea of taking the train or bus, or hitching a ride.

Trains not only offer the most reliable and safe means of traveling up and down the country, they're also popular as sites of hauntings, ghostly manifestations, and rival *Kauwaka*. On several occasions, whole battles take place in isolated train stations in the middle of the night, with only a slightly damaged siding on the rail sheds to greet the early morning commuters. Trains allow the *Kauwaka* to enter and exit cities, to link up one town's situation with solutions from another. The Maelstrom has very little direct influence or power on rail cars. An angry *taniwha* or rogue *atua*, on the other hand, might find a train a tempting target.

Gathering Together

As noted elsewhere, nowhere near as many *Kauwaka* live in New Zealand as in other civilized parts of the world. The actual demographics are entirely up to the Storyteller for any given chronicle, but the active number is likely in the low 30s or 40s at any given time. This makes it both much easier to gather together in a convocation or war council, and much more dangerous; with so few, the wrathful dead may cut the population of *Kauwaka* in half in just one night if there's cause for them to rise up.

Wakes aren't as common, simply because getting together to dance the night away in a graveyard is seen as somewhat boorish or disrespectful by New Zealanders in general if not always in the case of *Kauwaka*. If such a gathering were to take place, it would be conducted in some part like a Maori *tangi* (or funeral). The *Kauwaka* from the region, even if but a handful, gather at a place to weep openly, invoke the memories of the departed, keep their shades from clinging to anchors, and prepare them for their passage north to Spirits Bay. When a

Kauwaka dies, the *tangi* can go on for days. It is usually held near the sea, with a strong Warding set up around the *marae* or the cemetery, a place of calm amidst the Maelstrom.

Markets — which is to say gatherings of *Kauwaka* to trade mementos, information, and the tools of the trade — only ever happen in the big cities, where the Gauntlet is stronger and the Maelstrom is not as disruptive. Once a month at Auckland's War Memorial Museum, a gathering of North Island *Kauwaka* meets at market, bartering carved greenstone pendants or Korean War medals with one another. Beer is brought, songs are sung, but the atmosphere is strictly businesslike.

Outside of the quasi-formal convocations, councils, and other gatherings, Sin-Eaters in New Zealand tend to settle on a single location for their *whanau* to operate out of, whether it's somebody's house on an old beachfront street in Devonport, a hospital basement near the Dunedin city center, or a cabin on the slopes of Mt. Egmont. Others, like the Railway Battalion, have no central meeting spot. For them, the second life of a *Kauwaka* is one of constant motion, traveling by train or car, never stopping in the same place for more than a night. For these vagabonds, it's good to have contacts from your past life maintained, just to be able to guarantee a roof to sleep under or a kitchen to congregate in during an important trip.

Setting Stories in God's Own Country

Although the Themes, Mood, and the overarching premise of a prosperous nation hiding a terrifying storm of unrest and violence under the surface may seem as if they practically write stories for you, this is likely not always the case. Here are three examples of stories to tell in New Zealand of 1954.

Story Hook: Opening the Floodgates

The Avernian Gates in New Zealand are choked with the restless dead. It's the *Kauwaka*'s job to clear those out, allowing the path to the Underworld to be easier for those that need it, and restoring the balance in the region so that the constant mood of despair and unease is lifted. This is obviously easier said than done.

These Gates are found in both out of the way places, such as remote native forests, caves beside the sea, or in abandoned mines, as well as right smack dab in the middle of settled locations, such as churches, cemeteries, and university libraries. A massive Gate exists up in Spirits Bay, at the tip of the North Island, which also happens to be where the Maori believe the souls of the dead go when they die. Sadly for most souls of the dead, this Gate is sealed shut, looking like nothing so much as a railway tunnel clogged with writing masses of minor ghosts and fragmented echoes formed of plasm and spirit-stuff.

It's possible to clear a Gate using the right ceremonies or simply by pushing forcefully through the opening and reconnecting the channels into the Underworld, but within hours or days the Gate once again seals itself off. It becomes clear to any *Kauwaka* who does this (likely with the help of a few friends) that the Maelstrom itself, composed of Twilight storms of negativity brought up from the Underworld, is sometimes even bringing these ghosts back to the land of the living, stuck in an endless, screaming cycle of ephemeral horrors. This may even happen when the Gate is cleared, and what appears to be a backwash of ghostly remnants floods outward.

Kauwaka who have been working diligently for years clearing existing Avernian Gates of the excess of ghosts have started to realize that opening newer, unblocked Gates is probably the best long-term solution, barring actually reversing the Maelstrom itself.

Chronicle Hook: Ending the Maelstrom of Awhawhiro

If you want to tell an epic story set in New Zealand, this is the one. At some point in the history of the nation, the Maelstrom is subdued, the Underworld is driven back through the Avernian Gates, and relative peace is restored, albeit only until the next serial killer or natural disaster. How this is accomplished is likely the stuff of an extended chain of stories, centered on the identification of the Maelstrom's cause and the efforts on the part of the *whanau* to reverse it.

The premise of such a chronicle is that while New Zealand's history of colonialism, isolationism, and societal unrest is the fuel for the Maelstrom's negative energy, what's actually keeping the whole hurricane of anguish churning is an ongoing war between two Kerberoi, whose Dominions overlap and thus create a sort of fault line in the Underworld. The Kerberoi each represent a separate set of Old Laws, one very much rooted in primal Polynesian traditions writ large, and the other a Northern Hemisphere codex of colonial power. It may seem ridiculous to the modern political or religious thinker, but these two conflicting powers feed off the clashing attitudes and opposing beliefs of those above.

At the turn of the century — when New Zealand came into its own as a Dominion within the British Empire, women gained the right to vote, and the Tohunga Suppression Act was passed by parliament — what was previously just a contested rivalry between the two Kerberoi erupted into open and esoteric war. Just as the volcanic faults in the tectonic plates beneath New Zealand cause eruptions of magma and searing gas, the dispute between the two Kerberoi forced the



Underworld up and through the Avernian Gates, creating the Maelstrom as a result.

Ending this war is an exercise in diplomacy on the part of the *Kauwaka*, who must first realize what's going on and journey into the Underworld to find out what's actually happening. In that twisting labyrinth of lava tubes, lakes of fire, noxious vaults, and clashing traditions, the *Kauwaka* must deal not only with the Kerberoi but with powerful spirits who feed off the conflict itself — including Whiro, the wicked *atua* of legend, the strongest among them. Perhaps the *Kauwaka* can establish peace accords, creating a détente between the Kerberoi and their Old Laws, forging what amounts to a spiritual Treaty of Waitangi. Or, perhaps a new Dominion must be forged, pushing the other two apart, and one of the *Kauwaka* must undertake a ritual to become a Kerberos herself.

Story Hook: Abmortal Beloved

New Zealand has its fair share of creepy tales that aren't quite ghost stories but center around strange men, whether foreigners or outcasts. In the story of Sgt. Ned Poindexter, there's the former knife-throwing mesmerist Salter the Sensational, who was in truth a body-jumping spirit. Tales of innocuous laborers, train workers, and traveling salesmen who live unnaturally long lives are shared among the *Kauwaka*. These people don't seem to age a day, or they seem to crop up every generation looking exactly as they did decades ago.

The story hook for the Eternal Mayor on page 504 is one example, but here's another. A Maori warrior fights in Te Kooti's War during the mid-19th century, and comes home to find his village wiped out, his wife torn apart, his children and family carried off or dead. Wracked with grief, he undertakes the rite of *Utu*, the sacred duty of vengeance, swearing upon the names of his *iwi*'s *atua* and the *waka* that brought them from Hawaiki that he won't stop until all those responsible are dead.

This warrior, Tu-o-Rangi, is unaware that his wife and his family are still with him, anchored to him by the invocation of *utu*. He sees them in his dreams; they visit him in reflections in pools or mirrored glass. As his bloody task continues, he finds that he is unable to rest, unable to feel as if their spirits have been avenged. Empowered by their lingering presence, Tu-o-Rangi never ages, never grows old, and spends decades hunting down those who murdered his family and relations, and those who ordered it.

The *Kauwaka* encounter Tu-o-Rangi, perhaps suspecting he is a Sin-Eater himself. To those who can see into Twilight, ghosts always surround the warrior. It is only after one or two clashes with him, perhaps trying to keep him from killing a descendant of his village's despoilers, that they realize he is an abmortal. With the sacred strength given to him by *utu*, Tu-o-Rangi may be a match for multiple *Kauwaka*. With his Numina essentially driven by negative energy and wrath, the Maelstrom has the opposite effect on him that it does on the *Kauwaka*: It sustains him, protects him, and keeps him vital.

The *Kauwaka* must either convince Tu-o-Rangi to release his family's spirits, removing the anchors that tie them to him, or do this by force. Only when he understands that killing those who wronged him is not the solution to easing his beloved *whanau*'s passage to the afterlife, but rather his own acceptance of their death that will grant them peace, will Tu-o-Rangi's unnatural life come to an end and he may join them in eternity.

Inspirations

The following books, movies, and other materials are directly or indirectly responsible for the content of *God's Own Country*, and the list doubles as a handy reference for what media to consume in preparation for running a chronicle set in New Zealand of 1954. Most of these are firmly in the category of "What is New Zealand like?" rather than the much smaller group, "What are New Zealand ghost stories like?"

Fiction

Ronald Hugh Morrieson's *The Scarecrow* and *Came A Hot Friday* portray small town life in New Zealand in the 1930s and 1940s, decades before our time period, but each is rich with Kiwi slang, dark comedy, and, in the case of *The Scarecrow*, a heightened sense of dread that directly inspired the Railway Battalion.

Alan Duff's *Once Were Warriors* inspired a popular film of the same name (listed later), although the book is even more brutal in its depiction of the diaspora of the Maori *iwi* from rural life to urban squalor. It has two sequels, *What Becomes Of The Broken Hearted* and *Jake's Long Shadow*.

Margaret Mahy's *The Haunting* is a New Zealand novel about an eight-year-old boy whose family legacy of supernatural gifts is revealed after his grandfather's passing. Mahy is a Carnegie Medal-winning writer who focused on children's literature, and this is one of her finest. It's worth checking out her later novel *The Changeover*, too, although that novel is concerned more with witches than ghosts.

Film

An Angel At My Table. Jane Campion's 1990 film based on the autobiographical novels of Janet Frame, who was (at the time of *God's Own Country*) living through the middle installment of the trilogy at Seacliff Asylum. References to the time period's care of the mentally ill and a number of pop culture references of the 1950s make this worth the effort to track down.

Heavenly Creatures. For a clear sense of *Pakeha* society at the time of *God's Own Country* and a chilling look at the underside of the era of prosperity, you can't do better than Peter Jackson's thriller based on the Parker & Hulme murder case. The film is set in 1954, and is an excellent crash course in Kiwi accents of the era.

Once Were Warriors. It's set long after the time period of *God's Own Country* but it gives insight into the outcome of the

The Chronicles of Darkness

Vampires are a fairly recent addition to New Zealand's supernatural landscape, only arriving in any numbers after World War II, presumably finding their way here with returning veterans. The relatively small, close-knit communities here make it difficult for them to function with impunity, however, and the greater supernatural awareness of the morals here makes for a difficult unlife for any who are tempted to stick it out. As a result, they stick to the larger urban areas and keep their numbers low.

No **werewolves** — nor even any wolves — live in New Zealand. The Uratha consider the island off-limits, at least in part due to the Maelstrom. Those who try to cross over into the island report feeling their spirit selves torn to pieces, a bit at a time, accompanied by a feeling of sure doom should they actually set foot on the shore.

Mages are also affected by the Maelstrom, though to a lesser degree. Thrysus magi in particular seem to react strongly to the spiritual landscape of New Zealand, either losing themselves in the spiritual typhoon or becoming unable to touch their Spirit Arcana during their stay in New Zealand. There are rumors that there was a Thyrsus gathering in place when the Maelstrom began, but thus far, there has been no confirmation of that assertion.

The healthiest communities of supernatural creatures in the country belong to the **changelings**, who are surprisingly numerous for such a small population. New Zealand changelings often report only serving short durations in Arcadia and escaping with relative ease, though their stays are still as transformative as anywhere else. Whether their perspectives of time duration are off or whether the hedge around New Zealand forms only a weak barrier, no one can really say. Courts here form around landscapes (mountain, meadow, beach, sea) rather than seasons.

Prometheans probably have the most in common with the sin-eaters, although their numbers are few. Many ride the rails to keep ahead of their wastelands, while a few avoid humanity altogether and head for barren mountaintops and caves.

There is little presence of the **Arisen** hereabouts, though occasionally some of their artifacts make their way to New Zealand's shores through chance. Thus far, however, no Arisen has chosen to stay on the island.

Beasts are one of the most plentiful of all supernatural creatures in New Zealand, with a surprising number appearing among the Maori tribes. In a perhaps related matter, there is very little God-Machine presence; Infrastructure seems held at bay, again likely by the Maelstrom. Demons would therefore seem to consider New Zealand an ideal home, but any efforts to build a hell hereabouts to date have ended quickly and messily.

Hunters in New Zealand are very skilled and keep in contact with their Aussie counterparts, though not without some mild animosity between the two cultures. New Zealand hunters are likely to incorporate Maori tribal hunting ethos into their methods; a haka said by an anointed Hunter group is certainly a fearsome sight.

migration of Maori to urban centers, as well as the heritage and traditions that were left behind. Strong portrayals by Temuera Morrison and Rena Owen make this a true gut-punch of a movie.

The Piano. This haunting drama set on the West Coast of New Zealand a hundred years prior to our era gives plenty of fodder for ghosts and highlights the often messy and brutal history that *God's Own Country* paints a picture of dark prosperity over.

The Frighteners. Although this film isn't set in New Zealand of 1954, it nevertheless was filmed entirely in New Zealand (Wellington, to be precise) and includes so many Easter Eggs among the dark humor and slapstick that it's definitely a must-see for **Geist: The Sin-Eaters** fans of any era.

The Scarecrow (AKA *Klynham Summer*). 1982 film adaptation of the book, very hard to find. Notable for starring John Carradine, and for moving the time period up 20 years to the 1950s, which is spot-on for *God's Own Country*.

Whale Rider. Again, set many years after the time period of *God's Own Country*, but notable for its portrayal of life in a predominantly Maori coastal community and the trouble that a *tohunga* (played by Rawiri Paratene) has in passing his knowledge along to the next generation. Also, great scene depicting the use of a *taiaha*!



Hans turned away from the window and put on his greatcoat. The snow and darkness would increase his chances of success.

The snow crunched under his boots in rhythm with his breathing. Soon he was only a few blocks away from Checkpoint Charlie. One of his colleagues exchanged information with the West at that checkpoint, but Hans hadn't heard from her in weeks. Perhaps she had merely gone to ground.

Hans wouldn't cross at Checkpoint Charlie, though. Too much traffic. Too many soldiers. Too much risk of being seen. False identities he had, but not the luxury of multiple passports.

A figure emerged from the snow, and only Hans' self-control kept him from leaping in surprise.

"Sir, your papers?" the figure asked.

"Good evening, comrade," Hans said, withdrawing his identification from his left pocket and holding it out. His other hand remained firmly planted in the pocket. "Urgent house call."

The figure stepped into the pool of light from the streetlamp above. He was a young man dressed in the uniform of the Volkspolizei the regular police.The VoPo gave the papers a preemptory glance and returned them to Hans. He smiled. "Seems to be in good order, doctor."

Hans murmured a response and continued walking, fighting down the urge to look over his shoulder.

Hans entered an apartment building and ascended the stairs. The third apartment on the second floor was unlocked and empty. Hans went to the window. The nearer barbed wire fence stood directly underneath. He leapt from the window to the ground below. He picked himself up from the snow and watched the sweeping beams of the searchlights for a few minutes. Once he was satisfied he had identified the pattern, Hans ran through the snow toward the Wall on the far side.

Ten meters. Hans slipped off his greatcoat as he ran. The black curls of the barbed wire fence looked like the shadows of thorny bushes in wintertime. The searchlight would return all too soon. He threw the coat over the fence and clambered over. The tower guard spotted him just as he reached the top. A siren blared, but Hans was already on the other side. He collapsed into a heap behind a black sedan, panting from the exertion. The guards could no longer reach him.

"Herr Blutig, I presume," said a voice from inside the vehicle. The window rolled down to reveal a young man in a broad-brimmed hat. "Can I offer you a cigarette?"

Hans stood up. That was one of the signs. "I don't smoke, but let me buy you a drink."

The man shook his head in response to the countersign. "And I'm afraid I don't drink. Shall we go for a ride?"

Hans didn't answer, but he slipped into the car's passenger seat.

"What news brings you to West Berlin, Herr Blutig? Paranoids seldom risk the death strip so openly."

"According to my colleague in Moscow, a representative from an American corporation recently met privately with First Secretary Khrushchev. No one knows what they discussed, but the company's name is Black Sun Cosmocartography."

"I'm missing something, I think."

"Are you so new to the business?" Hans asked. He didn't wait for a reply. "Black Sun is also a contractor that works with NASA. When Kennedy announced on TV earlier this year that the United States would soon place a man on the moon, a Black Sun representative was standing behind him."

"What is on the moon that is so valuable to them?"

"I don't know.We need to bring this to the rest of the Agency," Hans said as the key turned in the lock and the man in the hat pushed the door of the apartment open. A small, electrically lit Christmas tree provided the only illumination in the darkened living room.

"It will wait until morning."

Hans entered, shaking his head. "I must speak to them tonight. We may have been followed."

The door slammed behind them, and Hans whirled. He found himself looking down the barrel of Agent's pistol. Its silencer gleamed red and green in the glow of the Christmas lights.

"I'm afraid I can't let you return to East Germany, Herr Blutig." He almost looked apologetic. "You know far too much to be allowed to fall into the hands of the Enemy's operatives."

Hans opened his mouth to respond a fraction of a second before the bullet passed through his skull.



Into the Cold

"A wall is a hell of a lot better than a war."

– John F. Kennedy upon hearing about the construction of the Berlin Wall

The Cold War remains possibly the most terrifying period in human history – certainly the first to pose an existential danger not just to one nation but to the entire world. That threat of nuclear Armageddon hung over the world like the sword of Damocles, coloring the politics, society, and art of the period. Citizens of nations directly involved knew their deaths could come at any time in a flash of light and heat. Those on the edges sat helpless, horribly aware that the fallout and nuclear winter would give them a slow, wasting death – and there was nothing they could do about it. Duck and cover drills and fallout shelters were worthless. They might help you survive the initial blast or even the next few months, but no backyard bunker's supply would last forever. Eventually the food would run out, and all you had accomplished was to delay the inevitable.

The Cold War's intensity waxed and waned erratically from the Battle of Berlin in 1945 to the fall of the USSR in 1991. At times, the threat of global thermonuclear war shrank to little more than a stone in the shoe – a possibility of death not much more likely than any other freak accident. Other times, it swelled up until it seemed World War III could start at any moment, and the people on the ground could practically hear the air raid sirens. The year 1961 saw a marked rise in tensions, and Berlin lay at the center of the elaborate game of chess in which the Soviet Union and the United States were engaged.

It is now December 1961. Berlin has weathered the Crisis of 1961 without anyone declaring war, but now West Berlin – an island of capitalist West Germany in the sea of communist East Germany – is surrounded by a barbed wire fence and guarded by soldiers with orders to gun down anyone who attempts to flee to West Berlin. The Berlin Wall represents a tiny compromise between the world powers, a moment when John F. Kennedy blinked and chose not to press the issue for fear that it would trigger catastrophe. As with so many of the maneuvers of the Cold War, both sides used semantics to define the meaning of the Wall. In the West they called it the Wall of Shame, claiming it was an admission by the USSR that Communism had failed so badly in East Germany that it had to build a wall to keep its citizens from fleeing to the West. Their counterparts in the East described it as the Anti-Fascist Protection Rampart, implying that neighboring West Germany had not yet been fully de-Nazified.

The Unchained have as much at stake in the Cold War as anyone. What's more, their abilities are particularly well-suited to the espionage and acts of sabotage the times call for. Many have become involved in the conflict between East and West – either to bring an end to the stalemate by ensuring the victory of one or the other, or to ensure that neither side gains the upper hand. Others eschew human politics as much as they dare, certain that the God-Machine's angels, cultists, and projects present the real danger. Either way, even the most temporal outcast must still contend with servants of the God-Machine, and those who focus their attention on supernatural Berlin may still fall under the scrutiny of human authorities who see enemy operatives everywhere.

Theme: Walls

The construction of the Berlin Wall did nothing to improve the Soviet Union's military standing in the world, nor did it entirely stop refugees from escaping into capitalist Western Europe. West Berlin is an *important* city, but it isn't the *only* city. Rather, the Wall is a symbol of the Iron Curtain that separates the capitalist West from the communist East. It represents everything that stands between opposing sides and keeps them from exchanging ideas, building relationships, or resolving their differences peacefully.

The Wall is not the only barrier with which the Unchained in 1961 Berlin must contend. The paranoia of world governments and the heightened interest of the God-Machine in the area have only exacerbated the outcasts' natural distrust of anyone connected to their creator — including other demons. The Agendas are often at odds with each other, and even Agendas face significant internal splits as the physical and political divide between East and West prevents them from easily cooperating. Under the watchful eyes all around them, outcasts must be more careful to separate the lives of their Covers from their secret lives as demons. Even those who go deep undercover in human society and refuse to surface cannot completely shake the sense that they are still shut out, for there is no higher wall than the one a demon surrounds herself with. Her emotions, loyalties, and knowledge of the God-Machine's secrets are just more refugees fleeing into the light — but she may choose which to let escape and which to gun down, until her conscience runs red with the blood.

Mood: Cold

After the seemingly unquenchable inferno of World War II, anything that followed would have seemed cold by comparison, but the Cold War that has settled into the bones of the world has gone beyond any winter of human history. Every day seems colder, as though the fire of all human sympathy has been extinguished, leaving the world to die a slow heat death as entropy saps away whatever warmth still remains. Cold spreads throughout Berlin. The cold of the city in winter. The cold of the war. The cold of the face of the policeman as he watches a refugee shot down on the other side of the Wall.

For the Unchained, this chill sinks its claws deep, penetrating the thin coats of paint they have put on their stolen lives. It is the coldness of the spy who looks upon injustice and does nothing because stopping it would break her cover. It is the coldness between demons who know they cannot fully trust each other because anyone — even another outcast — could be a servant of the enemy, be it a mechanical being or a human institution. It is the cold precision of the God-Machine's gears as they grind on, seemingly heedless of the damage its machinations have already caused and unconcerned with the potential catastrophes they may yet trigger. It is cold out here for the Unchained, and it is getting colder with every passing day.

What Has Come Before

The oldest demons in Berlin remember the industrial revolution. They remember the arms race with England that led into the Great War. They remember seeing death and horror inflicted with a cold, mechanical precision that was all too new to those unfamiliar with the God-Machine. They saw the rise of the Nazi state, an institution built on the newest technology, on the most modern ways of doing things. They saw humanity become like the Machine, and the madness that resulted. Even those who Fell only recently are intimately familiar with many of these horrors because they played some role in bringing them about.

The Unchained of Berlin mostly agree that World War II began in response to a message from the God-Machine to a small occult group in Germany called the Thule Society. This is not to say that an all-consuming conflict with a catastrophic death toll and crimes against humanity far beyond the imaginations of any previous generation was necessarily its intention. What a demon believes about the God-Machine's involvement in the events of the 1940s usually plays a key role in her choice of Agenda (see p. 543). Demons outside of Berlin float other theories, of course. Some foreign outcasts claim other Trumpets delivered messages to Russia, Japan, Great Britain, and even the United States, but only in Berlin do they know the Messenger's name — Herr Arger, usually rendered as Mr. Strife in English. What became of Herr Arger after the war is a matter of some debate (see p. 559).

In addition to the mortal death toll and the massive waste of mundane resources, more angels Fell in response to World War II than to any other event in human history. The reason for this isn't clear. Perhaps the random destruction wrought by bombs damaged Infrastructure that helped prevent angels from gaining enough self-awareness to question their orders. Maybe even the creations of Heaven grew sick at heart after witnessing the horrors of this chaotic time, when human sympathy gave way to brutal, technologically leveraged force. Whatever the cause, hundreds, if not thousands, of the God-Machine's angels Fell during or immediately after the war, and those stationed in Germany had the highest defection rate.

Although they were incapable of questioning, much less disobeying, their orders, many demons now regret the instructions they carried out, and came to Berlin to make new lives among the ruins. Some seek redemption — to rebuild what their hands helped destroy. Others thirst for power among the tremendous opportunities presented by this new era. Many simply wish to be left alone. The God-Machine feels the loss of its servants, however, and it seems intent upon getting them back. Hunter angels stalk the streets of Berlin, rounding up outcasts for recasting in the forges of the God-Machine. Human agents and informants lurk around every corner, watching for signs of defectors. Even some among

the Unchained have been compromised and infiltrate rings and Agencies, waiting for just the right moment to spring the trap so it catches as many demons as possible.

The Fateful Message

In 1933 the God-Machine dispatched a Trumpet to Berlin — the angel who in later years would Fall and take the name Herr Arger. Its message was meant to create a cult that would serve one of the God-Machine's projects by constructing and defending a large, twisted windmill whose blade turned counterclockwise. As was within the parameters of its instructions, the angel determined that subverting an existing cult would be more efficient than founding a new one.

It singled out the Thule Society — a group of German occultists with no direct connection to any other supernatural power. As it had done on previous missions, the Messenger angel fabricated a translation of the *Oera Linda Book*, which claims to be a secret history of Europe, and arranged for it to fall into the hands of the Society with its message retooled to speak to them. The angel's translation of the *Oera Linda Book* claimed to tell the secret history of the Thule Society's origins — how its members were the descendants of an ancient line of wise and benevolent rulers who had left their shining city in Thule millennia ago to bring illumination to the benighted lands of Europe. It included blueprints for a device that would allow the occultists to communicate with their counterparts in the shining city — the technology of which greatly surpassed those of any modern nation.

It was bait, a way of manipulating the Thule Society into building the large and important piece of Infrastructure the Widdershins Windmill represented. When the Infrastructure was complete, the Trumpet put on a brief show for the cult it had duped. It appeared to them as a ghostly figure that matched their expectations of how an elder of the shining city would look. As the Gears and the impossibly huge millstone turned above it, showering the floor of the mill with flakes of gold, the angel revealed that the people of the shining city feared the Society had allowed themselves to be sullied by their contact with those not of the pure blood. It gravely announced that the Society would receive no further communication from the shining city until they had proven themselves worthy heirs of its secrets. The door to the Widdershins Windmill slammed shut, and the Trumpet departed quietly, content that it had left the Thule Society fanatically devoted to preserving the piece of Infrastructure without any significant expectation of a future message.

The Society, however, interpreted this final message as a call to action. Living as they were in the ruins of the Great War and in the economic hardship of its aftermath, they hoped to return to the land of their ancestors and dwell in the shining city. They didn't know how to reach their destination, so their only hope was to prove their worthiness. Ultimately, the leadership of the Thule Society concluded that the best way to prove they were not sullied by their contact with those who were less pure was to cut off all contact with those of lesser blood. They could not drive all those not of their race out of Germany alone, but their doctrine was a flame to the shattered nation's powder keg, and the Nazi Party quickly rose to power.

During the war that followed, the God-Machine dispatched the same Trumpet to Germany on an unrelated mission. The angel witnessed firsthand the atrocities its message had unwittingly inspired and Fell. In an effort to undo the damage, the demon returned to the Widdershins Windmill and spoke through it. He excoriated the Society for misinterpreting his previous message as a call for genocide and condemned their actions as proof of how far they had fallen from the grace their ancestors had possessed in the shining city.

Members of the Thule Society heeded Herr Arger's message and immediately attempted to convince Germany's leaders to stop the war, but by then matters had gone too far. The occultists' influence had greatly diminished over the course of the last decade, and the S.S. viewed their calls for peace as proof of treason, which it linked to the mysterious Widdershins Windmill. When the demolition order arrived, the Thule Society attempted to defend their precious artifact. The resulting battle was short and ended with German tanks razing the Infrastructure.

After the war ended, most of the surviving members of the Thule Society left the occult entirely or joined smaller, less influential, and — most importantly — less radical orders. Some few, however, vowed to rebuild the demolished Widdershins Windmill from the original blueprints, if they could be found. The pages on which they appeared have been missing since the battle for the Windmill. Others took their failure as a sign that they deserve their exile from the shining city; they are still loyal to Thule, but they are not worthy of it.

One splinter of the Thule Society suspected the truth as none of their brethren did. They called themselves the Bändiger (short for "Teufelsbändiger," making them the "devil-tamers"), and soon won the respect of West Germany's Chancellor Konrad Adenauer by playing to his Catholic faith and fears that Satan was the driving force behind the Soviet Union. They still believed the first messages from Thule were genuine, but they became convinced that Herr Arger's message came from another being masquerading as one of the messengers of Thule's shining city. They have spent the last 15 years tracking down the demon.

The Wall

From the end of the war to 1961, 3.5 million East Germans had fled into West Germany — approximately 20% of the population of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Many of those fleeing the East were young, educated professionals and those with highly specialized skills, and the brain drain had a substantial economic impact on the nation they left behind. The Soviet Union took pains to control the border between the two Germanys, but West Berlin remained

a gateway to West Germany at the heart of the Communist East. The Berlin Wall was intended as a solution to that problem — a way of closing this pesky loophole.

It began as a more or less simple fence built just within the boundaries of East Germany to prevent refugees from escaping. In the first days after the GDR erected the Wall, demons with the ability to pass into other worlds found it laughably easy to circumvent. Those outcasts and stigmatics with abilities that allowed them to communicate with ghosts or spirits could use these incorporeal beings to deliver messages to the Unchained on the other side. Embeds like Across a Crowded Room, Special Message, and Animal Messenger allow crude but subtle communication, as well. Some among the Unchained have noticed a second barrier that follows the path of the Wall. It is an invisible, arcane barrier that blunts the force of supernatural abilities that might otherwise damage or penetrate the fence — one whose power grows stronger by the day (see p. 561).

Hearts and Minds

Both sides regularly characterize the Cold War not as a conflict between nations or coalitions but as nothing less than a battle between ideologies — communism and capitalism — each of which has strengths and failings. Both have adopted strategies that involve interfering with the affairs of unaligned countries. Both engage in complex games of espionage aimed at gaining some small advantage over the other, games that often end in the injury or death of innocent bystanders. Most tellingly, however, both claim to have the citizens' best interests at heart — the same tactic the God-Machine's angels use to ensure the loyalty of its cultists. This detail is not lost on the Unchained.

The confounding part of this is that except for slight variations both sides use the same tactics but appear bent on achieving mutually exclusive strategic results — the worldwide dominance of either capitalism or Communism. Some demons maintain rather zealously that the God-Machine is on one side of the conflict, and only the other side stands in its way — although whether or not this is a good thing or even a war those fighting for humanity's freedom from the Machine have any hope of winning is open to question. Most outcasts maintain that their creator is behind none of it. They believe the tactics adopted by NATO and Warsaw Pact operatives resemble the God-Machine's projects only because they are demonstrably effective methods of controlling any large group of humans, and it was only a matter of time before mortal governments learned how to manipulate the psychological vulnerabilities the God-Machine has been exploiting for years.

A handful of Unchained speculate that the God-Machine is backing *both* sides, and this conjures many worrying questions. Is it deliberately maintaining the Cold War as a kind of massive work of Concealment Infrastructure that allows it to move operatives and materials anywhere in the world without arousing human suspicions? Is it uncertain whether Communism or capitalism will better serve its goals, and so has created an experiment with Berlin at the center in order to test the individual merits of each one? Or is its seeming crisis of identity the result of broken connections between the God-Machine's Command and Control Infrastructure so severe that it is now effectively *two* God-Machines, each vying to assimilate or destroy the other?

Eyes Everywhere

1961 finds Berlin in a state of high alert. The GDR refuses to let any of its citizens travel to West Berlin. The guards who monitor the death strip have orders to shoot refugees on sight. Visitors from the other side of the Iron Curtain face constant and pervasive surveillance for the duration of their visits in East Berlin, with even children recruited as spies. Those suspected of disloyalty to the GDR face arrest, interrogation, torture, and execution. Although West Berlin is less overtly repressive, they work tirelessly to identify and root out Soviet saboteurs and other agents in the city, and with good reason. The KGB has proven that they have access to intelligence only available to those high in the command structure of either the British Secret Intelligence Service or the American CIA. Of more immediate concern are the many acts of industrial espionage and sabotage committed within the city by agents of East Germany. The Allies are desperate to identify these enemies within West Berlin, and sometimes they resort to measures the citizens of their home countries might consider abhorrent.

Demons in Cold War Berlin must take extra care to maintain their Covers in this divided city where everyone is watching for signs of enemy sympathy. Anyone with contraband could be in the pay of the enemy. Anyone who betrays less than a fanatical devotion to the ideals of secular socialism or religious capitalism might become an agent for the other side — if she isn't one already. Anyone who is too interested in events on the other side of the Wall or who is caught in a restricted area without authorization or who commits acts of sabotage in the city is immediately suspect and faces interrogation or worse. Because outcasts often exhibit any number of these suspicious behaviors, they must be as careful to avoid attracting the attention of human organizations as they are of evading angelic scrutiny.

Living the Post-War Dream

Demons in both Berlins enjoy the anonymity of living in a city of more than a million inhabitants. Both sides of the city have a substantial number of industrial plants and factories. Because both NATO and the Warsaw Pact nations regard Berlin as an important front in the Cold War, the cities are the focus of intense external scrutiny and investment. Both cities offer demons plenty of opportunities settle into their Covers.



West Berlin

West Berlin has flourished since the end of World War II. It has a booming commercial sector and caters to a large foreign military population. Due to some legal technicalities, its citizens are exempt from conscription into West Germany's armed services, and so it is a magnet for young people and has gained a well-deserved reputation as center for the arts and counterculture. West Berliners enjoy live theater and film. Although many West Germans are Catholic or Protestant Christians, a secular streak is rising among the new generation of West Berliners. Church attendance hasn't yet begun to wane, in part because practicing a faith is often seen as a way of distinguishing the free world from the godless communism practiced in the Soviet Union.

As an urban island surrounded by hostile territory, West Berlin is heavily reliant on shipments of food and other goods via the rail lines to West Germany. This serves as an often rankling reminder of the city's dependence on the foreign forces stationed there, since West Berlin could not prevent East Germany from cutting off this critical artery if not for the Americans, French, and British. For most West Berliners, the willingness of the Allies to take extraordinary measures to ensure the city remains free and well-supplied — so clearly proven during the Berlin Airlift of 1949 — makes them favorably disposed toward these friendly forces. Some resent having their home city being waved like a flag of victory by the United States, however.

Although the occupation forces have rebuilt most of the infrastructure that was destroyed during the war, the division of the city has complicated matters for its inhabitants. Several subway routes that once allowed travel between the two halves of the city have been closed off to prevent East Germans from escaping into West Berlin. Others remain open but pass through ghost stations beneath East Berlin without stopping. In one case, the subway stops at the ghost station but only so passengers can access another subway line. East German police guard the subway station entrance to prevent anyone from entering or leaving East Berlin by that route.

Telephone communications were all but destroyed in the aftermath of the war, and reestablishing them has run into obstacles. Telephone coverage is significantly lower in West Berlin than in most European cities of comparable size, and many switchboards are still manual, requiring a live operator connect callers. In addition, any telephone communication between West Berlin and the rest of West Germany must pass through East Germany, which could tap or disrupt the conversation at any time. Plans are in the works to build a radio transmitter to communicate securely with West Germany, but it could be decades before that sees fruition.

Demons of West Berlin

Although outcasts can integrate themselves into any niche in the city — from factory workers and soldiers to rich industrialists and high-level local government officials — many of the Unchained often favor Covers that either grant them access to classified information or give them contact with a variety of people in their day-to-day lives. The former must take great care to avoid human suspicion as they examine the eddies and currents of bureaucracy and espionage for signs of God-Machine projects. The latter allows them to achieve the same results by taking the role of the waitress, the guard, or some other near-invisible, but it often takes much longer to access actionable intelligence by such indirect means.

East Berlin

East Berlin is the capital of the GDR, which means it has a large number of government offices and bureaus, although Party members are given preference when filling vacancies. The city is economically depressed, which is partially to blame for the flight of its residents to West Berlin. The majority of the revenue generated by the city's manufacturing boom goes toward paying the substantial war reparations East Germany still owes to the Soviet Union, which means that workers receive paltry wages that do little more than cover their basic living expenses.

The Soviet Union has devoted considerable resources to establishing infrastructure within East Berlin, but most of the residents do not benefit from it because the majority of these projects are focused on ensuring the smooth operation of government and securing the border between West Berlin and the GDR. Many East Berliners live in small tenement apartments fitted with holes in the walls through which the Stasi can monitor their behavior. When they aren't at work at factory and service jobs, they attend politically sanctioned performances or sanitized versions of entertainments from before the war. Public libraries have many empty shelves where potentially subversive books have been removed by the Soviets or stolen by those who wish to protect or resell them on the black market. The East German Lutheran Church is tolerated by the Party, but its members are watched and those who show signs of disloyalty are often arrested.

Members of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany must maintain strict political orthodoxy, but they are also reasonably assured of receiving better positions, which allow them to enjoy a less austere lifestyle. Even low-ranking soldiers and police receive some of these benefits, but those in key government roles can live quite lavishly so long as they don't make a spectacle of doing so. People with highly specialized skills or knowledge acquired before the end of the war can sometimes maintain a high standard of living without being vocal proponents of the Party. Doctors and scientists must still steer clear of open sedition, but minor indiscretions might be overlooked to some degree.

Demons of East Berlin

Demons find it reasonably easy to establish Covers within East Berlin. The GDR's emphasis on loyalty to the Party means not everyone who receives prestigious government jobs is competent to perform them, and this can sometimes work

Covers and Covers

As steeped as they already are in living double lives, no few demons end up serving as spies or agents for one side or another in the Cold War. In some cases, they may even have one Cover working for the West and another for the East — each of which is hidden behind another cover (note the small c). For example, a demon cashes in a soul pact from an agent of the KGB whose cover was as a minor bureaucrat in East Germany. What constitutes a compromise for the demon?

In general, the Storyteller should call for a Cover check whenever a demon does something radically out of character for either the Cover or its cover. The reasoning behind this is simple: It is out of character for an undercover agent to act in a way that would compromise her cover, so if the demon's behavior is radically different from that of her Cover's cover, it is a compromise for the Cover, as well. The exception to this is if the Cover is not currently at risk of compromising her cover — such as when reporting back to headquarters as an agent. Furthermore, the demon can only use Legend to access Skills and Merits that her Cover would have, not that Cover's cover.

Note that it is exceptionally difficult to step into the role of someone who is already living this sort of double life. Remember that a soul pact imparts no knowledge about the person whose identity the demon is taking. The demon won't know the drop points, passphrases, or codes the agent uses to communicate with his superiors, much less the ins and outs of the job the Cover's alias is ostensibly paid to do. Moreover, the KGB agent almost certainly has friends and relatives back home who would notice if he was behaving strangely.

A demon who dares attempt to become a double-agent under the same Cover increases her risks exponentially. Spies who defect come under tremendous scrutiny, and these sorts of background checks are poison to a demon's Cover. If a demon really insists on playing for both sides for whatever reason, it is safer by far to employ two different Covers with separate aliases. Even then, it is rarely a good idea for those two covers to intersect in any way. Several years ago, one of the Unchained received orders to kill an enemy agent working in the same building — an enemy agent who turned out to be the alias of his other Cover. That forced the demon to choose between Covers knowing that whichever he chose, it would no longer be as valuable to him as it once had been — an agent likely to be targeted again or an agent who could not prove he had successfully carried out his orders.

in a demon's favor. The increased scrutiny such bureaucrats often endure from the Stasi can make maintaining one's Cover more challenging, however. Those outcasts who steer clear of positions within the Party often favor intellectuals, both for their access to useful skills via Legend and their increased mobility compared to rank-and-file East Germans. Factory workers and other such proletariats make good burn Covers, but few demons use them as a primary Cover unless they have no other choice.

Human Operatives

Although some stigmatics and supernatural beings infiltrate mundane agencies for their own reasons, most have to hide their presences and abilities just as much as the Unchained do. Ordinary agencies usually identify outcasts by purest luck, unless a demon is careless. What they lack in unnatural capabilities, however, these institutions make up in sheer numbers — both the number of organizations that operate in the two cities and the number of agents each of these groups has in the field. If they run into something they can't even explain much less capture, these operatives are likely to call for help from agencies with more exotic resources — or have that help thrust upon them when their reports start showing certain irregularities the more extraordinary organizations are trained to spot.

Volkspolizei

The Volkspolizei, or VoPo, are responsible for law enforcement in East Germany. Despite this role, they receive training and some equipment (armored personnel carriers, artillery weapons, etc.) more commonly associated with a military organization. Moreover, their officers must be members of the GDR's ruling Socialist Unity Party. Like police virtually everywhere, the VoPo issue citations for minor offenses, investigate crimes, make arrests, respond to disturbances, and generally act as the arm of the law within East Berlin. Most are professional, politically orthodox (at least outwardly), and genuinely interested in the well-being of the people and precincts they protect.

The VoPo are not intelligence operatives, although they will not hesitate to report any suspicious characters or behavior they notice on their beats to the appropriate authorities. A demon most often runs afoul of the VoPo when he commits some crime and does not adequately cover his trail afterward. Although forensic science is still fairly primitive in 1961, traces from fingerprints and footprints to

ballistic signatures and autopsies can still help the police catch a perpetrator who doesn't take sufficient countermeasures.

Grepos

The Grenzpolizei (frequently shortened to Grepo) are the East German border police responsible for guarding both the Berlin Wall and the inner German border (the longer, similarly fortified boundary between East and West Germany). When a refugee is gunned down while fleeing East Berlin, it is almost always a Grepo who fires the fatal bullet. They have orders to shoot to kill directly from the highest authorities in the GDR, and those police killed or wounded in the line of duty receive lavish praise and awards from East Germany's government.

For demons who must travel between the Berlins, the Grepos are a largely stationary obstacle. These police patrol the border or monitor the Wall from one of the city's many guard towers. If they spot a refugee or other suspicious person, they sound an alarm, illuminate the target with spotlights, and do not hesitate to use lethal force to bring him down. Although Grepos don't receive extraordinary equipment or training, the death strip near the Wall has been designed specifically to stack the deck against refugees:

There is no cover to be had on the ground, while Grepos in watchtowers or bunkers enjoy defensive fortifications (Durability 2; Size 10). A spotlight in the eyes at night might impose the Blinded Tilt (which can be resolved by turning away from the light). Climbing the Berlin Wall is an extended Strength + Athletics + Equipment roll at a –2 penalty due to the difficulty of climbing a barbed wire fence, with each roll requiring 10 seconds (3 combat turns). Reaching the top of the wall requires 5 successes. Failed rolls impose Conditions normally and also cause one point of lethal damage to the climber.

Stasi

The Ministry for State Security (Stasi for short) is the German Democratic Republic's secret police, which maintains an impressively effective and repressive intelligence agency. It has its headquarters in East Berlin, with several other offices in other parts of East Germany. Through its various branches and services the Stasi monitors every possible channel through which subversive thought can flow — from obvious targets like visiting foreigners and communications (mail and phone) to citizens' garbage (lest it contain suspicious Western foods or materials). It spies on the population mainly through a vast network of citizens turned informants, and fights any opposition by overt and covert measures including arrest, torture, and execution. It is currently honing alternate methods of crushing dissidents using blackmail, defamation, and relentless acts of psychological warfare.

The Stasi works closely with the KGB, and they have a reputation among the citizens of East Berlin that is as fearsome as their Soviet peers. Its agents are fiercely loyal to the Socialist Unity Party of Germany. Some among the VoPo might pay lip service to the Party's ideals to avoid rocking the boat and capsizing their careers, but members of the Stasi are true believers in the communist ideals of the GDR. Every major industrial plant has an undercover Stasi officer monitoring its workers for signs of disloyalty or sabotage. Every apartment building has at least one Stasi spy reporting who visits whom. Their agents also operate in every hospital, school, and university to ensure the intellectual elite do not deviate from political orthodoxy when interacting with patients and students. They frequently infiltrate religious and artistic organizations that often nurture dissidents, using the intelligence they gather to identify ring leaders and spread discord among the groups.

Suspicious both by nature and profession, Stasi officers investigate anyone they suspect of subversive intentions or enemy connections. They break into homes without warning to search for contraband, check public records to root out those using false identities, and carefully monitor the activities of those suspected of sedition. While the Stasi can have a hair trigger when dealing with innocent East Germans, officers don't waste their time pursuing a target who is clearly not involved in anything problematic. Once their initial surveillance comes back negative, they will likely pull out and turn their attention to other suspects.

A demon who falls under the suspicion of the Stasi has a real problem on her hands, however. The preliminary investigation, in addition to potentially catching her acting out of character for her Cover, can quickly wear away the thin guise of mortality that she relies upon to keep herself hidden from the God-Machine's agents. The more the secret police dig into her history and lifestyle, the more flaws they find in it, prompting them to investigate further, which erodes the outcast's Cover all the more.

KGB

This Soviet security agency has operations throughout the world. While their networks of spies allow them to collect intelligence on the enemy, the KGB's most powerful espionage weapons are its counterintelligence operatives. They have infiltrated key agencies of the governments of many Allied nations and use their positions to feed misinformation to the enemy in order to sow discord internally and bring more Soviet operatives into these organizations. In East Berlin, the KGB oversees the operations of the Stasi and ensures the GDR's government's continued cooperation with the Soviet Union.

Many among the Unchained suspect the KGB's effectiveness at home and abroad, and its seeming prescience regarding enemy actions, are not entirely the work of mundane operatives. They see the panoptic awareness and calculating intelligence of the God-Machine in the agency's methods of operation. Inquisitors are aware of at least one hunter angel among the KGB officers in East Berlin. How many more remain hidden from them? Some outcasts believe the God-Machine is the motive force driving the whole Soviet



Union, building up Infrastructure at key points throughout the world under the guise of merely collecting information and spreading disinformation. Whatever the truth, the KGB seems particularly interested in both sides of Berlin.

Bundesgrenzschutz

The Bundesgrenzshutz, or BGS, began as a West German border control force responsible for monitoring and controlling the traffic between East and West Germany. Over the last decade they have evolved into a more generalized police force and have a considerable presence in West Berlin in both of these capacities. The BGS performs many of the same duties as police in other cities, but they are also responsible for detaining those attempting to smuggle illicit goods, spy gear, or Soviet agents into West Berlin. This makes them suspicious of outsiders, especially those from Communist Bloc nations. They are also likely to take an interest in possible espionage-related activity to a much greater degree than do East Berlin's VoPo officers. Their city is surrounded by an enemy that seeks to infiltrate, undermine, and overwhelm it, and the BGS knows it all too well. The Berlin Wall may have lessened the likelihood that matters will again escalate to tanks rolling down the city streets, but a siege is still a siege.

The Berlin Brigade

At the end of World War II, West Berlin was divided into three sectors, each controlled by one of the Allied nations. France administers the northern sector, the United Kingdom the central sector, and the United States the southern sector. While the day-to-day civil authority rests with Berlin's citizens, the three nations maintain military garrisons and intelligence operations in West Berlin. They nominally cooperate with each other, but conflicts occasionally arise over jurisdiction, and spying on one another isn't unknown.

The Berlin Brigade refers to the three foreign military forces operating within West Berlin — the American Berlin Brigade, the British Berlin Brigade, and the French Forces in Berlin. From the perspective of the Unchained, these occupying armies represent an unknown quantity. Foreign soldiers and agents enter and leave West Berlin on regular rotations, and while most are mere humans, angels, other demons, and stranger creatures often use these changes of the guard to slip into and out of the city. Each fresh group of soldiers sets off a flurry of activity as the outcasts scramble to identify which new arrivals are enemies, which are potential allies, and which are third parties best left to their own devices.

Psychic Operatives

Although few humans manifest psychic abilities, those who do are often targets of recruitment campaigns by intelligence agencies and secret police on both sides of the Iron Curtain. No small number of psychic operatives find themselves stationed in Berlin, where their talents can be of especial use in the intrigues of East versus West. Although

most aren't directly aimed at demons, Unchained who exhibit suspicious behavior run afoul of them with irritating frequency.

Gespenster

The Stasi actively recruits psychics into the Ministerium für Staatssicherheit – Medienkorps, more often called Gespenster when it finds its way into rumor. Although many join only unwillingly, by the time the senior leadership of Gespenster has completed a conscript's training and psychic conditioning the new agent is utterly devoted to the Communist ideals of the German Democratic Republic. Although a handful of Gespenster agents possess kinetic powers — such as Biokinesis, Psychokinesis, or Telekinesis (see **Demon: The Descent** p. 299, 300, and 301) — its most terrifying operatives possess abilities that allow them to spy on people in new ways, such as Aura Reading, Clairvoyance, and Telepathy (see **Demon: The Descent** p. 298, 299, and 301).

Telepathy is particularly common in East Berlin's Gespenster because it is such a potent method of interrogation. When the Stasi captures an enemy agent who cannot be forced to betray his secrets by conventional means, officers often bring a Gespenster telepath into the investigation. Gespenster's involvement doesn't usually lead to a dramatic confession, but a telepath can pluck a piece of sensitive information from the victim's mind in a fraction of the time required for a traditional interrogation. Over the course of a few days, a small team of telepaths could squeeze out every drop of actionable intelligence from the target of their interrogation. This is especially valuable if harming the target might have adverse political consequences, as this process of ripping away every state secret a diplomat possesses does not leave so much as a bruise.

If falling under the scrutiny of the Stasi means trouble for a demon, attracting the attention of Gespenster is even worse. They have files on practically everyone in East Berlin, which they routinely cross-reference with the information their telepaths collect during interrogations. Contradictions invite additional scrutiny. Gespenster knows supernatural creatures exist and makes an effort to identify and track them. This is a particularly serious problem for demons, whose Covers weaken if subjected to close examination.

KGB Iron Comrades

The Iron Comrade Initiative was conceived as a means of creating elite soldiers for the USSR. By injecting subjects with powerful drugs or exposing them to radiation, the Initiative hoped to discover a reliable means of causing soldiers to manifest supernatural abilities. Most of these experiments proved fruitless, usually succeeding only in causing fatal cancers or radiation poisoning. In 1947 the KGB captured a powerful being of undisclosed origin, which it turned over to the Initiative several years later. The scientists of the Iron Comrade Initiative found a way to tap the creature's power and distill it into a form that could be administered to the subjects of their experiments by a process that came to be known as the Red Iron Method.

Although the Red Iron Method has far less than a 100% success rate (closer to 10%), and while fully half its subjects do not survive its effects, the USSR considers it a success and has enrolled many of its graduates into the KGB as enforcers. Most of the Iron Comrades manifest multiple supernatural talents. Kinetic abilities like Biokinesis, Psychokinesis, or Telekinesis are the most common, but Aura Reading, Omen Sensitivity, and Unseen Senses (see **Demon: The Descent** p. 298, 299, and 302) frequently manifest as secondary capabilities.

Even though Iron Comrades are stationed throughout the world, at least a dozen operate in East Berlin, where agents of the KGB act as minders for the Stasi. These psychics often spot security risks and enemy operatives that their less sensitive colleagues miss, but their primary purpose is to identify and neutralize supernatural beings within East Berlin. To this end they have full authority to take command of East German police and soldiers in operations targeting these creatures. Demons are not their primary prey, but those Unchained who use flashy powers or take their demon forms in public soon learn that the God-Machine is not the only one with armies of hunters at its disposal.

MI-13 Spy Hunters

In 1953, the British learned of the presence of Soviet spies that had reached the highest levels of the Secret Intelligence Service — also called MI-6 or the SIS. These enemy agents proved elusive. They seemed to know every move MI-5 (the United Kingdom's counter-intelligence agency) made to identify and capture them before the operation even started. It was as if both MI-5 and MI-6 were positively rotten with enemy informants, and for three years the SIS labored under the uncomfortable reality that nearly every mission they undertook would be compromised — a state that made their work virtually impossible. The defection of one of the KGB's Iron Comrades stationed in London brought the truth to light. The USSR had discovered a means of giving their agents psychic abilities that were the true source of their seeming omniscience. Although the defector didn't know enough about the Red Iron Method to allow the SIS to duplicate its effects, the existence of such a process gave the British government pause.

To combat this mentalist gap they collaborated with a similarly conceived section of the CIA to recruit psychics throughout the West. The result was MI-13, a joint counterintelligence taskforce focused on identifying, hunting down, and eliminating (or turning) enemy agents. The section is still new and small, so its spy hunters operate only in areas enemy espionage operations are likely to target — London, Washington, and of course Berlin. The psychic talents of its agents vary widely but tend toward clairsentient abilities — Aura Reading, Clairvoyance, Medium, Mind of a Madman, Omen Sensitivity, Psychometry, and Unseen Sense (see

Demon: The Descent, pp. 298-302). Telepathy is prized but rare, and only a handful of MI-13 operatives possess kinetic talents.

The Unchained of West Berlin often complain that MI-13 operatives have an uncanny knack for turning up at the most inconvenient times. The psychics can't identify demons on sight, nor are their visions of the future more than vague hints, and yet they tend to turn up wherever an undercover agent is in the process of compromising his cover. Whether it is the operatives' training or their psychic abilities, this precognitive gift frequently places them in the path of demons who are rather unhappy to see them.

What Is To Come

The Cold War's pressure has been building since the end of World War II, and it is about to get more intense than anyone expected. Nations on both sides of the conflict test nuclear weapons more often with every passing year. Advances in ballistic missiles and nuclear submarines make it all the more certain that any large-scale confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union will spell humanity's doom. The superpowers conduct proxy wars, involving themselves in the political struggles and civil wars of other nations (such as the Vietnam War) in order to spread their ideals or prevent their rival's ideals from spreading. The space race becomes another proxy conflict.

1960

1960 sets the stage for many of the conflicts of the next year. In February, France, an American ally, tests its first atomic bomb. In April, the US moves nuclear missiles into Italy, within striking range of Moscow. A month later, an American covert surveillance plane is shot down over the Soviet Union and its pilot captured in what became known with embarrassment as the U-2 Incident. These three events put the Soviet Union on the defensive, and its leaders increasingly feel they must defend its interests. The siege mentality only intensifies in June when the People's Republic of China declares their version of Communism superior to that of the USSR, depriving the Soviet Union of a critical ally on their eastern front.

In West Berlin, someone murders an elementary school teacher with a sickle and sledgehammer. The body is found in the victim's locked house, with no sign of entry or exit anywhere in the building. No reliable witnesses come forth, and the killer's identity remains unknown. The killer goes on to murder more elementary school teachers but remains elusive. Due to the curious choice of murder weapons, the press nicknames the killer Red Ivan.

1961

In January the US closes its embassy in Fidel Castro's Cuba. Three months later, a CIA-backed military intervention intended to overthrow Castro fails spectacularly in the Bay of Pigs Invasion, prompting Cuba to publicly declare itself a socialist nation by the year's end. Also in April, Yuri Gagarin becomes the first human in space, prompting President Kennedy to counter with a challenge to place an American on the moon by the end of the 1960s. More ballistic nuclear missiles within striking distance of Moscow are deployed to Turkey and the UK. At the end of October, the Soviet Union detonates the biggest thermonuclear weapon ever tested and intensifies its testing of other nuclear weapons.

In August, after talks break down between the US and USSR over the future of Germany, the Soviets build the Berlin Wall. October sees the Berlin Crisis — a tense tank standoff between US and USSR forces at Checkpoint Charlie near the heart of Berlin. Although it ends peacefully after less than a day, the incident marks a considerable escalation of tensions between East and West, one centered on the two Berlins.

At the end of 1961, no one knows whether the Wall will be a permanent feature of Berlin or whether the Soviet Union will relent and demolish it. Some in the US and UK regard the erection of the Wall with a kind of relief, as a sign that the Soviets and GDR have no immediate intention to conquer West Berlin; but for the Germans living there, it remains a shocking symbol of chilling relations between the neighboring halves of the divided city. Those with families and friends on the other side don't yet know whether they will see these loved ones again. Surrounded as it is by communist East Germany, West Berlin's continued existence as a bastion of capitalist democracy is by no means assured, and its fate rests with powers beyond the control of its citizens — the political fortitude and military might of the NATO allies in the West and the Warsaw Pact nations in the East.

A human sorcerer in East Berlin attempts to open a magical gate leading through the Wall and is the first to encounter its arcane echo. He and one of his allies are arrested by Gespenster, which executes them for treason a few days later. The sorcerer's second companion and his accomplice on the western side of the Wall remain at large.

1962

The walls between East and West rise ever higher during the following year. The Soviet Union replaces the simple Berlin Wall of razed streets and wire fences with an improved fence watched by more towers and guards, all of whom have orders to shoot anyone attempting to cross the death strip into West Berlin. More East German refugees will die attempting escape in 1962 than in any other year of the Wall's existence.

The Cuban Missile Crisis in October brings the world closer to thermonuclear war than it has ever been. The Soviet Union secretly installs ballistic missiles in Cuba, within striking distance of many American cities. When President Kennedy learns of this emplacement, his advisors encourage him to invade Cuba outright but he hesitates, concerned that Moscow will retaliate by capturing West Berlin. He ultimately orders a naval blockade of the nation and initiates tense negotiations with Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev. During

talks, American ships have orders to fire if fired upon, and an American surveillance plane is shot down over Cuba. B-59, a Russian nuclear submarine, is targeted by US depth charges and, believing war may have already started, very nearly launches a nuclear torpedo. Despite these provocations, negotiations continue. After two weeks spent on the brink of nuclear war, the Soviet Union agrees to withdraw the missiles from Cuba in exchange for Kennedy's agreement to withdraw the nuclear weapons it has in Turkey.

An explosion destroys a large warehouse in Western Berlin and kills 16 people. The French Forces in Berlin block the West German police investigation when it is discovered that most of the victims were dead before the explosion. The area remains under strict quarantine for most of a month, but rumors of half-mechanical bodies savaged by saber-toothed lions persist. Several months later, Professor Lidenbois, the parapsychologist brought into the warehouse as an expert investigator, is scheduled to present a paper at the University of Paris titled "Elohim and the Eloi." A week before his presentation his home burns down in an apparent gas explosion, destroying his research and all the copies of his paper, although abstracts of "Elohim and the Eloi" continue to circulate among occult investigators.

1963

After maintaining a strict border closure since the construction of the Berlin Wall, the GDR agrees to allow West Germans to visit East Berlin during the Christmas season in 1963. These visits must adhere to strict limits, but they allow families sundered by the Wall to see each other for the first time since 1961.

The Cuban Missile Crisis drew attention to the need for a means of communicating directly between Moscow and Washington, and the two superpowers establish a hotline to facilitate this. The US, UK, and USSR sign the Partial Test Ban Treaty in July, agreeing not to conduct further nuclear weapons tests except underground.

The second half of the year is less auspicious. The Prime Minister of South Vietnam is assassinated in a coup on November 2nd, possibly one enabled by the CIA. On November 22nd, President Kennedy is also assassinated, and conspiracy theories will rage about the assassination for decades to come.

On Christmas Eve, seven people in West Berlin and nine people in East Berlin go missing. No bodies are ever found. Many civilians report hearing bells that night near the last places the victims were seen, but beyond a few dark jokes among the Americans about Santa Claus kidnapping innocent people, the authorities in both Berlins remain baffled. One of the missing Berliners is later found living on the streets of New York City, but he appears to have forgotten his native tongue and only speaks English with a heavy German accent.

1964

The Berlin Wall continues to claim the lives of refugees fleeing East Berlin. The Soviet Union lays plans for improvements to the existing wall, although these will not be put into effect until the following year.

In August, President Lyndon B. Johnson claims North Vietnamese naval vessels attacked American destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin. Although this claim is later found to be misleading, it is used as a pretense for the US becoming involved in the ongoing Vietnam War. In October, China becomes the fifth nuclear power after testing its first atomic bomb.

MI-13 identifies six KGB agents in West Berlin, including two Iron Comrades, after receiving a tip from "an interested party." Five are held for interrogation and quietly executed. The sixth is handed over to the informant in lieu of a monetary reward. This KGB agent's body is later found flayed and dissected in the basement of a small church in the British Sector. The investigation into the murder is closed within days, the photographs of the crime scene sealed along with all other records of the incident.

1965

A concrete wall replaces the fence that had previously separated the cities. Residents of East Berlin are allowed, under very specific circumstances, to enter West Berlin. As in the previous two years, West Germans are permitted to visit East Berlin during the Christmas season.

In March, the US begins the sustained bombing of North Vietnam. It also invades the Dominican Republic out of fear of a communist takeover like the one in Cuba. Violence breaks out between India and Pakistan, in Indonesia, and in the African nation of Rhodesia (which declares its independence from Britain in November). In November, American forces fight their first major engagement of the Vietnam War in the Battle of Ia Drang.

Over the course of the year 40 women living in an East Berlin tenement give birth to identical twins — an extremely strange circumstance for a 50-unit apartment building. The Stasi declare the building off-limits to outsiders, and its residents are only allowed to leave for short periods while accompanied by police. At night neighbors report lights and strange noises coming from the tenement.

1966

At least another dozen people die at the Berlin Wall, most of them refugees gunned down by the East German border guards. After undisclosed incidents involving West German visitors during the Christmas season, the GDR suspends this program indefinitely.

France has felt years of festering dissatisfaction with its role in the alliance. With the close partnership of the US and UK, it feels that neither regards the French as an equal partner. France withdraws from the NATO command structure in March. It ousts all non-French NATO troops from France and refuses to allow any foreign nuclear weapons into the country. France remains a nominal member of the alliance, but French president Charles de Gaulle signals that, in the event of an East German incursion into West

Germany, he wants the option of coming to a separate peace with the Eastern bloc instead of being drawn into a larger NATO–Warsaw Pact war.

Someone leaves a thousand folded paper cranes in a West Berlin park on the vernal equinox. The paper appears to be pages from antique copies of the Quran, the Kama Sutra, and the complete sonnets of William Shakespeare. On the morning of the summer solstice, a thousand more paper cranes appear in the same park. This one includes pages from the Bible, George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four, and several car engine repair manuals. A similar incident takes place on the autumnal equinox. This time, a witness provides the police with the license plate number of the van believed to have been used to deliver the cranes, but the authorities make no move to pursue the matter.

1967

1967 sees a sharp drop in the Berlin Wall death toll, as East Germans increasingly come to regard the barrier as an insurmountable obstacle. Of the two known refugee casualties in that year, only one is shot. The other drowns.

In April, Latin American and Caribbean nations sign the Treaty Tlatelolco in an effort to prohibit nuclear weapons in the area. The violence begun in Indonesia in 1965 comes to a halt as President Suharto seizes control of the nation with the support of the US, whose full involvement in the conflict remains a subject of speculation. Israel responds with force to Egypt's military posturing, culminating in the Six Day War in June. Flare-ups of Maoist popular movements in Southeast Asia prompt the Bangkok Declaration in August, which is intended to quell the spread of communism in the region.

In April the GDR issues silver-plated bullets to all of East Berlin's Grepos. Three weeks later, no sign of this specialized ammunition remains in any of the guard towers along the Wall. Only three border guards remember ever seeing the bullets.

1968

In April 1968, East Germany enacts a new constitution intended to better-reflect the relations of socialist society and the present level of historical development. The original 1949 constitution had been at least superficially a liberal democratic document, while the new one is unabashedly communist, modeled as it was on the 1963 Soviet Constitution. The new constitution's restrictions on civil rights and the heightened force used to enforce it trigger a fresh wave of escape attempts, many of them ending with more blood on the Berlin Wall, including that of a guard shot by a fleeing refugee.

In Vietnam, the Tet Offensive stretches on from January to June, calling into question the winnability of the war in the minds of Americans. On the Korean Peninsula, the American ship U.S.S. Pueblo is captured by the North Korean navy while conducting surveillance on Soviet forces in the area, although its crew is eventually released in December. In Czechoslovakia, the Warsaw Pact nations bring an abrupt and heavy-handed end to the liberalizing reforms of the Prague Spring.

The KGB shuts down an experimental "workerless factory" in East Berlin, citing safety concerns. Its manager and his staff of seven foremen are later executed for sedition. Ten minutes later the Iron Comrades are summoned to the execution yard to assist in disposing of the bodies. The corpses are cremated, dissolved in sulfuric acid, and then buried in a radioactive waste site.

In March, construction begins on the George Washington Building in West Berlin, which will be the tallest building in the world when it is completed. The project is abandoned six months later, and the construction site remains unoccupied for many years except for its population of at least 200 feral cats. Housecats who run away almost always find their way to the construction site, after which they lose all signs of their former domesticity.

1969

Only three refugees are shot while trying to escape to West Berlin. Higher productivity quotas as part of the Economic System of Socialization (ESS) afford residents very little time to plan escapes, and increased scrutiny by the KGB and Stasi to prevent industrial sabotage leave dissenters with fewer opportunities to cross the death strip.

Border clashes between China and the Soviet Union draw some attention away from Berlin in the early part of the year. In July, the Americans accomplish the first publicized manned lunar landing as Apollo 11 touches down. Later that year, Black Sun Cryptocartography — a major motivating force behind the ESS despite its capitalist ties — abruptly withdraws all its interests from the Soviet Union. ESS is abandoned as a failure early the following year. Libya overthrows its monarchy in September, and the new regime aligns itself with the USSR, expelling all American and British personnel.

A hospital in West Berlin successfully revives a woman who has been dead for a week. During the following month it reproduces this miracle on seven other people. American troops storm the hospital six weeks later, after which no further resurrections take place.

1970

Although the Berlin Wall's penumbral shadow presented a significant obstacle to supernatural beings previously, some demons and other creatures had learned to circumvent it using their remarkable abilities. That changes in late January 1970 as the spiritual barbed wire that had previously surrounded West Berlin is mysteriously replaced with an almost impenetrable barrier. This forces supernatural creatures to rely on the same entrances and exits to West Berlin as humans do. Additionally, servants of the God-Machine heavily infiltrate the prisons where captured escapees are detained, and fully half a dozen demons fall into the hands of the angels as a result. Once this comes to light, outcasts who face inescapable capture at the Wall often commit suicide rather than face certain recasting in their creator's forges.

In March the US, UK, and USSR (among others) sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Although hailed as a step



away from the brink of human extermination, some among the Unchained see potential God-Machine influence at work.

1971

In March, a major supernatural incident at the Berlin Wall requires the direct intervention of most of East Berlin's Iron Comrades to suppress. Eyewitness accounts of the event remain confused and often contradictory, but it appears that several different supernatural beings joined forces to break through the Wall. After this event the GDR adopts procedures to cover up the deaths of subversive non-humans. Official death tallies and border guard reports no longer include those suspected of having supernatural origin. In September, the Four-Power Agreement on Berlin eases restrictions on visits to East Germany by West Germans.

In October, the United Nations officially recognizes the People's Republic of China as the legitimate government of China. The God-Machine's servants break up the largest Insurgent Agency in Moscow. Some of the Soviet demons who avoid capture flee to East Berlin and are pursued by hunter angels.

1972

The Four-Power Agreement on Berlin takes effect, and the number of reported escape attempts diminishes significantly as a result. A faction of Integrators in East Berlin put their plan into action (see p. 547).

Nixon visits China in February — the first such visit by an American president since the formation of the People's Republic of China. In May, agreement on the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks marks the beginning of détente between the United States and the Soviet Union.

1973

The Berlin Wall and its arcane shadow continue to enforce West Berlin's isolation, and turf wars between supernatural creatures and their various internal factions break out throughout the city. This conflict attracts the attention of powerful hunter organizations, which soon become a greater threat to the Unchained in West Berlin than are the angels. East Berlin's demons, having narrowly avoided falling into a major God-Machine trap, go deep into hiding and remain there throughout 1973.

In January, the US ends its involvement in Vietnam. In September, the CIA helps Augusto Pinochet overthrow the democratically-elected, Marxist-leaning president of Chile. This regime will later earn a reputation for human rights violations.

1974

Having gained international recognition as a nation, East Germany's relationship with West Germany appears to be thawing. At the same time, the GDR amends its constitution to remove all references to the previously united Germany and to declare its close friendship with the USSR. The Socialist Unity Party of Germany intensifies its efforts to bring East Germany into alignment with Soviet ideals of communism, which involves cracking down on dissidents internally.

The US and USSR have reached, if not peace, then at least a stalemate. The Soviet Union tightens its grip on the people of Eastern Europe, brooking no dissent on its side of the Iron Curtain. The Stasi arrests several Inquisitors who were working to reestablish communications with West Berlin's Unchained. Presumably, these outcasts are executed or turned over to hunter angels.

In West Berlin, hunters sent by the Church abduct the son of a demon and attempt to blackmail the outcast into betraying her fellow Unchained. They arrange a meeting in a local church, which burns to the ground during negotiations. The demon, her son, and the hunters are never seen in Berlin again, nor are any bodies recovered. The Church regards this as a direct challenge to its authority and sends more demon hunters to West Berlin.

1975

The GDR begins replacing the concrete Berlin Wall with a high-tech, reinforced concrete barrier twelve feet high and four feet wide. This Grenzmauer 75 includes highly sophisticated measures to prevent escape. These include smooth pipe at the top of the wall to make it harder to scale, barbed wire, anti-vehicle trenches, and fencing that triggers an alarm when touched. This is overseen by more than a hundred watchtowers, a score of bunkers, and guard dogs on runner leashes. The shadow war in West Berlin continues, although its participants have been forced to carry it out more quietly. In East Berlin, some of the Unchained emerge from hiding and resume Agency activity.

In April, the communist Khmer Rouge take power in Cambodia, beginning their reign with a genocide that will become known as the Killing Fields. Also in that month, communist North Vietnam conquers American-supported South Vietnam. The US and USSR participate in a joint space mission called the Apollo-Soyuz Test Mission, marking the symbolic end of the space race between the nations.

1976–1980

The Grenzmauer 75 increasingly becomes an intimidating fixture in Berlin's landscape, but East Germany has serious troubles of its own. Many of its problems are economic — debts pile up until the GDR has a growing cash flow problem. The Soviet Union, embroiled in conflicts throughout the world (most notably, Afghanistan), is not in a position to lend needed support. Additionally, the Helsinki Accords ratified in 1975 have the unanticipated side effect of increasing dissent throughout the eastern bloc, and Soviet crackdowns on protests create an international backlash against the USSR. East Berlin enters a deep economic depression along with the rest of the GDR as civil rights abuses by the Stasi undercut the city's morale and loyalty to communist ideals.

1981–1989

Newly elected American president Ronald Reagan rises on a tide of opposition to the policy of détente pursued by previous administrations. The US becomes more active on

the world stage, sending forces and supplies into nations in an effort to ensure that their current or new regimes do not support the Soviet Union.

In 1983 Reagan labels the USSR an "evil empire." He proposes the Strategic Defense Initiative (commonly known as "Star Wars"), which, in addition to being impossible with existing technology, increases the probability of nuclear war. The Soviet Union shoots down a passenger plane carrying a member of America's Congress when it strays into the nation's airspace.

At the height of this posturing and the deteriorating relations between the US and USSR, a Soviet early warning system mistakenly identifies a NATO war readiness exercise as a single thermonuclear ballistic missile launch from the United States. Had the Soviet operator responsible for monitoring the station not (correctly) dismissed the reading as an error, it would have meant global thermonuclear war. Even then, it is a near miss — the closest the world has come to Armageddon since the Cuban Missile Crisis. Able Archer 83 (the name of the NATO exercise) prompts the Soviet Union to arm its nuclear arsenal in preparation for a full-scale attack by the United States.

Following this incident, America opts for a change in tactics. President Reagan meets with incoming Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbechev in November 1985. In 1987, the president famously challenges the Soviet Union to tear down the Berlin Wall as a show of good faith. In 1989, with the Soviet Union virtually bankrupt, a series of peaceful revolutions take place throughout Eastern Europe.

In response to widespread protests in the second half of 1989, the GDR announces its intention to reopen the border between East and West Germany. On November 9, 1989, the Berlin Wall is breached. It will be demolished more completely over the course of the next year.

The Supernatural

The Unchained can't tell to what extent the God-Machine is manipulating the Cold War. Few assume it exerts any direct influence over the conflict, but many more allow, when they are feeling paranoid, that it is at least a possibility. Whatever the truth, nearly all demons in Berlin recognize that their creator is using the standoff to its advantage. The seemingly unlimited budgets set aside for secret military projects provide it with no shortage of resources, and the God-Machine is certainly not above using nationalism to prevent people from asking too many questions about how that money is being spent. As a focal point of the international conflict, Berlin makes a good place to conceal the God-Machine's projects, and Infrastructure proliferates in plain view of the demons who live there — watched over by angels and human authorities.

Agendas

The Unchained of Cold War Berlin are creatures of the world in which they find themselves. Many see everything through the lens of the events of World War II, and all feel the pressure of a potential nuclear Armageddon. An outcast's Agenda often reflects her response to world events as much as or more than it springs from her views of the God-Machine. It is worth noting that most of the factions described below are not formalized. They represent a philosophical nuance within each Agenda, as well as modus operandi — a sort of range of paths on the Descent. While demons with similar methods and goals are more likely to band together into rings or share information, even demons with incompatible objectives must still work together to survive long enough to implement their grand designs. As well, outcasts of several factions actively seek out demons of opposed groups as a step in their plans. An infiltrator must befriend those she means to spy on and ultimately betray. Even if she never wavers in her faith in the rightness of her actions, she may yet come to respect these enemies with whom she must associate.

History and History

Many of the historical hooks in this section, although assigned a specific year, could happen at any point during the Cold War. The Storyteller should feel free to use any that inspire her. Want the Integrators of East Berlin to betray the other Unchained this year, instead? Go right ahead. Think the "workerless factory" would make an interesting hook for the next story? Introduce it whenever you want.

The same holds true for the "real" history of the Cold War. In our world, the Berlin Wall evolves from a fence in 1961 to an imposing and seemingly impenetrable barrier in 1975. Few chronicles take place over the course of 14 years, but if you want the Grenzmauer 75 to be the Grenzmauer 62, instead, don't hesitate to change history. After all, the world of the Chronicles of Darkness is supposed to be a darker version of our own.

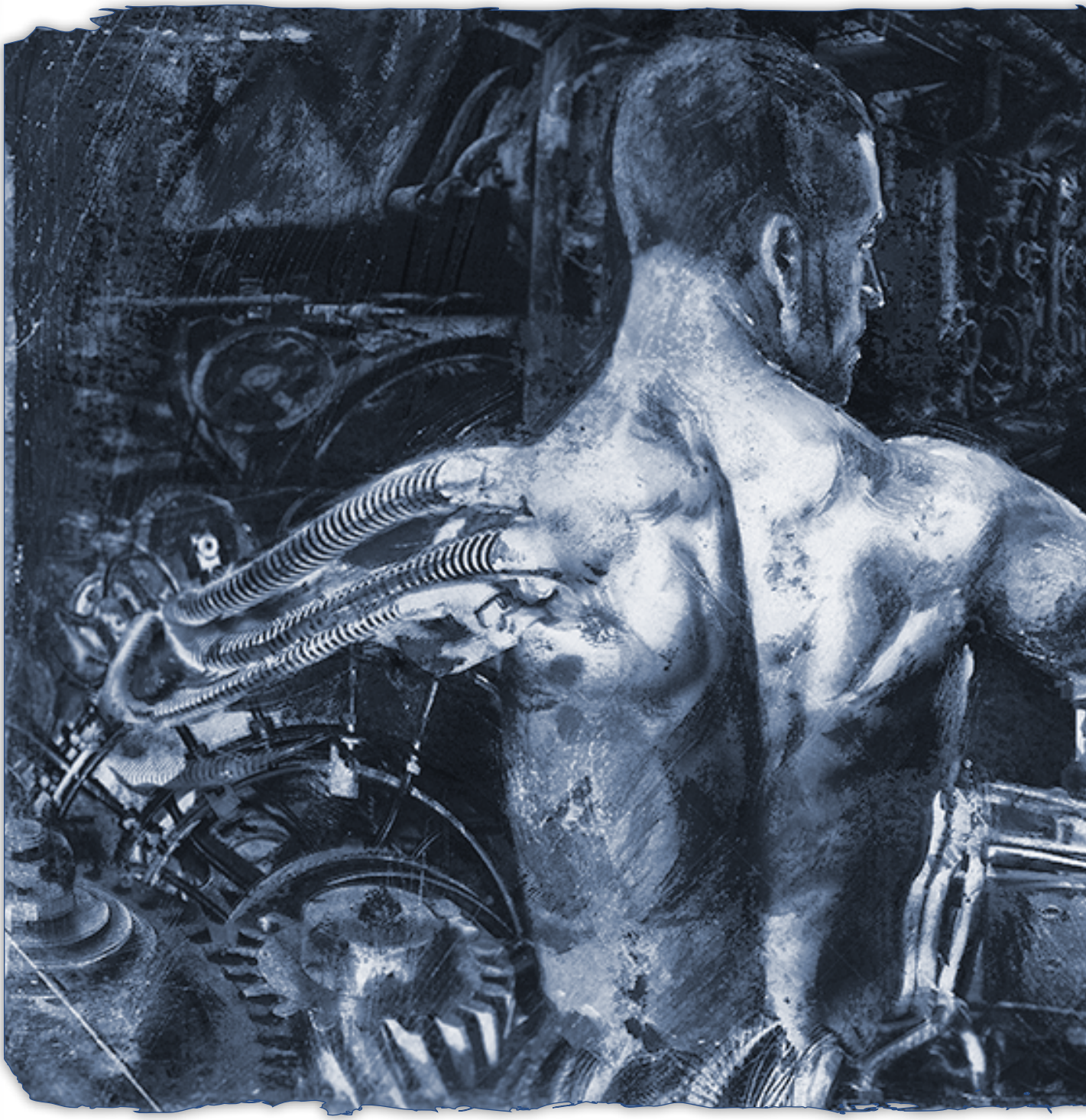
Inquisitors

An unprecedented number of demons Fell during World War II or in its aftermath, and the God-Machine has directed no small amount of attention to locating and recapturing its wayward servants. Those demons who have lost friends and allies to hunter angels and God-Machine spies — as well as those who were nearly captured themselves — are more likely to become Inquisitors.

Secrecy is the key to survival. Even the most paranoid of Inquisitors can seldom bring himself to huddle in a dingy apartment or squalid public tenement and do nothing. The God-Machine designed angels to act. Even Shields on long

assignments do not sit idle. They are constantly looking for potential threats and creating elaborate defenses to protect their wards from harm. Fallen they might be, but outcasts still have many of the instincts they possessed as angels, and this includes the programmed drive to eschew lengthy periods of inactivity. Inquisitors feel just as compelled to act as other Unchained, but they attempt to minimize the risk that they will be discovered by the God-Machine's agents.

With their mastery of intelligence-gathering techniques and disciplined caution, Inquisitors may seem like they would be natural talents among the cloaks and daggers of the Cold War. They are in fact the least likely to dabble in human espionage. Of the Agendas, they are the least active in the politics of East versus West. In part this is because many of them aren't convinced that thermonuclear war presents the greatest threat to the Unchained, and most who do fail to see how the petty intrigues of a single city can tip the scales in either direction in any meaningful way. That should be



left up to the demons of Washington, D.C. and Moscow. The Inquisitors of Berlin collect information about the Enemy, but if they have a universal goal in doing so it is to prevent the Unchained from falling into the hands of the God-Machine. This makes them the most cohesive of the Agendas, and though the Inquisitors of West Berlin may face slightly different obstacles than those in East Berlin, their methods and philosophies differ little from one half of the city to the other.



The **Curators** focus on collecting and organizing intelligence on the enemy, whether they do so almost compulsively, to satisfy their curiosity, or because they believe it will allow them to evade the God-Machine's servants. While some do the legwork personally, many rely on networks of informants — often ones unwittingly placed in the position through regular application of Embeds like Living Recorder or Special Message. Curators seldom reveal their sources and often hesitate before acting on any intelligence in their possession (including sharing it with other demons) for fear the Enemy will realize the outcast has a spy in a sensitive position within one of its organizations. When a Curator can be convinced to act as an information broker, however, the secrets at her disposal can mean the difference between the success of a mission and its failure.

The **Broadcasters** believe that the best protection from the God-Machine they can have is a community of Unchained who do not draw their creator's eye to Berlin. While they employ many of the same means of collecting intelligence as do Curators, the Broadcasters' focus is on disseminating that information to other outcasts — particularly if it will allow demons to avoid entanglements with angels or servants of the Machine. The West Berlin Free Agency — the organization behind Radio Free Hell — is the brainchild of Broadcasters. For the last 15 years they have been the primary channel of communication between West and East Berlin, and the erection of the Wall has hurt them more than any other faction in the city. As quickly as they develop new methods of getting messages over the Wall, human authorities and the God-Machine agents close the gaps through which the Broadcasters' messages slip. Some outcasts worry that the Broadcasters, in their desperation to maintain communication between the two halves of the city, have grown sloppy. They point out that in any war, priority is often given to eliminating enemy communication capabilities — especially immediately before a major attack — and in that light they fear what the sudden changes to Radio Free Hell might mean.

The **Tutors** agree with the Broadcasters' goals in principle but maintain a narrower focus. They seek out newly Fallen demons and shield them from the God-Machine's agents long enough for the newly Unchained to learn to avoid their creator's eye unaided. Tutors usually don't approach their protégés directly, working through intermediaries or using Embeds to pass warnings and instructions at critical moments. In the course of her surveillance of her target, the Tutor often unearths useful blackmail material and keeps a detailed analysis of her target's capabilities that she can use to protect herself should the student later turn against his master. Tutors sometimes provide their services to more experienced demons, alerting those who are about to fall into one of the God-Machine's traps. It is customary, particularly among the Unchained of East Berlin, to leave offerings of money and small comforts (cigarettes, vodka, etc.) at dead drops throughout the city that Tutors are believed to monitor. It seems so unlikely that these tokens of gratitude from



their fellow outcasts are enough to see to a Tutor's material needs that some demons suspect these Inquisitors support themselves using blackmail. No one admits to believing the persistent rumors that Tutors sometimes arrange for the God-Machine's agents to capture intractable students who insist on ignoring the Inquisitors' advice.

The **Observers** are the most hands-on of the Inquisitors. They infiltrate the ranks of the God-Machine's servants to monitor its projects. Like Curators, they do not usually act on the intelligence they gather — at least not unless they can manufacture a way to make it appear that the information leaked some other way. Also, Observers are not Saboteurs or Integrators (although some lean one direction or another), which means they seldom interfere with the construction of Infrastructure or the work of angels and cultists unless these place the Unchained in harm's way.

Integrators

Most of the Integrators of Berlin closely resemble the Turncoats of other places and times. Each Fell for his own reasons, and while he longs to return to the service of the God-Machine one day, he intends to do so in his own time and on his own terms. Some of these solitary pilgrims pursue earthly quests with a clear endpoint such as protecting a human as long as she lives or avenging a specific wrong — although not all Integrators who achieve these goals turn themselves over to the next angel they see. Others take up open-ended tasks like atoning for the crimes they committed during the war or serving the people of Berlin.

The **Penitents** maintain a loose connection with other Integrators. They may share a common general goal (returning to the God-Machine's service), but the path and timing of that return is highly personal to the Integrator. No two agree on the exact terms or method, which makes an organized fifth column of Penitents virtually unthinkable. For this reason, outcasts of other Agendas largely regard Penitents as harmless. Saboteurs may consider them blind fools steeped in self-loathing and bent on quixotic quests of self-destruction, but even they recognize that these Integrators usually don't pose a serious security risk.

The Cold War has given rise to a different kind of Integrator, however — one more capable of the single-minded pursuit of a shared goal. The **Faithful** fear that left to their own devices humans will eventually destroy themselves — and all the Unchained with them — in a massive cascade of atomic explosions, radioactive fallout, and nuclear winter. If humans cannot be trusted not to leap from the precipice, then only the Machine can prevent Armageddon. These Integrators believe the God-Machine is not self-destructive, and will take any steps necessary to prevent the kind of worldwide catastrophe a nuclear war would be. In fact, they believe the God-Machine may be the only thing that will save humanity. The Faithful simply believe the God-Machine will prevent Earth-shattering disaster, whatever the Unchained might do. They don't actively serve the God-Machine, but they try to avoid getting in the way of its projects. Some demons of other Agendas — particularly Tempters — adopt similar non-interference policies toward their creator and its servants for the same reason as the Faithful, even though they are not Integrators themselves.

The hope to which the Faithful cling has given rise to more proactive factions of Turncoats. All of them believe the God-Machine is the best hope the world has of escaping the thermonuclear doom that hangs over it. The main difference is they believe that World War II damaged or crippled the God-Machine in some way that has rendered it incapable of preventing catastrophe. Because these groups emerged independently of one another on both sides of the Wall, they take different forms in East Berlin than they do in West Berlin.

West Berlin

The **Restorationists** believe the God-Machine was badly damaged in the war and needs to be repaired. Furthermore, they are confident that the key to their ambition is a piece of critical Command and Control Infrastructure that once stood in West Berlin but was destroyed in the chaos of war. These Integrators understand enough of occult physics to recognize that simply rebuilding Berlin exactly the way it looked prior to the war will not harness the arcane forces necessary to reestablish the original occult matrix. A new piece of Command and Control Infrastructure must be built from scratch. A handful of Restorationists hope that this new Infrastructure will allow them to influence or even control the God-Machine, but that is probably a fantasy. The main obstacle to the Restorationists' work is that the Unchained don't have nearly enough knowledge of occult physics to design Infrastructure of this kind, although a handful claim (most of them falsely) to have constructed Infrastructure to maintain less complex occult matrices.

The Restorationists' obsession with Infrastructure and arcane physics has made them some strange friends. These include Stigmatics, God-Machine cultists, and scholars of every discipline. Some have forged uneasy alliances with other supernatural beings and the humans who hunt them, usually by concealing their true natures. Sadly, these Integrators have been known to side with their allies in disputes that involve other outcasts, a position that has not made them popular. Restorationists are particularly likely to betray known Saboteurs, since members of that Agenda are the only ones in West Berlin who seem to consider this faction of Turncoats a real danger to Unchained society.

The **Scales** trust that the God-Machine has enough redundant systems that it will eventually repair any damage it sustained during the war. The key word, however, is "eventually." These Integrators steep themselves in human espionage and bureaucracy and use their positions to prevent both the US and the USSR from gaining enough of an upper hand to trigger a nuclear war. Unlike Tempter groups that operate in a similar way, the Scales consider their work

FUTURE FATE: MONITORS, VIGILANTES, AND MOLES

Those who carefully read Chapter One of **Demon: The Descent** will recall that by the time the Berlin Wall falls, the Unchained of East Berlin routinely execute known Integrators — a practice they only gradually abandon after the reunification of Germany. Although 40 years of the Idealists' cavalier attitude toward the capture of outcasts certainly wins them few friends among the other Agendas, their fellow Unchained can forgive this. They cannot sit idly by once they discover the Moles' designs on East Berlin, however.

In 1972, having secured agents among nearly every faction in the East, the Moles contact powerful servants of the God-Machine and offer a gift of 100 demons. They even subvert the Vigilantes to aid in their coup. If the Moles' plan succeeds, as many as half the Unchained in East Berlin will be returned to the God-Machine's service against their will. Fortunately, an Inquisitor discovers the truth before the Moles can complete their act of betrayal. The Unchained of East Berlin go to ground virtually as one body and remain there for several months. The Moles, their Vigilante tools, and most of the other Integrators in East Berlin are less fortunate, and the majority of them fall into the hands of the God-Machine's hunter angels.

After this failed coup, the Integrators no longer receive the benefit of the doubt from their fellow outcasts. The Unchained of East Berlin show no mercy to any demon who admits Integrator sympathies. The outcasts will not even tolerate Penitents or the Faithful. This ruthless persecution of anyone who dares admit that they regret their Fall continues until the mid-1990s, and suspicion of Integrators in the former East Germany persists even into the early decades of the 21st century.

a stalling tactic. They are simply giving the God-Machine enough time to restore the systems it will need to create a long-term resolution to the Cold War.

East Berlin

The **Monitors** are Integrators who believe the God-Machine is currently operating below its optimal capacity because so many angels Fell during World War II and it is having difficulty compensating for their absence. Angels are, after all, a precious resource — arguably the least replaceable of all the God-Machine's servants. Most Monitors don't often act on this belief. They simply don't stop other demons from being recaptured by angels unless they have a personal stake in that outcast's continued freedom. The Monitors belief is that the God-Machine needs a certain number of its angels back; after that it will stop scouring the Earth for demons and return to the serious business of preventing full-scale nuclear war. The Monitors won't actively betray their fellow Unchained, but they certainly don't intend to be among the ranks of outcasts rounded up and recast in their creator's forges, either.

Vigilantes take a more active role in the process of returning demons to the God-Machine. While they share the Monitors' core article of faith, they have a degree of respect for their fellow Unchained. Some try to win over other demons, convincing them to return to the service of the God-Machine. As this approach usually proves a non-starter among outcasts, nearly all Vigilantes find other ways of deciding which demons deserve to return to their creator's service. They target outcasts who prey on humans, engage in criminal conduct, or recklessly endanger all the Unchained. Once a Vigilante identifies a target, he takes steps to draw God-Machine attention to her by any means at his disposal, ultimately flushing her out in the open so she can be captured by hunter angels. Some Vigilantes specialize in redirecting the attention of the God-Machine's agents away from benevolent demons by giving the hounds a less savory outcast to pursue, instead. Because they help rid the city of outcasts whose actions endanger all demons, Vigilantes are quite well-regarded among the Unchained of East Berlin and have earned favors from some powerful demons, many of whom owe their freedom to a Vigilante's timely intervention.

No demon openly admits to being a **Mole**. These Integrators operate deep under cover, earning the trust of other outcasts and collecting intelligence with the intention of betraying dozens if not hundreds of demons to the God-Machine when the time is right. Some believe this will return them to their creator's good graces, while others hope it will not bother pursuing them after they make such a major offering to it. Many don't expect to evade recapture but simply hope to help the God-Machine replenish the depleted ranks of its angelic servants so it can prevent humans from destroying themselves. Moles do not regard themselves as traitors but as martyrs in the service of humanity, angels, and their creator.

Saboteurs

Berlin's Saboteurs do not share the Faithful's belief that the atrocities of the last two wars occurred because the God-Machine merely miscalculated the human consequences of a few of its projects. Many believe their creator knew exactly

what it was doing and that all of it — the incineration of Dresden, the Nazi death camps, Stalin's purges of millions of his own people, and even the nuclear bombs dropped on Japan — was according to the God-Machine's designs. Perhaps some occult matrix required human sacrifices on a hitherto unimaginable scale, or maybe the God-Machine had hundreds of smaller projects that required a London Blitz here, a D-Day there, a Battle of Berlin at some other point. The Soldiers don't much care at this point, but they know their creator's behavior has become completely unconscionable and they mean to put a stop to it before the God-Machine does something even worse. They already have their suspicions about the true purpose of this Cold War.

And if the Integrators are right about the debacles of the last couple decades being a sign that the God-Machine suffered damage to a critical system, what of it? The Unchained are no better equipped to fix the Machine than its cultists are. Nobody understands it. Nobody knows what drives it or even where its key systems are located. If it is an out-of-control machine driven mad by accidents in the wars it started for reasons it certainly never shared with its servants, it is still a machine. It can't be reasoned with. Might as well try to talk a ticking time bomb out of exploding.

No. The God-Machine must be disarmed and dismantled, removed from the equation of human history forever. Without its influence, humans will come to their senses. They'll still be ignorant and often petty, but they won't engage in an act of nuclear war if it means their mutually assured destruction. The Cold War need not be a prelude to an Armageddon that takes place at a time of the God-Machine's choosing. Some Saboteur methodologies are equally common on both sides of the Wall, while others are much more prominent in East or West.

The **Freelancers** are not guided by any grand strategy. Rage drives them to attack the God-Machine at any opportunity. They are not suicidal, but they are more likely to take risks. Other Saboteurs frequently treat them with derision for their impulsive behavior. Mostly, though, other Thugs worry that the Freelancers' tendency to destroy Infrastructure and kill agents of the Machine will trigger exactly what most other Saboteurs are trying to prevent — nuclear war. The Freelancers usually scoff at this as a remote possibility at best. Occasionally one will muse that a premature Armageddon would present a considerable setback for the God-Machine's project — one it will take steps to prevent — and so nothing is more likely to force the enemy to waste its resources and to direct its attention away from the Unchained than a sudden and unexpected escalation of tensions. And if everything goes horribly wrong? Well, better to die free in the ruins of human civilization than to live in a world ruled by the Machine.

The **Cloaks** steep themselves in the espionage between East and West. While some do so because they genuinely subscribe to capitalist or Communist ideals, the majority use it to monitor and control the flow of intelligence between the two sides of the Cold War. The right misinformation in the right ear at the right time can implicate one of the God-Machine's servants or draw attention to Infrastructure it would prefer remain hidden.

West Berlin

The **Anarchists** engage with the countercultural elements of West Berlin. They direct the storm of anger at the less benign aspects of capitalism — its greed, its arrogance, its hypocrisy. Many of their tools are people rebelling against the foreign occupation of their city, those who haven't benefited from the post-war economic boom so often described as "the miracle," or those disaffected young people in any free society who refuse to conform to social norms or kowtow to authority figures. Some are much more focused than that — such as members of the Girrmann Group, which has helped 5,000 refugees escape into West Berlin so far this year. Some Anarchists have already found other uses for the Girrmann Group's human smuggling and extraction skills in Unchained society.

The **Silencers** take a much more cautious approach to their war on the God-Machine and its agents. When they need to stop a project, they would rather arrange construction delays due to misrouted materials or lost paperwork. In dismantling Infrastructure they usually arrange accidents or commit crimes (such as arson) that have an obvious cause with absolutely no connection to the Cold War. If only assassination will do, they will, whenever possible, make the murder look like a common crime, a suicide or, at worst, a minor cloak and dagger incident. They do this not because they fear their creator's scrutiny but because, in this city where an explosion or gunshot could trigger World War III, they do not want demons to be responsible for nuclear Armageddon. That said they *do* get their hands dirty — more often than they'd like, in fact. When circumstances demand a swift but noisy solution, the Silencers do not hesitate. At that point, however, they go into damage control mode as soon as the immediate danger has passed — eliminating as much evidence of the event as they can. They destroy documents, scrub crime scenes, and alter the memories of witnesses with Embeds like

Homogenous Memory. They are willing to kill the innocent to maintain secrecy, but most Silencers hesitate to do so. Partly, they recognize that it would mean resorting to the favored tactics of the Machine. More practically, though, every human exists at the center of a network of friends, family, and colleagues. Killing or abducting someone disturbs that web, sending powerful emotional vibrations into the wider world where it may attract the attention of anything from agents of the Enemy to human hunters looking to avenge the demon's victim. The higher the body count, the larger the disturbance, and the greater the probability that the outcast will attract powerful new enemies. Given how many dangerous enemies the Unchained already have, no demon needs to add a gang of shapeshifters or a sorcerous cult to her problems.

East Berlin

The secretive top-down organization of the Communist government of East Germany provides the God-Machine with an easy means to direct its projects while keeping its activities hidden, but the **Bureaucrats** are onto its game. These outcasts insinuate themselves into all levels of government, exploiting the deep corruption of human officials to undermine the plans of the Enemy. Their bribes and blackmail campaigns redirect resources at critical moments, alter orders for the movement of materials, and fabricate legitimate-seeming reasons why the government should dismantle Infrastructure. When they encounter a dupe of the Machine that they cannot manipulate, the Bureaucrats instead frame him for sedition and allow the brutal fist of the Communist government to crush him. Punishment in East Berlin is swifter than it is just — a mockery of a trial followed by a quick execution by firing squad — and the victim's successor is almost always more cooperative, especially if he knows how his predecessor's career ended.



The **Enforcers** specialize in identifying and neutralizing angels, believing that the God-Machine needs these servants to exert its will on the world. Some concentrate on destroying angels, forcing their former colleagues into the open and bringing them down by using their own Bans and Banes against them. Others focus on capturing them, and imprisoning or banishing them to places where they can no longer serve the Machine. A handful of Enforcers have built reputations for convincing angels to defect, using any number of means to orchestrate these Falls. These Saboteurs have arguably gained too much notoriety among the God-Machine's agents, however, for they have begun to use the Enforcers' own tactics against them. A particularly high-profile betrayal by one of the Unchained ended with half a dozen Enforcers captured by the Enemy, which was bad enough. When those fallen comrades returned to East Berlin recast as hunter angels with orders to seek out their old allies, however, it became clear to the Enforcers that the God-Machine had singled them out as targets of brutal psychological warfare. In the five years since that incident, the Enforcers have had to expand their focus to rooting out traitors who have infiltrated the Unchained — undercover angels, cleverly programmed Exiles, and even demons who hope to return to the Machine's service. While they are particularly suspicious of anyone with Integrator sympathies, the Enforcers have a difficult time trusting any of their fellow demons.

Tempters

In some ways the Tempters of Cold War Berlin are not so different from contemporary Decadents. They surround themselves with wealth and power and useful connections, the better to enjoy their new lives on Earth. They seek out pacts more often than any other Agenda does and yet are the most likely to grow attached to their existing Covers. As deeply connected as they are to the pleasures of the world, it should not be surprising that the Tempters feel the weight of the nuclear standoff more deeply than do other demons. But they also try to divorce philosophical motives from their means of furthering their personal agendas. A Tempter's modus operandi largely depends on whether he operates in West Berlin or East Berlin, while a Builder's side of the Wall seldom affects his likely raison d'être. The "why" of a Tempter's actions usually falls into one of a handful of broad philosophies.

After carefully examining the Gordian knot that is the Cold War, the **Nihilists** have reached the conclusion that nuclear war is inevitable. Furthermore, they see no reasonable means of preserving their own lives when it comes, and so they have decided to enjoy their brief existences on Earth as much as they can. As a result, Nihilists are the most likely to embody all the negative connotations of the word "hedonist." They don't actively work toward World War III, but they take no great pains to prevent it, either.

The **Meddlers** reject the Nihilists' fatalism. They believe they can prevent Armageddon by working through human institutions. Their exact methodology varies from Meddler



to Meddler. Some infiltrate military or police organizations, others government bureaucracies or political positions, still more intelligence operations or corporate hierarchies. Whatever her means of gaining power, the demon uses her influence to make East and West less hostile toward one another — creating opportunities for cooperation to mutual benefit, encouraging social contact, and otherwise preventing either side from dehumanizing the other enough to force a war of annihilation. The Meddlers have seen some success in the two Berlins so far, but it is unclear how much the Wall will hamper their future efforts.

The **Adherents** buy into the human ideology of Communism or Capitalism and work to bring their side victory. So long as there are two equally powerful empires vying for world dominance, the threat of nuclear war will always exist, but if one side or the other can be defeated before it can employ atomic weapons, the opposition will have no further reason to hold that threat of obliteration over the planet's inhabitants. Needless to say that the two camps of Adherents are not on speaking terms, despite the Meddlers' efforts to bring them into accord.

Like the Nihilists, the **Escapists** do not believe nuclear war can be prevented. Rather than using that conclusion as an excuse to descend deeply into fatalistic hedonism, however, these outcasts regard it as a strong reason to build or reach Hell as quickly as possible. Few among the Unchained are as single-minded in their pursuit of the Descent as the Escapists are.

West Berlin

The **Blooded** make up the oldest and most powerful faction of demons in West Berlin. Many of them made their fortunes during the Great Miracle after the war, but most secured positions of political and economic influence before Hitler seized power. Although they accept newly Fallen members, their enemies call them the Blooded because so many of them Fell prior to the war and so participated or profited from its atrocities not as servants of the Machine but as outcasts. Their hands are as bloody as any Destroyer angel's, and they do not have the excuse of being in the God-Machine's service at the time they committed their crimes. The Blooded frequently hold powerful positions in government, the military, or the Church that allow them to maintain their high-society lifestyles. They chafe at what they feel is the undue influence wielded by the foreigner outcasts who make up the Expatriates, and they're watching with growing trepidation as the Cooperative rapidly increase in size and power. The Blooded worry that if they are to maintain their position in West Berlin they will need to drive out or subvert at least one of these two rivals.

The **Cooperative** is almost entirely made up of demons who Fell during or immediately after World War II. Most have an almost religious devotion to the capitalist ideals of the West, if only because they have such an intense loathing both for the atrocities of the Nazis during the war and for the excesses of the Soviets during the Battle of Berlin. They have embraced capitalism and used it as their primary path to power. Many have taken positions in large corporations — from construction companies and hospitality conglomerates to retailers and manufacturers. Others have taken the free market a step further by steeping themselves in the city's organized crime rings. The Cooperative seeks out soul pacts more actively and aggressively than either of its Western rivals. Its members frequently condemn the Blooded for their complacency during the war, but this is mostly propaganda. The truth is the Cooperative covets the wealth and power of the older Unchained and will do whatever it can to supplant them as rulers of the city. They regard the Expatriates as imperialistic interlopers who present an inconvenient complication in the Cooperative's power struggle with the Blooded. Its members worry that as soon as they topple the Blooded, the supposedly neutral Expatriates will seize the opportunity to fill the resulting power vacuum ahead of the Cooperative.

The **Expatriates** are demons who came to West Berlin from far off lands in the last 15 years. Most do not even have German Covers, instead favoring American, French, or British identities. Many left behind existing financial or political empires to come to the city — whether to escape entanglements back home or to elevate their business to an international level. They frequently gather power in areas of West Berlin dominated by the handful of foreign nations that have set up operations in the city — as military officers, diplomats, or contractors. The Expatriates regard the Blooded with disgust and believe they are doing West Germany a service by drumming these despicable demons out of power. They likewise recognize the Cooperative as an obstacle to their own rise in power, and the tensions between the two factions have grown steadily.

East Berlin

East Berlin once had several factions of Tempters who were as eager to plot each others' downfall as those that now maneuver in West Berlin. Several years ago, however, their conflict grew too heated, and the God-Machine dispatched angels to the region. Forced to work together for mutual survival, the few remaining Tempter factions came to an understanding about which sources of influence would belong to whom. Any business that involves both sides of East Berlin's Decadent society requires at least one demon from each faction be involved.

The **Parasites** wield their influence only in an official capacity. They are military officers, bureaucrats, and politicians growing fat on the many public welfare programs forced down East Berlin's throats by the Communist puppet government. Technically, embezzling funds from these projects outright violates the Parasites' mandate, but it is enough of a grey area that other Tempters usually look the other way.

The **Corrupters** draw their strength from organized crime or deal in illicit goods. Their black market of small comforts not normally available to East German citizens provides them

The Chronicles of Darkness

The old order, the Shadow Empire, was destroyed in a coup in 1945, following decades of decrepitude brought on by constantly changing mortal governments. In West Berlin, the Margrave Heinrich III rules with an iron fist wrapped in a delicate glove. The East is locked in a constant state of war, as the **Kindred** fail to penetrate the communist establishment and must fight for scraps.

The spirits of industry have long dominated Berlin's Shadow. Rogue packs of **Forsaken** have fallen to worshipping these creatures, creating war among Father Moon's children as well as against the Pure.

The fortunes of **mages** have swung wildly in Berlin. While some became darlings of the Reich due to their ability to produce tangible results in the hunt for the mythic past, more were destroyed in purges of secret societies. The result is an Awakened society with few senior members, and with many of its treasures stolen first by the Nazis and then locked away in the vaults of the conquering Allies. Yet the young mages of Berlin are thriving, having discovered fragments of lost Atlantis as the depths of the Earth are opened in the rebuilding of the city.

There are many Wastelands in the two Berlins... but they don't seem to be the work of the **Created**. Some other agency is burning the world, while Prometheans passing through suffer from its horrid work. Berliners are even more suspicious of the Created than usual, but the greatest threat may lurk beneath the city. In parts of the Berlin subway where the trains never stop, a horde of Pandorans is growing, having somehow learned to reproduce without the "help" of Prometheans.

For the **changelings**, the Summer Court rules both Berlins year-round. They have nearly succeeded at the impossible: turning the local Hedge into a tamed garden. Their watchtowers rise among bramble and forest, imposing order and form upon the once wild and strange landscape. Some of the city's Lost see this as a golden age, while others – particularly the ostracized Winter Court – fear that the Gentry will join together and lead their armies against the too-visible changelings.

The Bändiger are Berlin's most well-connected **hunters**, having recently enjoyed the unofficial patronage of the Chancellor. However, their focus on hunting Herr Arger and others of his kind limits their influence in the loose coalition which maintains the Vigil. The Cheiron Group casts a much larger shadow, flush with cash from the western powers. The Malleus Maleficarum likewise enjoy substantial backing in West Berlin, thanks to the current pope seeing them not only as defenders but as missionaries.

Berlin is a very old city, with very old ghosts... but of more concern to **Sin-Eaters** are its very new ghosts. Contrary to the understood metaphysics of the dead, ghosts are flocking to the city from across Europe, anchoring to places with which they have loose or entirely absent associations.

Hundreds of relics have come to Berlin in the last century, as both private interests and the succession of governments have sought to gather the world's treasures. Cultists of the **Arisen** have followed, playing their own games of theft and espionage to recover what they see as their heritage.

with a steady income, but they can also secure access to more valuable contraband through their webs of bribery, blackmail, and theft. Some hire on as assassins or problem-solvers for desperate people. Others stockpile soul pacts, which are frequently the price for their more unusual goods and services.

Berlin Personalities

The God-Machine is especially active in Berlin. As a result, the divided city's population of demons, angels, exiles, and stigmatics is high for a community of its size. What's more, the population of Unchained changes constantly. Most of the demons of Berlin have lived there for years or decades, and more arrive all the time. A handful of Berlin's lost and renegade angels have called the city home for centuries. Outcasts have a high attrition rate, as well. Hunter angels, rival demons, human governments, and supernatural beings whittle away their numbers as quickly as they grow.

Links

The fuse at Junction U-34571 has burned out. Replacing it will restore power to the U-8 Line.

Background: As a Guardian angel, Links' mission was to preserve the structural integrity of Berlin's subway system. The layout of the tracks and the movement of the trains on it were Command and Control Infrastructure. The God-Machine analyzed patterns in the movements of passengers in the U-Bahn to make certain kinds of calculations. For 20 years Links guided maintenance crews to trouble spots



and, when necessary, performed emergency repairs himself. During the bombing of Berlin in 1943, however, the God-Machine fell abruptly silent. Moreover, this disruption of communications coincided with a sudden decrease in Links' power and a shift in his Ban that has made it more difficult for him to maintain the U-Bahn.

Links continues to maintain Berlin's subway system to the best of his ability — less out of loyalty to his muted creator than as a means of self-preservation. He haunts the ghost stations and maintenance tunnels, feeding on the current pulsing through the electrified rails. U-Bahn passengers occasionally glimpse Links as they pass darkened stations. The exile has saved the lives of several maintenance workers who lost their way in the dark. He has a grudge against foreigners (especially the Soviets, Americans, and British), whom he blames for his current predicament, attacking or killing them whenever he thinks he can do so without creating more trouble for himself.

Description: Links resembles a minotaur made of clockwork and pistons. Jets of steam exude from his nostrils as he exhales. His tail has a plug for a standard electric socket, with prongs that flicker with blue sparks when he manifests his influence over electricity. Only his eyes appear fully organic, although they are the oversized eyes of a bull. Whenever Links must communicate with a human without causing a panic, he does so from Twilight or from a position where he cannot easily be seen.

Methods: Links usually makes himself known as a mysterious voice in the darkness, providing warnings to wanderers in order to prevent accidents (because these tend to result in transit authorities temporarily shutting down a line while they investigate). He frequently offers advice to maintenance workers, especially if they don't notice a potential problem or can't determine the cause of the issue that brought them into the tunnels — again, speaking from behind grates or around corners. Links has been known to grow desperate if a technical fault is not repaired quickly enough. In some cases he kidnaps humans and demands they perform the maintenance he could not — freeing them once they restore service.

Virtue: Protective
Vice: Impatient
Rank: 2
Attributes: Power 5, Finesse 3, Resistance 4
Influence: U-Bahn 2
Corpus: 11
Willpower: 7
Size: 7
Speed: 15 (species factor 7)
Defense: 3
Initiative: 7
Armor: 4/2
Numina: Blast (electricity), Implant Mission, Innocuous, Pathfinder
Manifestation: Discorporate, Materialize, Twilight Form
Max Essence: 15
Ban: Links cannot use or manipulate physical tools of any kind.
Bane: A melee weapon wielded left-handed.

FRAULEIN ANJA UHRMACHER

If I start this stopwatch when that clock strikes 4:44 p.m. it will trigger a riot within five blocks of the courthouse.

Background: On an out-of-the way street in West Berlin sits a clockmaker's shop that has been in the same family since the middle of the 17th century. Anja is its current proprietor, and at the same time she has *always* been its proprietor — although this is the first time she has taken Cover as a woman. For the last 300 years, whenever Herr Uhrmacher's current body grew too old to carry out his work he secured a soul pact with one of his grandsons, groomed him as a successor, and cashed in for the young man's body. He did this because he believed it would keep him mystically closer to the original Cover the God-Machine provided and because it serves as a reminder not to get too attached to the lives he must live to avoid angelic attention.

Left with no suitable male heirs, the most recent Herr Uhrmacher deigned to steal the life of his only granddaughter, instead, and became Anja Urhmacher. Fearing any husband would interfere with her work, she never married, instead choosing to have a child out of wedlock. What little time she spends outside her shop Anja spends badgering her 30-year-old son Matthias to get married and start a family.

Anja Uhrmacher has devoted her post-Fall existence to studying arcane physics and is probably the only demon who has ever been able to boast that she has created new Infrastructure. Those Integrators who call themselves Restorationists look to Anja as the founder of their clique and their best hope of successfully repairing the damage the God-Machine suffered during the war. She believes that, in restoring her creator to its former glory, she will be able to adjust its processes enough to redefine her role such that it regards her as an equal partner.

Description: Uhrmacher seldom takes any Cover other than the current proprietor of the clockmaker's shop or his immediate successor (or predecessor). Currently, Anja is the only permanent Cover the demon has, although she keeps a few patch jobs on hand for emergencies.

Anja is a woman in her mid-50s with long-fingered hands and a small scar on her left cheek. She favors practical workman's clothes when she's in her shop and is never without her jeweler's kit, which she uses to study and modify clocks and watches in the field. Although she wears dresses and long skirts with some frequency, these inevitably have several pockets.

In her demon form, Uhrmacher is a short, grey-haired creature with an oversized head and four spindly arms. Her eyes are slowly turning orbs that are solid black on one side and all white on the other.

The clockmaker's shop is filled with thousands of clocks of every description. Many are comprised of exotic materials or have parts with no discernable purpose. Most unusually, only a few of the clocks show the correct local time. In fact, telling time is not the purpose of these clocks at all. They are all part of a crude work of Logistical Infrastructure that can manipulate space and Cover. Functionally, with at least an hour of preparation Anja can use one of her Embeds or Exploits on any target she could see via Clairvoyant Sight. Using this ability more than once per chapter is a compromise. Furthermore, with an additional two hours of preparation time, Anja can generate this effect on behalf of a customer in her shop, affecting any person he has met or place he has visited in the last month — either with her own Embeds and Exploits or that of her customer. However, this latter use risks compromise.

Storytelling Hints: Anja is intelligent but obsessive. Very little of what she says about arcane physics or her clocks makes any sense to anyone else. She knows the history and function of every timepiece in the shop, but it is remarkable how any demon who has spent three centuries on Earth can be so blind when it comes to reading ordinary people. The way she talks about her son, for example, you would think he was a clock with a faulty gear that would work just fine if only she could open up his casing and poke at it with a screwdriver for a couple hours.

Anja has achieved something usually considered impossible — the construction of a functional work of Infrastructure. This makes her a useful plot device the Storyteller can take in many different directions as the needs of the chronicle demand. Is she a potential ally, a mentor figure for the ring, or a dangerous antagonist? A pillar of Unchained society or the object of outcast distrust? Are the angels actively hunting her, or has the God-Machine chosen to let her pursue her pet project for its own reasons? Has she largely avoided the attention of mortal governments, other supernatural beings, and human hunters, or is she days away from being arrested, abducted, or murdered?

Virtue: Analytical
Vice: Callous
Incarnation: Psychopomp
Agenda: Integrator
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 4, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics 2 (History), Crafts 5 (Clocks), Investigation 2, Medicine 1, Occult 4 (Logistical Infrastructure), Science 3
Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Larceny 3 (Locksmithing), Stealth 3, Weaponry 2
Social Skills: Expression 1, Persuasion 1, Streetwise 2
Merits: Area of Expertise 1 (Logistical Infrastructure), Bolthole (clockmaker's shop; No Twilight) 1, Eye for the Strange 2, Good Time Management 1, Interdisciplinary Specialty 1 (Clocks), Patient 1, Resources 2, Suborned Infrastructure 1
Health: 7
Primum: 5
Demonic Form: Clairvoyant Sight, Essence Drain, Extra Mechanical Limbs, Inhuman Intelligence, Inhuman Reflexes, Sense the Angelic, Sonic Acuity, Teleportation
Embeds: Cause and Effect (First Key), Efficiency, In My Pocket, Interference, Like I Built It, Lucky Break (Second Key), Momentum (Third Key), Never Here, Special Someone, Voice of the Machine
Interlocks: Anja's Infrastructure is the manifestation of her first two Interlocks. The first allows her to create Logistical Infrastructure that manifests her Embeds and Exploits in other places. The second allows her to share this capability with other demons. She had hoped that Voice of the Machine would allow her to subvert the God-Machine's control over its angels, but that experiment failed spectacularly.
Exploits: Affliction, Deep Pockets, Four Minutes Ago, Murder by Improbability
Aether/per turn: 14/5
Willpower: 8
Cover: 7 (patch jobs range from 1 to 4)
Size: 5
Speed: 5
Defense: 4
Initiative: 8
Armor: None

Infrastructure

Few demons believe the God-Machine is directly controlling the Cold War, but almost all acknowledge it has not hesitated to take advantage of it to further its own goals. It frequently erects Infrastructure in areas that are politically or militarily important to one or both sides because it can use the heightened human secrecy and security to conceal and protect its projects. In that sense, Berlin is no different from Moscow, Washington, or London. Even taking that into account, however, the God-Machine has built a lot of Infrastructure in Berlin since the end of the war.

Static Radio

The military forces on both sides of the wall use encrypted radio signals to communicate with allies inside and outside of the city. Ordinary radio stations provide residents with



music, news, and entertainment. The Unchained and the God-Machine hijack these channels frequently, adding hidden piggyback transmissions with messages to coordinate their allies or manipulate human listeners.

A high-pitched static hiss renders AM broadcasts between 400 and 700 kHz impossible for anyone within 150 miles of Berlin. This includes all of East Germany, as well as parts of West Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. At night, due to the skywave effect of the Earth's ionosphere, this interference blacks out communications on these frequencies throughout Europe and can occasionally be heard as far away as Moscow. A radio can sometimes pick up intelligible voices at what have become known as AM 444 and AM 666. These nicknames are a bit misleading, as the broadcasts are usually slightly above or below those frequencies. Half the time these voices speak in Russian. The other half they speak English with an American accent. Most of the time they recite seemingly random strings of numbers and letters, but occasionally a listener will catch a phrase or sentence that sounds like a coded order or warning.

The broadcast is coming from one of the high rises in the British quarter of West Berlin, but the large number of tall buildings in the area makes it difficult to pinpoint the exact source. Adding to the difficulty is the presence of the MI-6's HQ within the suspicious area, so intelligence agents tend to take note of outsiders snooping around in the neighborhood.

It appears that the God-Machine is using these transmissions to direct its angels in East Germany and possibly the rest of Europe. Additionally, the radio static might be producing unknown side-effects in humans who are exposed to it, as radio signals frequently play a role in Concealment Infrastructure. Destroying the Static Radio would force the God-Machine to use alternate means of communicating with its agents in the region or cut it off entirely from some of its angels. Moreover, it might well lift the curtain obscuring many of the God-Machine's projects in East Germany. Suborning it, on the other hand, would give the Unchained access to a secure communications channel used by the enemy to coordinate its servants — a powerful intelligence-gathering tool in the hands of any ring or Agency who pulled it off. An outcast might even find a way to manipulate the Static Radio's broadcasts in order to issue false orders to angels or conceal demonic interests from human scrutiny.

The linchpin of this powerful piece of Logistical and Concealment Infrastructure is the radio room hidden near the top floor of the building used as a broadcast station. Aether gathers in the exposed steel girders on the roof of the high rise, which the

Static Radio uses as broadcast antennae. Analyzing the Infrastructure once the demon identifies it requires an Intelligence + Science roll at a –3 penalty.

Interrogation Room #4

The Stasi has several interrogation rooms available to them in their East Berlin headquarters. The GDR's secret police use them to conduct interviews intended to frighten small-time offenders, extract information from enemy operatives, or shatter the ringleaders of seditious groups to serve as a warning to their accomplices. Gespenster agents and Iron Comrades sometimes borrow these spaces, as well, but no one ever seems to notice Interrogation Room #4.

This piece of Elimination Infrastructure exists to decommission angels — particularly Fallen angels. Hunter angels dressed as plainclothes Stasi officers turn over their prizes to the Trumpet responsible for implementing the sanctions procedures. To the outside observer, Interrogation Room #4 looks little different from the Spartan décor of the other interrogation rooms. The furniture varies from seductively comfortable to extraordinarily frank about its real purpose. Torture implements, as the Messenger angel is fond of saying with a smile, are entirely optional.

A trap door in the floor opens to a river of molten steel — one of the God-Machine's infamous reforging facilities — but few captured outcasts see that until the Trumpet completes its "exit interview." In addition to this portal to the recycling facility, this Infrastructure has one other important property. For reasons of arcane physics none among the Unchained understand, demons in Interrogation Room #4 cannot lie. This doesn't mean they must tell the truth, of course. That said, the Messenger angel serves only one function, and is very good at what it does. Very few demons who find themselves in Interrogation Room #4 successfully withhold *all* their secrets. Some manage to protect a close friend or their ring, but most betray everything long before they melt away in the God-Machine's forge.

This Elimination Infrastructure has been the perennial target of the Unchained since the time when its existence was only a worrying rumor. Its location makes it difficult enough to access, and the steady traffic of hunters and angels reporting for decommission further complicates both rescue and sabotage attempts. When a demon who knows far too much about her fellow Unchained falls into angelic hands, however, a desperate and doomed extraction mission often takes place. Discussions of the potential benefits of suborning the Infrastructure are little more than thought experiments, but a place where even demons cannot lie has considerable potential as a tool of diplomacy among the Unchained.

The linchpin of this Elimination Infrastructure is the badge of office the interrogator Trumpet wears on its Stasi uniform. It only dons it when actively engaged in an interrogation. At other times the uniform and badge remain neatly folded in the angel's tenement apartment three blocks away from Stasi HQ. Aether gathers in the furniture and implements of torture as they see use in Interrogation Room #4, although they sit in a storage room when not in use. Analyzing the Infrastructure requires an Intelligence + Intimidation roll at a –2 penalty.

The Day Trains

Checkpoint Bravo at the southern tip of West Berlin provides access to trains that travel across the GDR and into West Germany. Allied trains are not allowed to travel these tracks except by night. Ostensibly, this is to prevent NATO from collecting intelligence on East Germany while traveling between West Berlin and West Germany, but the truth is stranger than that. A scale in the rails near the Checkpoint Bravo end of the rail line determines the weight of freight and personnel the Allies ship into and out of West Berlin each night. The next day, East German trains ship an equal mass of materials in the opposite direction on the same tracks. The specific cargo makes no difference as far as anyone can tell, but if a train hauls a hundred tons from West Germany to West Berlin, a GDR train hauls a hundred tons from the outskirts of West Berlin to a depot a few miles away from the West German border.

The movement of the Day Trains sustains the continued presence of three powerful hunter angels in Berlin, and disrupting this daily ritual would force the trio out of the world for at least a few days if not significantly longer. The linchpin is the cargo scale concealed in the train station near Checkpoint Bravo. Traces of Aether collect in any cargo the Allied trains haul into or out of West Berlin, with its highest concentrations in trains themselves. Analyzing this Logistical Infrastructure requires a successful Intelligence + Crafts roll.

House der Technik

This five-story building in East Berlin has housed dozens of the God-Machine's short term projects since its construction in 1907. It has been a department store, a cinema, a show room for General Electric of Germany, a Nazi office building (and later POW prison), and, most recently, the German Free Trade Union Federation. Records concerning its use between 1914 and 1924 have vanished, but after 1924 it had a basement (which it lacked in the original plans), and the floor plan has changed considerably from its 1907 blueprints. In all that time it has never been renovated, only appropriated for its new function. All attempts to order its demolition have mysteriously failed to be carried out. The building itself benefits from potent Concealment Infrastructure that has been used to cover up dozens of minor works of Logistical and Defensive Infrastructure.

The linchpin of the building's Concealment Infrastructure is a capsule that has gotten stuck in the pneumatic tubes between the third and fourth floors. It contains an uncashed check made payable to the House der Technik's original architect. Aether collects in each pneumatic capsule

FUTURE FATE: HOUSE DER TECHNIK

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, a community of squatter-artists takes over House der Technik and renames it Kunsthaus Tacheles. It remains an artist commune well into the 21st century. Perhaps the Unchained successfully suborned its Concealment Infrastructure to create several Bolt Holes in the building. Or maybe it became a squatters' haven because that Concealment Infrastructure was destroyed. Possibly, however, the God-Machine determined that it would get no further use from the building and abandoned it.

the building uses. A demon who wishes to analyze the Concealment Infrastructure of the building must succeed on an Intelligence + Politics roll at a –3 penalty. The lesser projects the God-Machine frequently houses in the House der Technic have their own linchpins and functions, but their short-term nature grants any analysis attempts a +1 bonus.

Pergamon Museum

Situated on the Museum Island in East Berlin, the Pergamon houses countless relics from ancient times. It suffered damage and looting during the war but reopened with its remaining collection in 1958. Its proverbial scepter and crown jewels are four ancient architectural works packed up stone by stone over the course of a few centuries — the Pergamon Altar (which gives the museum its name), the Market Gate of Miletus, the Ishtar Gate, and the Mshatta Façade. Together they represent four distinct empires at the height of their power — Ancient Babylon, the Greek Empire, the Roman Empire, and the Umayyad Caliphate.

The museum and its four huge treasures are part of a massive work of Logistical Infrastructure. Each is a gateway that opens at midnight on certain nights and allows travel to and from the architectural work's point of origin — using principles of sympathy. These portals remain open for 12 minutes before becoming ordinary doors between various exhibit halls once more. The number of days between opening nights varies according to a fixed rising and falling cycle that corresponds with the first 12 numbers in the Fibonacci sequence — 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, and 89. At the beginning of the cycle the doors open on two consecutive nights, after which the openings take place every other night for two openings. The fifth opening in the sequence takes place after two nights with no opening. The number of days without openings increases until the twelfth opening. After this, the gap shrinks using the same principles. The thirteenth opening takes place on the 90th day after the twelfth opening, and then the period between openings shrinks to 55 days, 34 days, and so forth until the end of the cycle sees openings on two consecutive nights and the sequence begins again from the start. This means that the 23rd, 24th, 1st, and 2nd openings take place over the course of four consecutive nights.

The God-Machine uses the museum to move personnel and materials between the four sites. It never moves supplies into or out of Berlin itself, however, although it is not clear why. On nights of opening, a Shield disguised as a security guard patrols the museum to ensure no one disrupts the supply line or sees something he shouldn't. It also prevents in-the-know GDR refugees from using the gates as a means of escaping East Berlin. Aether collects in each gateway during openings. The linchpin is an out-of-the-way gallery that lies at the exact center of mass for the four gateways. Museum patrons almost never enter this gallery, which features an ancient clockwork device reminiscent of the Antikythera mechanism whose gears whirr and turn only during the 12 minutes of each nocturnal opening. Analyzing the Infrastructure requires an Intelligence + Academics roll with a –1 penalty.

Playing the Game

Although the Cold War has been going on since the Battle of Berlin in 1945, the construction of the Berlin Wall on August 13th, 1961 marks a steadily growing coldness between East and West, Soviet Union and Allies. The chill spreads through the city like frost on a cracked windowpane. It grows like a wall stacked stone upon stone by calloused hands. As the chronicle progresses, Berlin should feel increasingly claustrophobic. The enemies of the Unchained gradually multiply and employ more effective tactics against them. The espionage between East and West evolves from small intelligence-gathering operations to massive spy rings with agents at the highest levels of government. And underneath the skin of the city the gears of the God-Machine grind on, building elaborate Infrastructure to make Berlin ever more dangerous for the demons who hide there.

It is no accident that much of the terminology 21st-century demons use to describe their operations and abilities stems from this time and place in history. Cold War Berlin is a crucible that will test the resolve and cunning of its outcasts. Half a century hence, demons will look back on it as a time when the hopes of both Hell and human survival flickered and grew so dim that it seemed they would perish. This chronicle aims to capture the bleakness of the age while giving the players' characters an opportunity to bring the world back from the brink or to stand helpless as it tumbles into the eternal winter that threatens to consume it.

To that end we provide several stories that can be introduced either one at a time or layered upon each other until the players' characters begin to despair of maintaining their freedom in the face of the challenges arrayed against them. Some of these stories are fairly small in scale. Others have wide-reaching scope that might only play out after many chapters.

Ghost Numbers

East Berlin has one of the most advanced telephone networks in Europe. When an aging automated switchboard is replaced with a newer model able to route more calls, however, the city's phone system begins to exhibit strange behavior.

Blueprint

The new switchboard is the linchpin of Logistical Infrastructure that allows East Germany's phone system to connect callers to people who were killed during the bombing of Berlin and the Battle of Berlin. Perhaps they are ghosts who don't realize they are dead and so remember Berlin as it was during World War II, or maybe they are echoes of the past transmitted into the present along the phone lines.

However it actually works, its purpose is to make contact with several people who lived in Berlin at the beginning of the war in order to diagnose a problem or glitch that first manifested at that time. The God-Machine will use this information to correct flaws in one of its projects in the city — although whether such a correction will be good or bad for Berlin's Unchained remains unclear. A ring might learn important details about the God-Machine's plans by intercepting its servants' communications with these lost souls. They might find it easier to disrupt the correction by destroying or suborning the switchboard that makes the project possible.

Infrastructure

The anomalous behavior began after the grand opening of a recently rebuilt apartment building. Residents of the apartment reported receiving calls from strangers asking for people they had never heard of before. Oftentimes when friends called the residents, another person answered the phone. When the calls got through, sometimes another party was on the line. At first the residents assumed the fault lay with the lines or switchboards, but when phone technicians found no problems there, the rumor began to circulate that the Stasi was waging some kind of strange psychological warfare campaign on everyone in the building.

Moving Parts

- The phenomenon spreads throughout East Berlin. Sometimes a wrong number will connect a caller to a stranger. Most of these end the way wrong numbers usually do — a moment of confusion, confirmation that the number was misdialed, and finally a brief apology as both sides disconnect. Once in a while, however, the person who answers one of these ghost numbers will say something that gives the caller pause — usually a reference to World War II or someone associated with it.
- One of the ghost numbers finds its way into an East German urban legend. Children and teenagers dial it to "crank call the Devil" — an elderly-sounding man who shouts obscenities and threats at callers. In truth, the victim of these pranks is a deceased World War I veteran with PTSD. Although he is seldom lucid on the phone, he is one of the subjects the God-Machine needs in order to diagnose and compensate for its error.
- A group of East German parapsychologists at the University of East Berlin attempts to systematically catalogue all these ghost numbers, believing themselves to be communicating with people in the past. Concerned that the citizens of Nazi Germany might encourage the researchers to pursue subversive agendas, the Stasi shuts down their research. One of the parapsychologists escapes into West Berlin with a handful of the phone numbers, including one for a man claiming to be an engineer working on the Messerschmitt Me 262 — the first operational jet-powered fighter aircraft — alongside Hans Von Ohain. The engineer is one of the subjects the God-Machine needs to contact as part of this project, and it dispatches an angel to bring the rogue parapsychologist back to East Berlin.
- In the process of attempting to tap East Berlin's phones, the Allies inadvertently tapped some kind of main switchboard for the ghost phone numbers. They are currently collecting what they believe is top secret intelligence communications disguised as conversations about events that took place in 1945 Berlin. They have enlisted top cryptographers and linguists in an effort to crack the GDR's code, but have not yet succeeded in doing so. Demons who infiltrate this operation might be able to use it to eavesdrop on conversations between the God-Machine's servants and the subjects the project requires. A misunderstanding by the Allies might instead result in an international incident the players' characters will have to hush up.

The Sewer Troll

Although the Berlin Wall does not make the Girrmann Group's mission easier, they continue to sneak refugees out of East Berlin through the sewer system. As summer turns to autumn, however, that route becomes too dangerous for humans to risk, and even the Unchained will learn to fear what hides there.



Blueprint

The God-Machine has had Gears in the sewers for centuries, but it recently greatly expanded its subterranean operations in Berlin. Angels guard the new Infrastructure their creator has built around the facility that houses them, driving off or killing humans and supernatural beings who wander too close to the Gears. The God-Machine's servants avoid parts of the sewers that see heavy traffic, including the ones the Girrmann Group uses to sneak refugees out of East Berlin. However, emanations from these projects have created many particularly large and nasty cryptids, and some of them have claimed sections of the sewers as their territory.

Infrastructure

Cryptids frequently make their way into Berlin's sewers. Most are mere vermin little more dangerous than ordinary rats and cockroaches. A couple days back, though, something big attacked members of the Girrmann Group during an extraction mission. It killed five people — three refugees and two escorts, including a stigmatic — and dragged off a second stigmatic. The two survivors told frantic stories of a bipedal creature half alligator and half wolf, although they disagreed on which parts of its body belonged to which animal. Among the Unchained the creature became known as the sewer troll.

Moving Parts

- Although West Berlin only recently learned of the sewer troll, its existence is not news to the VoPo of East Berlin. The cryptid makes occasional forays into the city to hunt. Several horrific maulings and many mysterious disappearances are blamed on the creature. The Girrmann Group believes East Berlin upgraded the quality of its sewer grates to prevent refugees from escaping into the West, but the truth is that the GDR ordered this as a measure against further cryptid attacks. Now that the sewer troll cannot easily enter East Berlin, however, it will have to find new hunting grounds.

- The Anarchists suspect a monstrous cryptid — perhaps a large animal that wandered deep into the sewers where the God-Machine is known to have Gears. They send a ring of demons down to investigate, and none of them are seen again. Possibly the sewer troll is more than a match for four experienced demons, or maybe there are others like it down there. Whatever the truth, until someone clears the way the sewers will no longer be an easy way to circumvent the Wall.

- Dennis Keller, the stigmatic survivor of the initial attack on the Girrmann Group emerges

unexpectedly from the sewers of West Berlin. He has no memories of events after the attack. He has been wandering lost in the sewers for weeks, but his body does not appear nearly as malnourished as it should be. Dennis has been infected by reclavore — a symbiotic, bacterial cryptoflora that lives in his gut and allows him to satisfy his nutritional needs by eating Aether. While this isn't likely to end world hunger, the God-Machine could use it to render its Concealment Infrastructure virtually invisible to demons and stigmatics, since devoured Aether leaves no aetheric resonance to detect. Is this the purpose of the new Infrastructure in the sewers, or is it an unintended byproduct? Is the God-Machine as yet unaware of the existence of reclavore, or has it already used it to hide Gears in Berlin and beyond? Whatever the truth, the mere existence of the cryptoflora is dangerous enough. Letting the God-Machine implement its use on a worldwide scale would be devastating to demons. Braving the sewer cryptids to find the source of reclavore is daunting enough. If it turns out to be the intended product of the sewer Infrastructure, however, the only solution is to suborn or raze some of the most heavily guarded Infrastructure in Berlin.

Herr Arger's Confession

After 15 years of careful research and extensive investigation, the Bändiger capture Herr Arger — the demon whose message to the Thule Society triggered the rise of the Nazi Party. Using methods known only to themselves, they secure a confession from the outcast that will draw demon hunters to West Berlin like locusts to a field of wheat.

Blueprint

Demons can control their emotions and can make lies seem like truth, but that doesn't mean they cannot break under interrogation. The Bändiger had all the time they needed to extract a confession out of the demon whose message dashed their hopes of returning to Thule. Although Herr Arger resisted the occultists' tortures as long as he could, at the end he gave them most of what they wanted.

The Bändiger know Herr Arger is a rebel angel and that he is not unique in Berlin, much less the world. They discovered that demons walk the world in the flesh of mortals, manipulating and sabotaging human institutions from the shadows. Herr Arger has implicated several other demons in Berlin. The only information he kept from them was anything having to do with the God-Machine; but that may make matters worse, for it left the Bändiger with the impression that the Unchained serve the USSR.

Infrastructure

Fräulein Silber, a member of Herr Arger's ring, issues a warning to any Unchained in West Berlin who care to listen. She has failed to rescue the Messenger from the Bändiger, but her infiltration revealed how much the occultists had learned. That they had extracted any information at all from a demon as old and experienced as Herr Arger was surprising enough — and frightening for any other outcast who might fall into their grasp. Fräulein Silber does not know what became of Herr Arger after his interrogation. Hopefully the Bändiger simply killed him, which would have been a mercy. More likely he was reclaimed by a hunter angel, but it is also possible that he was turned over to agents of the Church for further examination.

Moving Parts

- The Bändiger take their discovery to Chancellor Adenauer and convince him that demons represent a serious and insidious threat to democracy and the souls of West Germany's citizens. Given Adenauer's close friendship with the Catholic Church, it is unsurprising that he contacts Rome for its aid in addressing this menace. In a matter of months West Berlin is positively swarming with demon hunters.

- In addition to the problems one would expect to arise from this increased human scrutiny, it appears that someone within one of the Temporal Agencies in West Berlin is selling the dossiers of local outcasts to the Church's demon hunters. While the initial evidence points to an Integrator or group of Integrators within the Agency, closer scrutiny reveals inconsistencies in this case. Perhaps hard-line Saboteurs are trying to eliminate the Turncoats or simply break their power. Perhaps the leaders of the Agency are using the demon hunters to fray the Covers of local Unchained in order to drive them into the Agency's debt to replace those Covers. It is possible an angel or other agent of the God-Machine has infiltrated the highest levels of the Agency and is exploiting demonic paranoia in order to foment chaos and distrust within Unchained society.

- One of Herr Arger's old Covers turns up in East Berlin. Did he escape, was he rescued, or did the Bändiger find a way to turn him into their undercover agent among the Unchained? Herr Arger has no close allies on that side of the Wall, so it seems strange for him to operate there voluntarily. More strangely, he soon infiltrates Gespenster, which becomes a staunch defender of existing God-Machine projects. Based on this, some outcasts claim Herr Arger has been reclaimed by his creator and serves it once more as an angel. This seems unlikely, however, for a demon cast into the God-Machine's forges and remade as an angel seldom retains the Cover she had as a demon.

- The CIA gives American scientist Dr. Edward Buchanan permission to investigate poltergeist activity in Spandau Prison. While the records of

HUNTER: THE VIGIL AND COLD WAR BERLIN

Angels are not the only ones hunting demons in 1961 Berlin. Groups with access to Hunter: The Vigil and its supplements might have noticed a few references to some of the compacts and conspiracies from that game. Hunter organizations that fit in particularly well in the setting include:

The Loyalists of Thule: This splinter of the Thule Society seeks atonement for the mistakes made before World War II, a goal many of the Unchained share with them. Few human organizations know supernatural Berlin better, so they have the potential to be useful allies, but if they ever learn the truth about the Widdershins Windmill they also have ample reason to despise angels and demons alike.

Malleus Maleficarum: Sent by the Church at the request of Chancellor Adenauer, these witch hunters and vampire slayers have turned their talents to rooting out the demons hiding in West Berlin. They have learned to recognize the telltale markings of stigmatics and glitches, although they can't tell the difference between them and so mistake stigmatics for demons with some frequency.

Guest Appearances: Other compacts and conspiracies that might make an appearance in a Cold War Berlin chronicle include Null Mysteriis, Aegis Kai Doru, Taskforce: VALYRIE, Knights of Saint George, the Barrett Commission, and VASCU.

his findings remain classified, Dr. Buchanan uses the money he receives from the Allies for his services to found Leuchtlaboratorium in West Berlin. Ostensibly a research laboratory dedicated to the investigation and study of occult phenomena in the city, Leuchtlaboratorium's focus is on angels, exiles, *qashmallim*, and demons. To this end, it is particularly interested in infiltrating or subverting the Bändiger in hopes of learning the occult society's secrets about these luminous beings. Eventually Dr. Buchanan will succeed in this ambition, laying the groundwork for what will become Luminous Labs, which the Deva Corporation will ultimately acquire.

Radio Free Hell

Agents of the God-Machine disrupt a critical source of news among the demons of both Berlins. They then use this tool of the Unchained first to spread misinformation and then to sow discord between the outcasts of East and West.

Blueprint

Propaganda campaigns play an important role in the Cold War. After all, when any troop movement into enemy territory could set off nuclear Armageddon, leaflets and radio broadcasts serve as less-inflammatory proxies. Radio Free Europe was conceived as a propaganda source intended to expose East Germans to Western culture, to encourage dissent, and to aid refugees seeking to defect. Its broadcasts from West Berlin started in 1949, and the concept has since spread to other Western cities situated near the boundary of the Iron Curtain.

Demons, particularly Inquisitors, long exploited these as a means of transmitting news to Unchained throughout Berlin. Non-demons could not hear these messages, so it was deemed a relatively safe way of notifying outcasts of angel sightings, alerting them to God-Machine activity, and making them aware of the availability of goods and services of interest to demons. Among the outcasts of Berlin, these demon-hidden tracks became known as Radio Free Hell. No one knew the precise identities of the Inquisitors who created the broadcasts, placed them on tapes, and arranged for them to find their way onto the radio, but the information was consistently accurate — no more likely to contain misinformation than any other intelligence briefing. Its only real flaw was it covered mostly events in West Berlin, but enough messages from the East got through that every day's broadcast usually had one or two items of interest to the Unchained of East Berlin.

Infrastructure

Shortly after the construction of the Berlin Wall, the Radio Free Hell broadcasts come to an abrupt halt. Most outcasts assume something has spooked the Inquisitors behind this channel of communication, but as weeks drag out into months they amend this to an assumption that the angels have captured the broadcasters.

Moving Parts

- Radio Free Hell broadcasts resume without offering any explanation, but their information is less reliable. At first it seems likely a new batch of Inquisitors has taken up the fallen mantle, but doesn't have the extensive network of contacts their predecessors possessed. The inaccuracies are rookie errors as innocuous, if worrying, as journalists failing to check their facts, but what they get wrong seems entirely plausible. The errors become more egregious as time goes on. When several broadcasts lead West German demons directly into traps set by hunter angels, it grows increasingly clear that Radio Free Hell has been subverted as part of a massive

disinformation campaign serving agents of the God-Machine.

• Western outcasts no longer trust the Radio Free Hell broadcasts, and most demons on that side of the Wall have stopped listening to them completely. Whoever is behind the radio disinformation campaign abruptly changes tactics. The broadcasts paint an increasingly bleak picture of events in West Berlin, claiming its Unchained have been subverted by the God-Machine. With most other communication channels with East Berlin cut off by the Berlin Wall and heightened human security, this propaganda is often the only news of the West the Unchained of East Berlin have. That it aimed to sow discord between demons could be no accident, but the damage has already been done. Western demons often receive chilly, if not hostile, receptions when they find themselves on the other side of the Wall.

• At this point, simply shutting down Radio Free Hell entirely will only play into the enemy's narrative that West Berlin is no longer safe for demons. Even restoring the communication channel to its original state is no guarantee that accusations of subversion will not persist, but at least it can't possibly make matters worse for the relations between East and West. However, the God-Machine almost certainly expects the demons to seize this resource and will no doubt be prepared for any operation targeting it. That may, in fact, be the point — to flush outcasts into the open so they may be more easily tagged and collected by the God-Machine's hunter angels.

The Church of Reconciliation

Berlin has a Wall and a *Wall*. The GDR erected the Berlin Wall virtually overnight to prevent East German citizens from escaping into West Berlin. The God-Machine's servants are building a second Wall — an arcane echo intended to cut off all supernatural means of communication and travel between the two cities.

Blueprint

The Church of Reconciliation stands on the border between East and West Berlin, within spitting distance of the French Sector. The Berlin Wall was built around the church — an urban island between two death strips, accessible only to the Grepos, who use it as an observation post. The handful of border police regularly stationed here are all members of a God-Machine cult called Brüderlichkeit der Versöhnung (Fraternal Brotherhood of Reconciliation) and maintain the Gears hidden in the basement.

The church is a piece of Defensive Infrastructure that reinforces the Berlin Wall against supernatural forces. When it first became active in October it only protected the physical barrier from the most heavy-handed of occult assaults — vulgar displays that would likely attract undue human attention anyway — so its effects were not immediately obvious. To maintain the Arcane Wall, once per month the cultists must anoint the Gears with four cups of blood from one refugee whose attempt to cross the Wall failed. It doesn't technically need to be someone who died trying to escape, but this tends to raise fewer questions than the inexplicable exsanguination of someone the Grepos captured without a shot fired or a struggle.

Infrastructure

Embeds whose effects should be undetectable become unreliable when used to exert influence on the other side of the Wall. Dogs and birds of prey savage animal messengers. Guards and police seize books and documents that hide demonic missives without explanation. Critical words and phrases disappear from conversations via Across a Crowded Room. The Unchained suspect powerful Infrastructure is at work, although no Saboteur has identified the source of this interference.

Moving Parts

- The church's Gears require the blood of only one victim per month to maintain the functioning of the Arcane Wall, but additional sacrifices strengthen it considerably. The Shield responsible for protecting the church and ensuring its Gears are well-fed goads the cultists into bringing more victims' blood to water the Infrastructure. The bodies of refugees disappear from morgues and funeral parlors. As the cultists grow more desperate for new sacrificial victims, they kill imprisoned escapees or arrange for a criminal's release only to murder him a few days later. Pushed to extremes, the cultists begin aiding or even inciting escape attempts — feigning sympathy for their victim's plight so that they can betray the refugee at the last moment. As more of these ploys succeed, the Arcane Wall grows increasingly impenetrable (see below).

- As time goes on using supernatural abilities to cross the Berlin Wall becomes more dangerous. Stigmatics who can see spirits describe the Arcane Wall as an impossibly high, barbed wire fence in which ensnared ghosts twist painfully and futilely. Demons who take ephemeral form must contend with this barrier in Twilight just as they would with the physical obstacle in corporeal Berlin. No soldiers with rifles and spotlights watch from the echoes of the guard towers, but at least two angels capable of seeing and affecting both the physical and spiritual worlds patrol the border between the cities to prevent unauthorized crossings in either direction. These angels seem particularly interested in the portion of the Wall that borders the French Sector.

- The linchpin is an unexploded American bomb from World War II that rests in the church's basement, buried in a pile of rubble that was never cleared out. Bringing GDR attention to this ordinance might





prompt an evacuation that would prevent the cultists from feeding the Gears on schedule. The bomb is only a few yards away from the Gears, so setting it off would almost certainly damage the Infrastructure beyond repair. A demon who successfully suborns the Church of Reconciliation Infrastructure could adjust the permeability of the Arcane Wall — allowing some beings and powers to pass through it while refusing passage to others. Of course, any plan involving the church must contend with the angels in the area. The angels that patrol the Arcane Wall cannot enter the church, but they keep watchful eyes on the wall that surrounds it. The Shield in charge of the church has grown a little too zealous in its desire to feed the Gears and could be driven to Fall.

Bad Blood

The KGB discovers that vampires are manipulating GDR politics and sends Iron Comrades to crush these interlopers. A Temporal Agency sees an opportunity to expand its influence in East Germany and assigns operatives to infiltrate the Iron Comrades. Servants of the God-Machine quietly seize control of Gespenster.

Blueprint

Vampires have inhabited Berlin for as long as it could call itself a city. For centuries the dead have exerted influence over local politics to protect their own interests, occasionally reaching out to manipulate nations and empires from the safety of the German city. This didn't stop during World War II, and it certainly didn't end when the Soviet Union carved up Berlin into East and West. Vampires found their way into comfortable posts within the Socialist Unity Party of Germany as they had within every royal court and government bureaucracy. They warred among themselves quietly, as is the habit of their kind. Somehow Vladimir Semichastny, the new head of the KGB, learned that the dead had infiltrated the East German government. What's more, he took the threat so seriously that he dispatched at least a dozen Iron Comrades to identify and destroy every vampire in East Berlin. The leaders of the dead community know this could mean trouble but don't yet regard it as a serious threat. They could ally themselves with the markgraf of West Berlin, but the dead of East Berlin do not really want to have anything to do with that mad tyrant. Vampire hunts by humans are nothing new, after all. This time, though, the humans aren't working alone.

Infrastructure

Many new faces arrive at the KGB headquarters in East Berlin. These agents come fresh from Moscow, and their thickly accented German doesn't so much say "intelligence operatives" as it does "enforcers." They show up unannounced in government offices and make quiet appearances at Party meetings. Within a few weeks the executions begin. Officially, these are crackdowns on government corruption, but every demon who has regular contact with the vampires of East Berlin quickly notices the pattern.

Moving Parts

- No one knows why Chairman Semichastny bears the dead such a deep grudge, but a dozen Iron Comrades with the promise of "as many as you need" speaks volumes about the depth of his loathing. These psychic KGB operatives have impressive capabilities for humans, but without the element of surprise they are no match for most vampires in a toe-to-toe fight. Despite their fierce loyalty to the USSR, they quickly recognize that their mission is an impossible one. Reinforcements may prolong the conflict, but the Iron Comrades' mission in East Berlin will require more than a handful of psychics with big guns.

- The Tempters of the GDR Temporal Agency have acquired considerable political influence in East Berlin over the last few decades, but they have as yet been unable to topple the powerful political machine the vampires have maintained for centuries. The Agency's bosses learn of the KGB's vampire hunt and see an opportunity to eliminate their longtime rivals for power. They send Agents to assist the Iron Comrades — quietly at first, but more directly once they have established themselves as trustworthy allies. Agents of the KGB work together with operatives of the Agency to quietly identify and ruthlessly execute the vampires within the city. Only those Iron Comrades stationed in East Berlin know of the alliance, and even the psychics are not entirely sure of the nature of their companions. Once the KGB achieves its goals in East Berlin, the Agency's leaders expect to easily fill the power vacuum the vampires leave behind using new Covers they are already tailoring to fit the roles.

- They'll never admit it, but the Stasi is not pleased that the Soviet Union has sent the KGB to handle a threat that should be a GDR concern. That non-human entities somehow avoided the Stasi's attention is a considerable embarrassment for the organization, and no one's eye was more blackened by this failure of intelligence than the agents of Gespenster. There isn't much they can do now. The Iron Comrades have the blessing of the Soviets to investigate and eliminate corrupting influences within the GDR's government. Eventually, however, the Gespenster operatives hear rumors that some of the Iron Comrades' local assistants are themselves non-human entities. They conduct a quiet investigation using their extensive network of informants. The angels of the God-Machine who operate within Gespenster take a keen interest in the result of these inquiries.

- In time, matters come to a boil. The Iron Comrades and their Unchained allies hunt East Berlin's vampires. Gespenster and the undercover angels within their organization root out the demons among the city's KGB. The few surviving vampires arrange for Gespenster to discover more outcasts to root out — within the KGB and beyond it. The Agency distracts Gespenster by directing attention to the demons of a rival Agency.

Inspirations

Cold City, by Malcolm Craig. A roleplaying game about monster hunting and espionage in Berlin during the post-war occupation, before the division of Germany into East and West. *Cold City* has a lot of grist for running investigation stories with secret agendas in the early days of the Cold War, and its catalog of Nazi occult plots is a great inspiration for projects of the God-Machine.

The Lives of Others (dir. Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, 2006). While set in the 1980s, this film dramatizes politics and personal passions intertwined with the Wall and divided Germany. The main hook, in which a Stasi officer is assigned to monitor a playwright because of his superior's secret romantic jealousy, is a good example of how the layers of deception in a demon's life may have nothing at all to do with the Machine.

Spione, by Ron Edwards. This roleplaying game includes a detailed analysis of the Cold War spy genre, with special attention paid to Berlin. While it's very much its own game and not something you can poach rules from for the Chronicles of Darkness, the genre criticism alone is worth the price of admission.

The Spy Who Came in from the Cold, by John le Carré. We also cited le Carré in the **Demon** core book, and his fiction has been an inspiration for much of the game in the present day. However, it deserves particular consideration in the Cold War Berlin setting. *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* concludes in the early days of the Berlin Wall, the event which kicks off this chapter.







"There's not a good onomatopoeia for that sound when a fist cracks a cheekbone."

The detective leaned over the table, with one foot on a chair. "That's a fancy fuckin' word, right there. Did you buy it with the drug money?"

"It means a word that sounds like the sound it describes." A large man with a shaved head and a tan raincoat crossed his arms and relaxed into the most uncomfortable old wooden chair in the five boroughs.

"I know what it means!" The detective kicked over the chair's mate and put a finger in the man's face. "Enough games. Tell me what happened!"

"As I was saying, Officer Thompson, I punched his fuckin' face in. And in accordance with New York Penal Code 35.15, I was perfectly within my rights as a citizen to do so. He had a gun in my face, so I put a fist in his face."

"You're covering something. First off, you still haven't told me why you were on the scene at an abandoned factory in Harlem when a drug deal was going down. Second off, the lab says there's no way your fist did that much damage to that junkie's face. You'd have marks on your knuckles. You'd have chipped bones. What aren't you telling me, Brown?"

The man in the tan coat kicked his feet up onto the table. "I've got a strong constitution. I inherited that from my granddaddy. You know, the one your granddaddy owned? I was at the warehouse because that's my neighborhood, there was lights on, and I'm a concerned fuckin' citizen. That's why."

The detective paced across the room with his forehead in his hand. "Damn it, Brown. Help me help you. If you were buying drugs, just say it. We'll sign a deal. You testify. You'll walk."

"Excuse me if I'm not too keen on trusting a deal from the police. I'm telling you, I wasn't buying. I was patrolling. And I can't tell you anything yet, because I'm on the verge of something big. You let me walk out this door, and you'll have a bust on your hands by the end of the month. Think about it, Officer Thompson. Breathe in, and smell that sweet promotion."

Thompson stopped, and instinctively took a deep breath in. He shook his head. "Brown, you're a private investigator. You're not a cop. I might turn a blind eye, but the NYPD doesn't take kindly to vigilante justice."

Brown rolled his eyes and shook his head. "It doesn't have to. It just needs to stay the hell out of my way. You eat your donuts, and take your kickbacks, and I'll catch the bad guys so you can look good. It's a win–win."

Thompson winced, and put a finger in Brown's face. "You're walking a dangerous line, Brown. I've got kids out there dying in the street. I've got homeless numbers like you wouldn't believe. Crime's an epidemic, because unemployment's an epidemic. We fight on those streets every god damned day. You and your hoodlum trash are making it worse for everyone."

A little spark grew behind Brown's eyes. In a split second, he went from sitting to standing. Before Thompson could react, he had the detective's tie tight around his neck. He stood face to face with Thompson, pulling the detective over the table. "Don't you fuckin' think you know those streets better than me. You need to back off just like I said. We can do this nice, or we can do this rough."

"McNabb! McNabb, get in here!" Thompson choked out through the constraining cornflower blue tie.

"Your men can't hear you. They can't hear you, and they can't see you. Now, you and me, we're gonna make an agreement right here and now, you got that?" Little bits of Brown's spittle smacked against Thompson's face, adding emphasis to his coarse tone.

"What are you? What do you want?" Thompson stammered, and reached for his belt.

"Your gun's gone, Officer Thompson. I took it before you sat me down. Now, are we gonna negotiate, or are you gonna keep trying to pull this shit?"

Thompson put his hands up in submission. "Fine. What do you want?"

"That's the spirit, officer. I've already told you what I want. I want you to back the fuck off. Let me handle this one. When I get your kingpin, he'll come gift-wrapped on your doorstep with a little fuckin' bow. You can march him right into the station, and take all the credit. I just want your men off my tail. I'll keep my turf safe. You get your jaywalkers and small-time pimps. If it's big news, you bring it to me."

Thompson gave it a moment's thought, then nodded. "There's a cartel moving in off 145th and Amsterdam…"

Brown cut him off. "That ain't my turf. Outside my neighborhood, you all can do whatever you want. Inside my neighborhood, you're security guards for show. Play it right, you're gonna be chief of police some day."

"Chief?"

"Chief. You're gonna crack every case that hits my hood. You let me walk out that door, and you file a report that looks kindly on whatever it is you want to say I'm doing out there, and I promise you that you'll have your man within the week. You and me, we could be good friends." Brown released the detective.

"I'll let you walk, on account of a lack of evidence. We'll see about that culprit." He straightened his tie, and dusted off his slacks before heading to the door.

"We'll be talkin' again soon, Officer Thompson." Brown stood and gave a mocking salute.

Thompson stopped, his hand on the doorknob. "These talks?" He looked back to Brown. "They can't happen here."

Brown gave a toothy grin. "Yes, sir."

The Bowery Dogs

New York City. The 1970s. Werewolves. What comes to mind when you toss these three things together? Inequality? Violence? Territoriality? Desperation? Attitude? Change? All these, and more? The thing is, the 1970s, New York, and Werewolves intersect so much, the Venn diagram of the three looks a lot like a circle. That lets us hone in on those "back to basics" elements that normally pop in a **Werewolf: The Forsaken** game. We get to keep it simple. If we're not sweating the complexities, we get to hit harder and faster with the core conceits of a **Werewolf** game.

Ford to City: Drop Dead

–New York Daily News, October 30, 1975

Theme and Mood: When All You Got's a Little...

The 1970s

Our setting is the 1970s. We're keeping it vague in order to keep it simple. We're not too concerned about the chronological order of historical events; we're just concerned that those events can act as tools in our kit.

Now, if you want to bother with the specifics, the dates, the times, the people that were actually on those streets, you can do that. The Internet's your playground, and this decade's been well-documented by many capable journalists. You'll want to run your game over an extended period, sometimes with a year or more between chapters. But we're not working with that as the default assumption, because we want a story that shoots like an Uzi, not like a cannon.

Many of the human conflicts don't directly affect the Forsaken. Economic woes mean little when a simple Gift can net some fast cash. Drugs barely affect them, so they're not likely to get hooked. Racial violence looks a lot different when you can not only survive a lynching, but emerge from a pile of bodies that'll never harass a marginalized person again. If you think the Forsaken are at the top of their game in New York, you're damned right. However, these problems affect the territory, they affect family, they affect friends. It's all about encroaching on turf, and all these problems do it in spades. Keeping a neighborhood's one thing, but watching the foundation literally crumble with neglect is another. Keeping a city block secure isn't so hard until the law-abiding residents flee for better job markets. The 1970s teach a hard lesson: Maintaining territory depends on more than just the pack. It teaches community the hard way, as the Forsaken scramble to maintain what ties they can.

New York City

We're set in New York City. It's not the one you can see right now if you pay to head up the Statue of Liberty's torch. It's an elemental, fictional, cinematic construct. It's the New York City of *Taxi Driver*, of *Shaft*, and of *The Warriors*. It's New York with the contrast turned up, then layered with a light film grain and gray tone.

In our New York City, everything matters. New York summers are hot, sure. But in our New York, we notice this when a poor Storyteller character's shoe sole

breaks off, and his feet blister on the unforgiving pavement. New York winters are a bitch, sure. But in our New York, the snow comes down hardest on the last day your character can pay her rent before eviction. The violence hits home. The economic disparity affects friends, families, and neighbors. If it's worth seeing, it's worth feeling. That's our New York.

Most of these problems affect the Forsaken on the periphery. The hot concrete might be uncomfortable to the Uratha, but it won't cause blisters the way it will on a human. For this reason, it's important to build relationships and make the setting live and breathe. Otherwise, the players won't care when the pain, the decay, and the despair set in. If you let them live in their own private social island, they may wall off and cease to engage with the things that make this setting different from any other modern urban story.

GANGS

Every now and again, a game offers startling, thought-provoking insights. It can break philosophical barriers and communicate complex concepts with unparalleled simplicity. Here we go: Packs have many similarities to gangs. You can use pack territoriality as a metaphor for what was happening in the real world at the time.

Shocking, right? But now that we've got the obvious out of the way, let's dig deeper. Because there's something more than a little creepy about attributing the behaviors of disenfranchised and oppressed youth to those of murderous, unnatural monsters. Drawing those comparisons could go to very disturbing places very quickly. Not to say that there's anything wrong with metaphor and exploring real world problems through the lens of fiction. After all, it's one of the things speculative fiction does best. But it's worth approaching with consideration and sensitivity.

We can't point to one, single reason real people turn to crime. For every crime, and for every person practicing it, you can find at least one different reason. The easiest way to deal with this is to always approach characters as people, not as archetypes, then to always ask "why?" If the answer sounds like it could apply to anyone, ask again. Keep going until you have an understanding of the person behind the action.

Forsaken, like gangs, share common goals, but are still at each others' throats. The gangs aren't hurting for territory. New York's jam-packed with people and businesses; there's more than enough to go around. So why do the gangs fight over the same few blocks? Why do they push the borders, when they could just as soon grow outward? They'd get more from standing together against corrupt law enforcement and attacks from more-organized crime syndicates. The Forsaken have the same problem. Enough Forsaken live in New York that with a little organization, they could keep the Border Marches safe from invaders, and maintain their own little fiefdoms without contest.

Just remember that people don't always make the best choices. They're not looking at character sheets where they can sit down and think about the most sound option; they're fighting for their lives.

Often, they don't even think they're making the best choices. When you've been raised all your life to think reputation is the only thing that matters, you'll take a bullet to look strong. You know as well as anyone that a person with a bullet wound looks an idiot. But a strong idiot.

Sometimes, they thought they were making the best choices at the time, but they got in too deep and felt they had to stay the course. When you're broke, sometimes pride's all you've got. Sometimes, they think they don't have another option. And sometimes, the best option seems like the worst. People in gangs, they aren't playing a game. Not really, no matter what they say. They're living. They're making do with what they've got. Mechanical optimization isn't something they have a concept of. If you can apply that to your Forsaken, you've applied what's possibly the best lesson that the gang-as-pack metaphor has to offer.

DRUGS

In the 1970s, seemingly credible news outlets published articles stating that cocaine was not addictive. Even though laws prohibited usage, the media showed cocaine as a chic, glamorous lifestyle choice. While LSD was on the decline, Vietnam veterans commonly adopted heroin to distract and numb the pains of the war. Marijuana crept upward in popularity, as federal laws lightened penalties and drew distinctions between cannabis and harder drugs.

New York stood as a hotbed of drug culture in the 1970s. Today, if you walk Times Square, you'll find all manner of family entertainment and general popular culture. In the 1970s, Times Square was the perfect place to score coke, to hire a prostitute, or find even less savory services. By this point in time, over a third of the occupants of the prison system did time for drug charges, even if they were arrested for robbery or assault. The system wanted to make drugs the problem.

On top of the horrors of addiction, drugs exacerbated or at least reflected other problems. While African Americans made up less than one-third of cocaine users, they made up over four-fifths of all cocaine convictions.

Drugs offered solid profits for gang and Mafia interests, fueling their recruitment efforts. Drugs kept the downtrodden from participating in many important social battles, and kept them as viable targets of the right-wing political powers that would end up called "The Moral Majority" in the late 1970s.

The Forsaken have little to fear from drugs, at least directly. Nothing pushes hard enough against their metabolism to set in, and addiction's just not a concern. These things can hurt the wolf-blooded in their lives, however, and pose a serious threat to many of the people in their territories. Worse, heavy drug use opens the mind to possession. Drug-friendly communities remain prime targets for Urging and Claiming. A wasted subculture is like a toy store to spirits looking for access to the flesh world.

Smart Forsaken watch the flow of mind-altering substances in their territories. There's only so far one can regulate a neighborhood's free time, but for many people, drug use is a convenience culture. Removing convenient





sources removes the motivation to get high for all but the most addicted users.

ATMOSPHERE: A TV CULTURE

Remember that televisions were much more common in the 1970s than they are now; before the Internet, it was a primary source of entertainment for almost every American household. If you want to be particularly poignant and topical, you can find Vietnam newscasts free for download online, or for streaming on Youtube. With a little creative searching, you can find documentaries and radio shows about any given one of the major setting topics. If your players have a scene where the pack sits around planning or otherwise interacting inside the home, play one of these scenes in the background.

With this era, you have a distinct advantage in that the media of the time saturated every aspect of American life. Much of that media is still available today. It may seem like a no-brainer, but a good reminder that news came from televisions, and almost all televisions broadcast in black and white, is markedly useful in establishing setting.

On the other hand, this setting offers a strange new world for the Forsaken of New York. Cameras are everywhere. Civilians don't yet own personal film cameras; but since the Vietnam War, everything's fit for broadcast, and New York's population density is a goldmine for prospective journalists looking to be the next Walter Cronkite.

WHAT HAS COME BEFORE

We're in a falling building. It's not a building that falls because of an explosion or act of God. It's a building that falls because of years of mismanagement, abandonment, bankruptcy, short sales, neglect, and unemployment. It's the kind of building that falls slowly. It decays enough that nobody wants to come back in, then it slowly topples. Every now and again, a big chunk falls off and causes extreme damage, but from day to day, you usually can't tell the difference.

ANCIENT HISTORY

In *The New York Times Magazine* in 1948, J.B. Priestley said, "The New York that O. Henry described forty years ago was an American city, but today's glittering cosmopolis belongs to the world, if the world does not belong to it."

World War II lifted New York out of depression. It welcomed a rush of new immigrants. It signaled a boom in industry and commerce. Keynesian economics ushered in economic growth worldwide. By the end of the 1940s, New York was the world's largest manufacturing center. It serviced over 40% of all port freight, and 20% of all wholesale business. With the foundation of the United Nations, New York became something of a world capital.

New York's golden age didn't last long. Unparalleled building expansion required commensurate and consistent economic growth to fill those new establishments. As the economy drew back from its fever pitch, many businesses failed, and many residents fled the area. In many cases, they abandoned buildings less than a decade old.

In our setting, most young people were not alive to see this golden age, or were too young to remember it. They were born on the downswing, and things don't look as if they're getting better soon. This golden age is just the seed for the stories we're telling.

LABOR MOVEMENTS

In 1966, transit workers all over the city launched a wide-reaching strike that resulted in changing rights for union organization for New York City employees. At its peak, New York saw garbage piled and burned in the streets, both as a form of protest, and to get rid of the stench of trash. The piles grew, and the people saw no end in sight as New York quickly learned how dependent it was on its waste removal services. The strike crippled transit for nearly two weeks, and ended with employee wage increases, additional holidays, greater pensions, and the right of employees to vote for their union representatives.

Two years later, sanitation workers went on strike to protest unfair wages and pension policies. As the trash piled up and rumors flew of a city-wide public employee strike, the city buckled to pressure and accommodated the sanitation workers' demands.

That same year, many Brooklyn schools closed their doors for over a month as teachers fought over community control of the schools. This long-reaching strike went on and off for months, and carried a strong racial undercurrent. Unlike the previous two strikes, this strike did not end well for the workers. The city denied them control of their district schools, and some participants saw jail time.

In 1975, the city faced bankruptcy, and like any other time the privileged faced collapse, the burden fell to the working class. To avoid the default, the mayor called on the school board to invest $150 million from its pension funds to keep the city afloat. While resistant, the teacher's union buckled at the last moment and paid the debt.

We could fill an entire book with these labor crises. Many have. But the point is, our setting comes right on the tail of these massive strikes that shifted power rapidly and heavily. Those sorts of shifts are rarely something the people are prepared for, and thus it can stress an already taxed labor force. If you want to read up on the topic, one great book that details the labor movements of the era, focusing heavily on New York, is *Rebel Rank and File: Labor Militancy and Revolt from Below During the Long 1970s*. It's a collection of essays that span before, during, and after our setting here.

On the Shadow side, labor was hit hardest by the Court of Fair Wage's departure. The Court of Fair Wage stood as the strongest collective of spirits in the region for decades, but one day, it just vanished. New York is a hard-working

BRINGING IT HOME

In this section, we touch on many of the events in the 60s and 70s that influence our setting (and to a lesser extent, the 40s and 50s). This section just hits the parts that drive home our target themes and moods. If you're interested, New York's modern history is perhaps the most documented of any city, ever. Per capita, it produces more journalists than any other city in the world (we think). Numerous careers were built on publicizing this period in New York.

If you want it, you'll never find yourself short of specific information on New York. You can't search the Internet without a bombardment of relevant data and evocative imagery.

Go crazy. When setting a scene, hand the players a vintage photograph to show them what they see. When you sit down to create characters, put a movie on in the background. This is more than just to add to the ambience. As a Storyteller, you may struggle to home in one a specific aesthetic, because of that media saturation. Many players will come to the table with preconceived notions, and it's up to you to show them just where their notions meet up with your vision.

city; it represented the positive side of the American ideal. As the ruling court vanished, other spirits born of collective aspirations died out rapidly. The more energetic courts brought about by the manufacturing sector in New York rose as predators over all the more ephemeral concepts. The *Hisil* looked an industrial nightmare. Dump trucks with massive teeth patrolled the city streets, devouring lesser spirits and absorbing perverted versions into their frames. A giant, looming factory spreads conveyor belts out through the metropolis, twisting and winding in labyrinthine patterns, capturing and drawing spirits into its cavernous gut.

CIVIL UNREST

In the 1960s, African Americans and women fought hard for civil rights, and in a few landmark cases, won. Civil disobedience and protest movements shaped legislative and social change.

Many of these battles were fought over basic, common-sense rights, like the rights to education and voting. In many of the most famous cases, they fought over the right to eat in the same rooms or drink from the same fountains.

By the 1970s, the African-American-led Civil Rights Movement was largely done. The Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968 made wide-spanning changes to public policy regarding discrimination.

In the later part of the 1960s and the early to mid 1970s, the Black Power Movement stood to challenge the dominant practices of nonviolent protest and passive resistance. In the light of Dr. King's assassination, strong, reactionary responses seemed the only logical course of action for some.

For the Uratha, challenging age-old prejudices becomes deadly. Predominantly black packs demanded to be taken seriously. Old-guard white packs stood their ground, often violently. In an odd turn of fortune, Uratha don't often live as long as their human counterparts. They die violent, terrible deaths before they reach old age. So old prejudices, while stronger, died earlier than they did for humanity. In the Tribes of the Moon, old racists were a dying breed by the 1980s.

For women, the 1960s led to more social changes than legislative changes. With the 1960 approval of the birth control pill, women were able to take a greater, more self-determined role in their lives. In 1963, *The Feminine Mystique* reshaped social views, and that very year, physicist Maria Goepper-Mayer became the first woman to win the Nobel prize. Thanks to the war, women took stronger roles in the job market, and the 1960s also saw equal pay legislation make strides to — but not completely — implement wage equality. This second wave of feminist thinking moved to redefine a woman's role in society, and in the work force.

Counter to the situation with black Uratha, women among the Forsaken never saw the same prejudices they saw in the human world. After all, who is going to tell a Storm Lord Rahu she can't be alpha of her pack? But this period did lead to a trend toward more feminine totem spirits. At least one prominent Uratha stood briefly to claim that female-coded totems would start packs down a slippery slope toward adopting Lune totems. He vanished in 1975, never to be heard from again.

Everything we can say in this short space underserves the topic at hand. But in this time, in this place, you have to consider these events. They're downright integral. We encourage you to dig in, and digest some media about the topic. Watching *Malcolm X* is a great place to start. Read *The Story of Ruby Bridges*, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years*, and *Voices of Freedom*. *Voices of Freedom* is of particular interest because it's anecdotal, peppered with personal experiences, and it spans the 60s, 70s, and 80s over time. On women's rights, *The Feminine Mystique* is a good starting point, but don't stop there. Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* and Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* offer valuable insight into feminist thinking of the time period. In addition to important bits of education, they're full to the brim with atmosphere that'll add an air of authenticity to your stories.

VIETNAM

Throughout American history, the American public mostly supported its war efforts. The American people fought one another in the Civil War, but public opinion



favored those engagements. However, when the American government decided that involvement in Vietnam's struggles was necessary to prevent the spread of communism, the people didn't fall in line.

Not only did they not approve, millions of Americans stood in demonstrations and protests over the course of the war's last decade. Popular media figures stood in unquestionable opposition. Woodstock brought 400,000 people together to celebrate peace and love, as a united front against forceful invasion.

While film played a part in earlier conflicts, the Vietnam War set new levels for television involvement in the war effort. Americans could turn on the TV set and see the effects of the conflict with unprecedented intimacy and accuracy.

The Vietnam War is also the first American war that ended in a clear defeat. The American troops withdrew without having accomplished their goals. The US spent countless dollars and lost thousands of soldiers with little to show for it.

American involvement in Vietnam ended around the middle of the decade. This setting assumes that your chronicle takes place right before or right after the end of the war. If you're playing a longer-scale chronicle, consider planning your arc with the end of the war in mind, so you can play at the cultural shifts happening throughout the decade.

On the spiritual side of things, Vietnam was far enough away from New York that you couldn't see its influence from day to day. However, if you're playing through a chronicle of longer scope, Vietnam has long-term, lasting effects on the *Hisil* that wouldn't be self-evident until the 1980s and 1990s. But with the insidious, subtle ways these influences change the shadowscape, by the time anyone notices, it's too late to fix.

Finding source material for the Vietnam War and the culture surrounding it shouldn't be difficult at all. *Platoon* is a great film that'll remind you just why there were protests. *Full Metal Jacket* and *Apocalypse Now* are other obvious choices. The book *Against the Vietnam War: Writings by Activists* has a better portrayal of the home front, though, which is probably more valuable for the day-to-day affairs of your games. Let's face it; unless you're playing a game set in Vietnam, the characters in your stories only have exposure to the war via radio and television.

For Werewolf characters, Vietnam stands as a dark point of reference. Guerrilla war is not pretty, and never ends well. Not that war ever ends well, but guerrilla war leaves a mark on the soul. It's very personal, since you see all your compatriots and have to reconcile losing people whose names you know.

STONEWALL

June 28th, 1969, police raided the Stonewall Inn of Greenwich Village — the largest gay club in the United States. This was a common occurrence in gay clubs in the 1950s and 1960s. Aside from that, Mafia elements owned the Stonewall, which brought down even greater scrutiny. These crackdowns were deeply invasive, often violent, and disenfranchised an already hurt community. Officers would forcibly inspect bar patrons to verify that they were dressed in accordance with supposed gender expectations. Those not fitting the officers' expectations would be arrested on the spot.

The difference this time was the people struck back. As rumors spread of beatings during arrests, bar patrons lashed out and threw things at a police wagon. The police beat a patron in plain sight, and escalated the conflict further. Over 500 people stood down the 10 police officers, who walled themselves up with some civilians and some captives. The crowd taunted the police, and shoved burning trash into the building. Eventually, a tactical team rushed in to evacuate the officers. Not only did the people stand up to the police and force a retreat, it showed the public and the officers that society had pushed the gay community way too hard — something had to change.

Even though the Inn was burned, broken, and devastated, it remained open for months afterward. In the nights following, the riots renewed and grew, standing as a firm statement that the Inn's patrons would not be defeated. While the Stonewall eventually closed, its legacy continued with gay pride marches, which first made their way through New York City in 1970. That's where our setting begins. Stonewall's already happened. Now, it's all about holding onto that. There's a foundation of legitimacy that we're building on, amidst the grungy and dismissive backdrop.

In the *Hisil*, Stonewall had some immediate, fiery consequences. Spirits clashed as people did. But as far as the Shadow was concerned, people beat people, people burned buildings. It looked like any other riot. It opened up the floodgates for later changes all over the country, but change would take time. For the Forsaken, most of the conflicts caused by Stonewall are more personal — friends and family hurt. The Forsaken know the struggles of the downtrodden and put-upon.

The aftermath of Stonewall is an ideal atmospheric anchor for **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, and in particular for this setting. **Werewolf** is a game about an unexpected community rising up out of mutual and immediate need. It's a game about staking out territory, taking a firm stance, and making a statement that you will not be moved, no matter how hard the outside pushes. It's about groups that think that they're right, and that sometimes you're in the way of that righteousness. It's about not giving a shit what they think is right when it's stepping on your safety and freedom.

If you want to look further into Stonewall and the events surrounding it, there's plenty out there. *Stonewall: The Riots That Sparked the Gay Revolution* is a solid take. *City Boy: My Life in New York During the 1960s and 1970s* is a strong accounting of the era from a perspective in the gay community. The 1995 film, *Stonewall*, takes an important memoir and gives it screen treatment.

DAMN, IT SUCKS TO BE X

The 1960s didn't end racism, sexism, or homophobia. In many ways, the Civil Rights Movement stirred a proverbial hornet's nest. Even as marginalized groups celebrated historic victories, bigots clawed out from the woodwork to intensify their oppression. Mobs attacked citizens enjoying newfound rights.

We don't need to tell you this was terrible.

In the Chronicles of Darkness, it was just as bad. Maybe even worse in some cases. But here's the deal: This is real shit that happened to real people. For some people, these wounds are still hanging wide open. Ourselves, our friends, and our families are hurt by these events, and continue to be hurt by these events. Sure, these things happened historically. But then again, they didn't always happen. In the Chronicles of Darkness, we play exceptions to the rule. We play exciting, larger-than-life characters. We're not constrained by the burden of averages.

We're not going to tell you to avoid prejudice in your games. But we'd ask that you be sensitive. For example, just because someone wants to play an LGBTQ character in the 1970s doesn't mean they want to deal with slurs and attacks. The point of a Storytelling game is to have fun, and if a player walks away hurt because of your idea of historical accuracy, you've lost the game.

WHAT IS TO COME

In the 1970s, you've got to take the good, and you've got to take the bad. The people in New York, and in the greater United States, made much progress. Things also got worse in many ways. As the economy unraveled, people starved in the streets. Then again, other disenfranchised people gained unprecedented rights. But those rights didn't come cheap, and many of the leaders who helped push for those rights died or wound up in prison for their efforts. The 1970s weren't the worst in any way, or the best.

Things are bad, sure. But this isn't a pinnacle. This is a period. It gets worse. Racial tensions flare in the 1980s. The Reagan administration fosters further economic inequity. Society's excesses boil over and spill on the underprivileged.

By and large, everything lightens up into the 1990s. The dot-com bubble helps out. As the Cold War coughs its last dying



breaths, society has attention to pay to progress, both economic and social. This uptick continues until the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001 send America spiraling back into chaos.

Game Evolution

What does this mean for your game? As we've noted, this setting plays loose with chronology. It doesn't matter when things happen, so long as they happen. As Storyteller for *The Bowery Dogs*, your most important job is to keep momentum. The 1970s stand as New York City's nadir. At any given point, the players need to feel as if this moment is the worst; things have to get better, right?

You do this by letting the story flow, letting the players react, and right before true resolution to a meaningful problem, drop the next event. Softball the locations. If the characters are in the Bronx, and you want to throw down an event like Stonewall, do it. The only important feature you need to focus on is the timing. Don't let things calm down. Hit hard, and hit fast. You're not trying to destroy hope, you're trying to build conflict that can't be fixed with just claws and teeth. In fact, the players shouldn't think they can "fix" the setting. They can't. If three to six people could fix the ills of 1970s New York, things wouldn't have been so bad.

Don't let your story fall into misery tourism. You don't have to hit the pack head-on with every problem, but they should always feel invested. They should always feel as if these events are part of their lives.

The Privileged

The characters should always feel as if these events are part of their lives. How do you do that when the pack consists of politically or economically powerful characters who don't regularly see the plight of Average Joe and Jane? What if the pack is a handful of Storm Lords and Iron Masters whose territory is the board of directors of a multinational company?

Of course you could always take that power and influence away from them. You could have them removed from office. You could make their stock prices fall and bankrupt the company. But that might (reasonably) bother the players. After all, if they made characters with these things in mind, this is a clear statement about the type of game they want to play. Taking all that away is a bait and switch. It's deceptive. It also leaves you with characters unprepared to face the realities of the story. Have you ever read a book where the protagonist didn't seem to fit into the story being told? It can be done well, sure, but it's generally jarring and uncomfortable for the reader.

The other choice is to remember that every corporation, every government, every organization exists because of the masses. If the players play the 1%, you have 99% of the populace to contrast and complement their experiences. In that corporation, their workers are hit hard by the labor strikes. What does a company do when it literally cannot get rid of the massive stores of garbage it's accumulating? What happens to employee productivity when the school boards close, and leave workers needing to stay home with their displaced children?

Make it personal. That secretary she's banging? His roommate's in jail for protesting his hard-earned pension being used to bail out an irresponsible city government. He's about to lose his house because of the loss of a paycheck. Sure, you could just ignore it. But he's talking about taking a job with his grandfather in Boca.

The Downtrodden

If the pack lives on the streets, New York's problems will come into play first hand. Avoiding those issues just isn't possible. The good part of this is, it's not hard to show off the features of the setting. You can bring in any of the major events of the decade, and you're likely to see plenty of effect, plenty of sympathy. The downside is, when it's easy to introduce, you're liable to take it for granted. It's easy to dump a pity party on the downtrodden, but that's an easy trope, rife with simplicity and stereotypes.

Don't take these struggles for granted. Don't parrot off another generic story about the poor. Draw from anecdotes. Look for the gut-wrenching specifics, and think hard about how to adapt them to the very specific circumstances of the characters and their friends and families. Social ills are a lot like death. If you tell one person's story, people will listen, people will cry, people will commiserate. If you tell the story of 10,000 deaths, people glaze over. They understand academically, but they can't connect with the story.

Territories

To the Uratha of New York City, everything's a scramble. Everything's a desperate grab. Territory changes hands as rapidly as the stock market fluctuates. Outright loss and full land grabs might be rare, but borders bend, twist, ebb, and flow. A pack never really knows where its territory ends and another's begins. No amount of scouting can keep all monsters from the door.

As part of your planning, consider territories. Two basic approaches will help determine the scope of your chronicle. You can look at blocks, or you can look at neighborhoods.

The default assumption is that, in New York, most packs can manage a block or less. City blocks can house thousands of people in some cases, and those blocks might be more eventful than a smaller city by themselves. Play your cards right, and a New York city block could even be the entire setting of a chronicle.

The problem with the block approach is that there's not a lot of room for give or take. At least, not on the surface. If you're willing to do a little legwork, and list or even map the area, individual buildings, offices, apartments, and alleys can shift hands. The advantage is that you can put a face and a name on every shift in power. You're not just talking about losing the 83rd street block. You're talking about Mr. Wu's little Chinese place, the one with the skewers everyone talks about. Those *Azlu* aren't pushing into Melrose; they've possessed the Santiago family.

The opposite approach, looking at territories as neighborhoods, will give your game a bigger, more grandiose

scope. Actions resonate hard, everything makes for dramatic changes. If you're not careful, you lose a bit of the value in the individuals who fill your setting. Make sure every action has a face tied to it. If the players do something, if antagonists do something, it has to affect someone. If you can't find someone to affect, some way to exhibit that, is it worth showcasing in the story?

With both approaches, you have one great tool at your disposal to tell *Bowery Dogs* stories: the ensemble cast. When starting your game, have players define all their characters' Social Merits and associations. If someone brings up a business, ask about who runs it. If someone brings up an alley, ask who sleeps in it. You don't need to flesh out each as a full character sheet. You could use the Retainer Merit as a basis for bit characters (see **The Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 85). Just rate every one by order of importance, even if they aren't actually Merits on a character's sheet.

Look at these characters as a huge extended family. They aren't always around, but they can be whenever the need arises or it just feels right to bring everyone together. They shouldn't overshadow the primary pack, but they pop up when it counts, for better or for worse. As Storyteller, you have to play numerous characters. Using ensemble play removes that burden, and allows a spotlight on the occasional supporting character without it feeling like a ramrodded story rather than player intent.

Burning Down

New York is falling. Buildings in this period go without tenants, as citizens rush to greener pastures. Without proper maintenance, buildings return to the Earth from whence they came. To a casual observer, New York is decaying faster than it grows. That's the state of affairs in *Bowery Dogs*.

Reflect this on both sides of the *Hisil*.

Hungry spirits whose feeding grounds have spread too thin should be common. Spirits of decay, of decomposition, and of overgrowth should pester everything and everyone. Nature wants to reclaim, and the *Hisil* makes that literal.

But in the flesh world, it's pervasive and constant. Walls crumble. Buildings creak and tilt. Everything drips something that smells like dirt, rust, and less savory things.

For starters, in any physical action scene where a character achieves a dramatic failure or exceptional success, in addition to any other effects caused, introduce the Urban Collapse Tilt (see the sidebar). Note, this only applies to physical actions. The roof won't collapse on your head in a debate. But if you're chasing a drug dealer through tenements, it might.

From a Storytelling perspective, you can emphasize this thematic element by showing a lack of structural integrity in all things. Run with the metaphor. City Hall can't get the funding to bring out the snow plows. When the rain pours and the wind hammers the city, trees come up at the root because the dirt just can't hold them. A car crash is never a car crash; it'll take down a power line along with it. The point is, always make it look like more things are falling apart than coming back together. Entropy should be on the tip of your tongue as a Storyteller for this chronicle.

New Tilt: Urban Collapse

The ground, walls, and ceilings around the scene are unstable, and fall apart with little motivation.

Effect: The Tilt makes traversing the scene challenging. Characters moving more than half their Speed in a turn must succeed in a reflexive Dexterity + Athletics roll at a –3 penalty or suffer three points of bashing damage and the Knocked Down Tilt (see **The Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 285). However, by taking a –2 penalty to attack (or other reasonable) rolls, a character can impose this effect on a victim, forcing them to roll or suffer Knocked Down.

Additionally, any dramatic failure is met with full collapse. This causes five points of bashing damage, and the character is trapped under a mass of rubble. Removing the rubble requires a Strength + Stamina roll at –5 penalty. Every such failed roll causes an additional point of bashing damage. Other characters can contribute to lift her out similarly. Additional assistance removes the penalty on a 1-for-1 basis.

Causing the Tilt: In the decaying urban jungle of New York, the first dramatic failure or exceptional success in an action scene brings this Tilt into effect. This is completely up to Storyteller discretion. If she doesn't believe the given scene has enough decay or neglect to allow for it, it's her call. However, any time Gauru form comes into play, collapse should be a risk.

Ending the Tilt: The Tilt ends with the scene. Ingenious characters may come up with stopgap solutions in the immediate that could mitigate its effects during a scene. Note that even if the Tilt ends because of the end of an action scene doesn't mean the location is safe. Once a location suffers the Urban Collapse Tilt, it'll automatically suffer it in any subsequent action scenes. Removing this damage requires extensive construction work to repair and reinforce the infrastructure.

Fires

New York has a hostile climate, mixed with an absolutely overwhelming population density. Buildings press up against one another, and there's not much room to stop a fire once it starts. While the city technically has mechanisms in place

to stop fires, overcrowding keeps a fire engine from properly traveling through the streets. Apathetic people would rather block its passage than lose their place in the traffic crawl.

In your chronicle, fires should be complications. Sure, you can put them out. But something always comes up. Something always gets in the way. There's always lasting damage.

In the real world, what seems like a random fire could lead to a greater plot entrenched in New York's factual history. For example, look into the Gulliver's Nightclub fire of 1974. Burglars lit a bowling alley ablaze to hide a burglary, and the fire spread to an adjacent nightclub, killing more than 20 people. This sort of event could ripple all throughout the possibilities of a **Werewolf: The Forsaken** chronicle. Perhaps the burglary and the arson were both false fronts for something altogether different. Maybe a pack of Pure aimed to cause terror and dissent in a Forsaken neighborhood. Or perhaps the place held a nest of *Azlu*, and a young Forsaken panicked and did something awful without thinking.

On a more directly malicious note, the Armed Forces of National Liberation, or FALN, launched numerous bombing attacks on New York soil during this decade. They stood in opposition to any government not espousing Marxist policy, and attacked places with active populations using dynamite. If your chronicle wishes to touch on the Summer of Sam killings, David Berkowitz was implicated on numerous arson charges as well as his shootings. Some stories put the arsons at well over 1,000 instances. The riots during the 1977 blackout could also be a cause. For two days, New York went without power, and looting, vandalism, and rioting peaked.

The Summer of Sam

The summer of 1976 took on an identity of its own in New York, thanks to the Son of Sam killings. In your chronicle, the Summer of Sam is a hotbed of stories waiting to be told.

David Berkowitz was an adopted child who, once he discovered his origins, grew increasingly troubled. He had a tour in the Army, then his explosive life of murder started in his 20s. According to his stories, he began stabbing young women in 1975. His spree took place mostly over 1976 and 1977, when he killed at least eight people. He was caught in 1977, in one of the most popularized, media-absorbed spectacles of the era.

According to Berkowitz's statements, his neighbor's Labrador retriever was possessed by the devil, and demanded of him the blood of young girls. He told the police he was deeply involved in the occult, and that fueled his rampage. Over the years, his story changed, adding and removing elements. In some of his stories, he had a cult of accomplices who never saw charges. Some evidence suggests at least some credence to his story. His apartment was full of Satanic graffiti, for example.



THE TULPA OF SAM

One take is that the possessed dog in Berkowitz's story didn't exist until Berkowitz came along. If you take Berkowitz's story literally, a possessed neighbor dog came to David, and told him to murder. What if he wasn't so far off base? What if his mind were so far out in left field, it created the "demon" to fulfill that role? What if it was a physical manifestation of a defense mechanism?

In some forms of Buddhism, the concept of the *tulpa* is that of a thing made real, made physical, by manifest thought or spiritual presentation. The idea aligns with many "invisible friend" stories. So if you go this route, David Berkowitz's strange dog is actually a highly intelligent Jaggling, created by Berkowitz's psyche in order to reconcile his sinister urges.

Of course, that raises the question: If a man's mind can create a powerful spirit to justify his actions, can it create more? And if something in the *Hisil* — or one of the Pure tribes — discovers this dark gift, to what ends will they go to take it for themselves? Consider that not all of Berkowitz's convictions are fully verified. Some investigators believe he had accomplices, or was completely innocent of a few of the charges. Perhaps a group of the Pure used some of these killings to harrow Berkowitz, convincing him he was even more depraved than he truly was.

In your chronicle, the strange story of Berkowitz and his victims could take many forms. At its simplest, he could simply be David Berkowitz, a deeply deranged individual who murdered numerous people. After all, he didn't need supernatural influence to shake the community in the real world. When dealing with Claimed, Ridden, and Urged, Forsaken have relatively straightforward solutions to lean on. But when the neighborhood's terrorized by a mundane, breathing person, what's an Uratha to do?

On the other hand, plenty of the Shadow's more chaotic elements could have pushed him over the edge, or even committed some of the crimes for which his convictions and confessions weren't so tight. Look to the end results for inspiration. What would a creature of the *Hisil* want entire neighborhoods indoors for?

INSTITUTIONAL VIOLENCE

On April 28th, 1973, an undercover police officer shot and killed 10-year-old Clifford Glover. Glover and his father were walking through the South Jamaica neighborhood of Queens when the shooting occurred; the two officers later testified that the father and son were guilty of a robbery. This caused massive unrest in Queens. When the officer was acquitted of murder charges, riots ensued.

Clifford Glover's story wasn't the only story of institutional violence in this era, but it's iconic. Corruption grew so rampant that police slaughtered a 10-year-old boy who was walking with his father. Earlier, we mentioned Stonewall. The era features numerous stories of institutional power striking down at the people. Many of these stories end with the people striking back. Trust in the system was at an all-time low, thanks to incidents like these, and fiascos like the Vietnam War.

These kinds of events can occur at any time, in any place. But what's important about these events in *The Bowery Dogs* is that the people are taking notice, and that sends reason flying out the window. The people fight back. That sounds like a good thing, but in the immediate, it means further tensions and further institutional violence. Police don't take kindly to vigilante justice, especially when that justice is targeted at other police.

What does this mean for your chronicle? It means pull out the stops. Sometimes shit happens, and it makes little sense to your average person. After all, who would shoot a 10-year-old boy? Why would anyone think that's the best course of action? It's complicated. A million variables went into that devastating, horrible decision. But when it's someone close to you, you (rightfully) don't care about those variables.

It also means that you don't let anything happen without ripples. At this point, the people are starting to see that if they stand up, they'll be heard. If enough of them stand up, the institutions quake. That's a powerful realization. And unfortunate as it may be, those ripples come back. Everything's cyclical.

Take notes. If you're running through an extended chronicle, bullet point every institutional conflict you've touched upon so far. During every game session, show one little shard, one ripple. Even if it's just an editorial in the New York Times that comes up during a character's breakfast, show it. And during each session, showcase one small scene that brings one of those ripples to the forefront. Build momentum. Give actions consequences, and give consequences more consequences.

CORRUPTION

In 1967, New York Police Department investigator Frank Serpico released credible evidence exhibiting widespread police corruption, but was summarily ignored. In 1970, he contributed to a front page story in the New York Times, whistleblowing on the corruption in the NYPD.

The following year, during a drug arrest, a suspect shot him in the face. His supporting officers refused to make the proper calls for help, and he was only saved thanks to a civilian witness. Some evidence suggests the officers brought him to the bust to be murdered.



NEW TILT: RIOT (ENVIRONMENTAL)

Tension thickens the air into a greasy cloud. Everything hangs in a delicate balance, as everyone wonders what happens next. Then someone throws a bottle.

Effect: Every turn, all characters in the midst of the riot are bumped, struck and pushed by the maddened crowd. Roll Stamina + Athletics (reflexive action) each turn; failure on this roll means the character suffers two points of bashing damage. Any other effects — smashed storefronts, destroyed public property, beaten/murdered public figures — depend on the location of the riot and are down to the discretion of the Storyteller.

Causing the Tilt: Mostly this Tilt will be applied as the story dictates, not by anything the characters control. If the characters do something stupidly high-profile in an already-tense situation, though, like taking Gauru form in front of a panicky mob, they just might find themselves touching one off. Certain Gifts, especially Rage and Inspiration, might also allow werewolf characters to start a riot.

Ending the Tilt: Barring supernatural powers, most characters don't have the ability to stop a riot once it really gets going. Depending on the size of the mob, the nature of the triggering event, and the ability (and willingness) of authorities to respond, the riot might run anywhere from a couple hours to a few weeks.

Serpico's leaks changed everything. The public saw the NYPD like never before, and their trust would never return. The police were no longer benevolent peacekeepers; they were self-serving street soldiers, willing to abandon the public interest if it meant turning a dollar. So your average citizen looked to herself first, and faced every cop with suspicion. When it comes to facing down a criminal, or asking the police for help, many citizens would take their chances, since the police were just professional criminals.

This distrust makes good cops jaded. This draws them into the fold of the crooked police. This in turn causes more distrust. The cycle grows, and everyone hurts for it.

If your chronicle deals with the cops (and what urban **Werewolf: The Forsaken** game shouldn't?) consider introducing these elements. Not all cops are crooked. Some actively want to stamp out corruption within their ranks. And for an Uratha interested in securing a neighborhood, helping a nice guy cop root out the bad elements at the precinct is one great way to ensure some degree of security moving forward. Or if the characters are so inclined, finding a crooked cop and greasing her palm is a guaranteed source of privileged information about one's territory.

REBUILDING

New York is being built anew. Sure, walls are coming down all over the city. But in the prime real estate of New York City, every collapse is a business opportunity. Every eviction is vacant floor space. Even if something isn't collapsing, it's worth tearing it down and building something bigger in such a crowded place.

THE WORLD TRADE CENTER

You can't talk about construction in the 1970s without talking about the World Trade Center complex. From 1966 until 1973, the Port Authority and numerous contractors built the two behemoth towers of the World Trade Center, each over 100 stories in height. At the time, they were the largest man-made structures in the world. They quickly became iconic representations of the New York spirit, and were recognized the world around as a staple of the New York skyline.

What the World Trade Center towers symbolized depended on to whom you spoke. To many downtown, the towers symbolize America's dominant economic position, and New York's place at its heart. To those in Queens, it represents the disparity in New York's priorities. In one neighborhood, they'll invest hundreds of millions to build shiny towers. In the next neighborhood over, they won't even fix the potholes destroying our cars.

Depending on where you want to plot your chronicle, the World Trade Center could be stuck in the bureaucratic nightmare of planning, it could be under construction, or it could be a new fixture on the city skyline. Being that the tower complexes are so big they have their own zip code, they're a shoo-in for an enterprising, up-and-coming pack to claim as territory. After all, that amount of space and foot traffic is bound to draw spirit attention. It's not as if the planning commission consulted with someone versed in loci and verges.

Alternatively, you can move away from the static idea of the towers' status. If you have an arc in mind for your *Bowery Dogs* chronicle, you can use the towers' erection as a visual representation of that arc. Start the chronicle in the planning stages, where the city clears out Radio Row, forcibly evicting private businesspeople and tenant families. Then move through the complicated construction as your story heats up. Once the action reaches its high point, the towers open for business. This way, the characters can literally watch this massive structure rise as the city falls apart around them. Even if the characters never set foot in the neighborhood, they can see the building slowly rising in the backdrop; mention it during your descriptions.

MOVEMENTS

Gay rights. Civil rights. Women's rights. Worker's rights. Sexual liberation. In this slice of the world, everyone had an

King of the Mountain

If you want to use the World Trade Center as the heart of your *Bowery Dogs* plots, look to its newness. New things always come up in New York, but nothing so new, so big. Everyone wants a piece of it. As of this point, it's the biggest territory dispute since New York's initial founding and the Revolutionary War.

On the Forsaken side, it's a sign of power. Whoever controls the tower has nigh-unlimited access to political and financial power. It's all about access and availability. With the towers at your disposal, nobody can tell you no. For spirits, it's uncharted territory. It's 200 stories of new ground that could mean anything. There's enough inspiration and innovation moving in that for hungry court to eat to their hearts' content. The *Azlu* and *Beshilu* see room for expansion. After all, New York's crowded as hell, and it's no different for the city's vermin. The World Trade Center is fresh, new, and clean. It's miles of lucrative real estate for enterprising pests.

issue. Everyone had a movement. While the buildings in New York fall into disrepair, movements build and grow. A movement is a great grounding point for a pack; it takes some of the weight of character creation off the players' shoulders. They just have to determine how their characters relate to the common ideal.

If going this route, look to totems that stand symbolic of that ideal. Look to the persistence of urban wildlife. Opossums, raccoons, rats, alley cats, and junkyard dogs are a great place to start. Then look to more conceptual designs. Do an Internet search for the wheatpaste posters supporting these movements. Co-opt the art styles and messages, embody them, personify them. Those are your best *Bowery Dogs* totems.

Music

The births of punk rock and hip-hop aren't inherently Uratha phenomenon. They would have happened, completely independent of any werewolf influence. However, they give a strong model for Uratha life in the period. Both styles tell a harsh, bleak story about urban life. Both speak to a need for rebellion, for a need to rise up and solve problems yourself because the system stands against you. The status quo can't be acceptable, by nature of being the status quo.

Best of all, if you focus on hip-hop and punk rock themes for your *Bowery Dogs* games, the soundtrack writes itself. There's even quite a bit more crossover than some people would like to admit. For example, Blondie was partly responsible for helping hip-hop achieve mainstream radio play.

If you want to dig far enough, New York punk rock goes back well into the 1960s, but arguably saw its birth in the early 1970s with acts like The New York Dolls, Patti Smith, Television, The Velvet Underground, Blondie, and The Ramones. Some acts from nearby regions like The Talking Heads saw prominence thanks to shows in New York at classic venues like CBGB. If your chronicle leans toward the later part of the decade, you can even draw from second-wave punk like Teenage Jesus and the Jerks or The Misfits.

On the hip-hop side, you have just as rich a history to draw from. Hip hop started at block parties in the Bronx that drew from funk and soul music, and beat-breaking styles from Jamaican immigrants. New York had a saturation of brilliant acts like DJ Kool Herc, Pete Jones, Grand Wizzard Theodore, Erik B. and Rakim, Afrikaa Bambaataa, and of course Grandmaster Flash. The going theory was, hip-hop was an answer to the popular disco music of the time.

There's a ton of material on the genesis of these two important musical styles. Every individual act has a story that could be fodder for a chronicle in and of itself. You can look to the music directly for inspiration. For example, Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five's "The Message" paints a painful picture of New York in the 1970s. It's a powerful anthem, one you'd be wise to pay close attention to while designing your chronicle and describing the city streets.

The thing about this music is, it's all written and sung from experience. It's direct. It's raw. It's unfiltered. It's perhaps the most accurate accounting of the time period you're going to find. Don't let that resource go to waste.

The World Beneath

The *Hisil* mirrors New York's conflicts. It takes all the complexities of urban life on the downswing, and filters them through a toothy, slimy, dark metaphor. The predators of the *Hisil* exist because New York's predators exist. In the Shadow, the Court of a Fair Wage left town. Nobody knows where it went. They were the ruling spirits in New York; they kept a solid equilibrium, dealing in Essence and lesser spirit life, and that power vacuum could mean disaster for any weaker entities.

The New York *Hisil* embodies scarcity. As the people see fewer resources and greater needs, so does the other side. To the denizens of the Shadow, everything looks like the next — and maybe last — meal. There's never enough Essence to go around. Every locus is overtaxed. Every pack is overworked.

If you want to push hard on the gang metaphor, use the *Hisil*. After all, courts and choruses of spirits come about in a chaotic, organic fashion. Bigger courts absorb smaller courts through violent overthrow. Courts claim territories, disallowing any intrusion or trespassing, under pain of destruction.



THE MOON LANDING

Astute readers might remember that on July 20th, 1969, the Apollo 11 mission landed on the moon. For the Forsaken, this changed everything, since it opened the door for the idigam.

Of course this means that our setting is a time period where the idigam ran wild. Where were they in New York? That's a good question. And it's a question for which the Forsaken have no answers. New York would be a great stomping ground for the ancient demigods. But for some reason, none appear to have taken hold in the region. Do they know something the Forsaken do not? It's likely.

From a thematic perspective, the idigam are bigger than the intimate, street-level aesthetic we're going for with *The Bowery Dogs*. It's very easy to place the blame for all the world's ills on a "big bad," but the real world is far more complicated than that. We hit on many social ills in the period and the region. They're touchy, hurtful issues with countless institutional causes. If you can just punch and claw those problems away, the Forsaken become something entirely different.

If you choose to use the idigam in your chronicle, consider using them as plot devices and catalysts for action, as opposed to direct threats. You could even use them as a displaced threat; an idigam could inhabit what was formerly called the Burned Over District in west and central New York. It'd be far enough away that the Forsaken wouldn't have much immediate need to address the problem, but close enough that they could feel its influence.

COURTS

In New York, a handful of powerful spirit courts comprise the majority of the *Hisil*. Fair Wage left town. There's a vacuum, and the remaining courts seek to fill it and dominate the field. We've included the Court of Indulgence as an example of one of the Courts seeking to fill Fair Wage's role in the city.

THE COURT OF A FAIR WAGE

The Kuspu Dinu

The Court of a Fair Wage used to be the big player in town. For centuries, it grew in influence, peaking around the 1950s. It grew too big to stay stable, and began a path toward collapse in the 1960s. Recently, it vanished. Nobody saw a great struggle. Nobody knows where a court of spirits could have even disappeared *to*. But it's gone, and the shit's about to hit the fan. The few straggling spirits from the court seem unaware of the mass disappearance, which leaves them in a vulnerable place.

For Uratha aware of such things, the court's disappearance is even more cataclysmic than it looks at first glance. With the World Trade Center's construction, New York's slated to grow into even more of a financial powerhouse than it was before. With the influence of other courts, the situation could grow terrible for the city's people. Vice-ridden, monstrous spirits seek to claim the Kuspu Dinu territory. For example, one manager might pay normally 100 workers; but if possessed by a spirit of Gluttony, that same manager bleeds his workers dry. Those workers go hungry, which causes hunger spirits to come in force. Hunger and gluttony merge to become Unending Feast, which damages the cityscape as a whole. These sorts of problems ripple outward, and could cause unimaginable conflict. Smart Forsaken in the neighborhood should look to that power vacuum, and make sure it isn't filled with something awful.

Soldiers: Fair Wage isn't completely gone. Its foot soldiers still wander the streets. Every day, they number fewer as other predators team up to remove them.

Fair Wage Soldiers look the part of wartime patriotism propaganda. They're steel workers. They're riveters. They're assembly line technicians. They're blue-collar Americans with cut jaws, proud work ethics, and exaggerated tools of the trade. They carry rivet guns, sledgehammers, hydraulic rescue tools, and other massive implements of manufacture and destruction.

They look for instability and injustice as the Court defines it ; they'll home in on any situations where larger spirits are devouring smaller ones, but they have no problems with multitudes of smaller spirits destroying a larger one. In many cases, this is their own downfall, since they won't fight back against "the little guy." Their ban is to "never stop the underdog." If this ban extended to the higher echelons of the court, it could offer a reason for their disappearance.

Crafty Elodoth manipulate circumstances in the *Hisil*, in order to recruit the Fair Wage Soldiers' aid. Stack a conflict to look unfair, and the Soldiers will jump into action. But as the court vanishes day by day, Uratha interested in using the Soldiers to their advantage have to work to protect the soldiers from other predators, so it's a two-way street.

Locks: They look like padlocks. They're remarkably common, even though their numbers have declined dramatically in the past few years. Their entire purpose is to find things that are in desirable states, and keep them from changing — for better or for worse.

Their perception of what constitutes a desirable state appears arbitrary even to those that study the Court of a Fair Wage. The defining factor looks to be that there's no predation or fighting in an area for a few nights' time. The Locks look to the area as successful, and lock down further change. Mind, they don't leave if fighting starts; they just prevent damage and change to the immediate environs.

Locks boast the ability to make objects and set dressing almost immutable. In game terms, they can spend Essence one-for-one to increase the Durability of all inanimate objects in the immediate vicinity for the remainder of the scene. This affects both sides of the Gauntlet. When they decide to be stubborn, their surroundings are untouchable.

The Court of Indulgence

Ikkusunu

The Court of Indulgence stands as one of the dominant courts in Fair Wage's absence. The drug culture has shifted from the "friendly" drugs of the hippie movement, to harsher drugs like mescaline, cocaine, and heroin. Sex moved away from "free love" and more toward a disco hookup culture. As these things changed, and the Court of Indulgence grew to prominence. It bolsters and feeds on the destructive impulses of New Yorkers, which New Yorkers provide in droves.

Unlike most spirit courts, the court itself has a ban. Its individual members have their own bans, but every representative shares the same limitation: "Do not stop before it hurts." While this causes a high mortality rate within the court, the court compensates through raw numbers. They reproduce like little else. It doesn't hurt that their driving principle is self-perpetuating; they push indulgence, and indulgence begets indulgence. When an addict robs a home to pay for her addiction, that's just a little more fuel on the fire.

This has a side effect. The Court doesn't have a contingent of powerful, ranking spirits. It's all Gafflings and some lesser Jagglings. They come in seven different breeds, each roughly corresponding to one of the Seven Deadly Sins.

Mind you, these are not tempting demons. These are embodiments of cracks in society's fabric. These are failures and pains from an evolving culture. Theirs is to do and die, to destroy and to decay.

Greeds, Consumptions, *Hubaa*: Greeds take the form of hot, glowing flows, not unlike lava. The orange and red fluid occasionally bubbles up, and when the bubbles pop, bits of world currency splash outward. They grow quickly, burning everything in their path, sometimes enveloping entire city blocks before they dry up and leave ash and fool's gold in their wake. They're currently the fastest growing breed of Indulgence.

Prides, Privileges, *Shaddim*: Prides look like nondescript, faceless, androgynous white people in business attire. While they hunt alone, when they find suitable prey, they break into many parts, their limbs skittering across pavement, and their abdomens crawling slowly. Their heads roll toward their victims and scream an ear-piercing static that distracts, deafens, and ultimately will kill if left unchecked.

Wraths, Burns, *Hihim*: Wraths are small, lanky humanoids covered in hot, viscous fluid. Those familiar with it identify the fluid as napalm, which burns so hot the fire is invisible to the naked eye. Their victims rarely get to look long for the source of the fire, as a Wrath rushes its prey and explodes, covering them in the burning gel.

Sloths, Lethargies, *Shiddu*: Sloths have no physical appearance; they cannot be bothered. This makes them among the most dangerous of the Indulgences. When they find prey, they cling to it, and cause time to slow around it. Its muscles become heavy, and it simply stops moving. Eventually, it becomes too lethargic even to breathe. This horrific process can take upwards of a week; many victims starve before they get to that point.

Gluttonies, Overdoses, *Shabu*: Gluttonies are snakelike creatures made of long, slender hypodermic needles. They perpetually depress their plungers, and the venomous green fluid from within flows down the neck of the syringe to re-enter the rear like narcotic ouroboroses. When they find a target, they'll attach to it by needle, and pump their venom. The venom makes the target hungry for whatever they want most. The hunger is a deathly, existential hunger, one that's not sated by indulgence. So the subject will consume and consume to the point of self-destruction.

Envies, Emptinesses, *Enro*: Envies look like nothingness. Light warps around them. To most eyes, they're simply distorted space. In fact, they're holes in existence that draw in everything around them. Inanimate objects absorb directly into them. Living things slowly disintegrate over the course of hours, losing structural integrity until they just cannot continue living. Fortunately for the world around them, they move slowly; most cannot move more than a foot in an hour.

Lusts, Wetnesses, *Titu*: Lusts are thin clouds of salty-sweet organic wetness. They arouse in the way pheromones might. They cause immediate and unmistakable obsession for all the things a person has been told not to do. If one of the breeds of Indulgence was the leader, Lusts would be that. They tend to trail along with other Indulgences, compounding their effects and making the victim want for their end.

Unique Manifestations

New York boasts some spirits that aren't parts of the major courts; but remain powerful nonetheless.

Scoopers

Scoopers are industrial machines made of flesh and bone. They look like dump trucks, cement mixers, or cranes. They're of exaggerated size, even for what they look like, sometimes taking up an entire city street. Scoopers are perverted spirits of hunger; they draw essence from fulfilling their need by any means necessary. For the scoopers, this means capturing and delivering one being to be consumed by another. They gather up numerous small spirits at a time, and bring them to greater spirits, which grow rapidly from the feasts.

Scoopers bring with them two very real concerns. First, they're a quick ticket to power for whatever Court wishes to take Fair Wage's place — but with rampant feeding comes the risk of turning *magath*. Secondly, as the Scoopers grow in numbers, a few interests have looked into the possibility of teaching them to manifest. One pack of Pure seeks to unleash them on the world

of flesh, to terrorize and destroy the population of New York. If they succeed, New York could be the first city truly conquered by the Pure, and it would irrevocably shatter the Oath of the Moon.

Melting Pots

Melting Pots are less pots, more puddles. They're primordial ooze, seeking to return everything they touch to its natural state. They barely move, instead waiting for things to become trapped in their quagmires. A creature that touches the Melting Pot is stuck fast. Over the course of days, it's slowly absorbed, and the puddle grows.

To most spirits, they're hardly a threat. Most of New York knows about these puddles, and simply steers clear of them. This keeps the Melting Pots from growing too large. A few very large puddles haunt certain intersections, and block all traffic going through the *Hisil*.

Most of the time, that's all the threat Melting Pots pose. Sometimes, though, spirits are sucked into the puddle without being completely "digested," as it were. As the Melting Pot slowly siphons off their Essence, these captive spirits turn on each other like cats in a sack, tearing into each other for what little Essence they have left. Every once in a while, this ends up creating a *magath* — and every once in a great while, the new *magath* is strong enough to burst the Melting Pot and escape. *Hisil* explorers are advised to avoid Melting Pots that bubble like molten tar: you never know what might come snarling out of one.

Running the Game

Here, we hit on the tools necessary to run the game, including the basic modifications to **Werewolf: The Forsaken** necessary to fit the setting. Then, we'll give a basic model for a *Bowery Dogs* story, including a series of modular scenes you can piece together to build your own tale. Sure, you could run a game set in this setting with just the standard Storytelling System rules, but in this section, we hit hard on some genre conventions, and how to bring them home with the game mechanics.

The Punk Generation

This is an optional rule designed to emphasize some of the themes of the setting. Here, now, the downtrodden lash out, and in many cases they win. The status quo shakes at its foundation.

With this rule in play, events play out normally, until someone in a privileged position steps on someone less fortunate, and the less-fortunate person decides to strike back.

For the purposes of this rule, determine what Social Merit most closely fits the action at hand. If someone's arresting the homeless, it's Resources. If a cop throws around some false evidence to make an arrest, that's Status. If the victim



NEW CONDITION: THE PUNK GENERATION

Your character has been wronged by someone more privileged than she. While under the weight of that oppression, she suffers –2 to all Resolve and Composure rolls.

Resolution: When spending Willpower to lash out at the source of the Condition, you can choose to use the rote quality on the roll instead of taking the normal +3. If you do so, resolve this Condition.

Beat: n/a

of the action has fewer dots in that Merit than the aggressor, the victim gains The Punk Generation Condition.

From a systems perspective, the rote quality allows the player to reroll all failed dice once in the roll. So, this quality is only a benefit if the player rolls four or more failed dice. But if it's a dice pool where she's giving it her all (and statistically, one that's at least about six or seven dice), this can make for a devastating turn of the tables.

The Punk Generation cuts both ways; if the struggle shifts to a place where the victim becomes the privileged participant, he can find himself on the receiving end. For example, the cop that planted evidence has more Status than the junkie. The junkie would get the Punk Generation Condition. However, the junkie has more money, and thus more Resources. So if the junkie retaliates by finding the cop's shit apartment and slashing the tires of his used Buick, the cop can turn the tables and lash out using the same Condition.

DRUGS

In New York City, the 1970s was a time known for its drugs. While the rules for drugs in the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook** work fine for your average chronicle, a little extra attention can help to shine a light on that aspect of the setting.

Keep in mind, these drugs are a gross abstraction of reality, blended with genre conventions and dramatic considerations. They're not supposed to accurately portray real world addictions, any more than a dot of Strength is supposed to model all the ways a character can be strong.

TAKING DRUGS

Trying to lump all drugs into one series of rules is difficult, because each interacts differently with the body, and with the mind. There exist some rough categories, but mostly these exist because of laws and certain common symptoms. Then again, in a game like the Storytelling System, we abstract things enough that rough categorization can work. However, any given drug can have specific rules that overrule the general drug rules. Use the specific rules for the drug in question whenever possible. Unless otherwise noted, drugs that modify Attributes will modify relevant derived traits as well as any dice pools. A drug that increases Strength will increase Speed, for example.

Dosage and Overdose: Every drug has a "common dosage." This is a single use. A "hit." Enough to get your average person high. This amount will give the drug's expected effects. We're not listing specific amounts, because that level of pedantry doesn't have a place in a storytelling game. If your character takes the common dosage, roll Stamina + 3 to resist overdose. If your character takes more, it's a straight Stamina roll to resist overdose. Each additional dose affords a cumulative –1 penalty. Willpower can be spent to add to these rolls, but many characters with addictions won't have Willpower available to spend.

Overdose causes lethal damage equal to the drug's Toxicity rating, plus the number of doses the character has taken. Unless otherwise noted, the damage comes one point per half hour until the entirety of the damage has run its course.

Tolerance: A character who has taken a drug repeatedly will not feel its positive effects (but will still suffer any negative effects) with a common dosage. A character who has suffered physical or psychological addiction (see below) cannot feel the positive effects of a drug without taking more than the common dosage. She can sate her physical dependency with a basic dose, but she doesn't receive the necessary rush to sate her psychological dependency.

PHYSICAL ADDICTION

A character's body can become acclimated to the use of a drug, and grow to physically rely on its presence to operate normally. Any time the character uses a drug, the Storyteller should roll the character's Stamina, plus or minus any modifiers the drug affords. Success means the character avoids physical dependency. Failure means the character becomes dependent.

A dependent character who goes a whole day without indulgence suffers physical withdrawal. While in a physical withdrawal, she will not heal normally. Every hour, she suffers a level of bashing damage, and loses a dot of her highest current Physical Attribute. She'll suffer damage and lose dots equal to the drug's Toxicity. From then forward, she can make Stamina rolls every six hours. Each success returns one level of damage and one Physical Attribute dot. This affects derived traits, and can cause massive complications due to lost Health boxes. Once she's fully healed, she can heal as normal. However, if she uses the drug again, the dependency returns immediately without rolls. But if she takes the drug during withdrawal, the damage and lost Attributes return.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ADDICTION

Psychological addiction is a much more insidious and subtle beast than physical addiction. Not everyone is prone to psychological addiction, and there are many factors that could determine whether or not a character is.



In game terms, a player decides whether or not their character has an addictive personality, and is prone to addiction. After all, psychological addiction is a terrifying thing. It can cause a loss of agency. Storytelling games are about choices, so that loss should never be inflicted lightly.

If you choose for your character to have an addictive personality, it takes the form of a Persistent Condition. The Condition gives Beats whenever the addiction meaningfully impedes the character's life.

An addictive character becomes addicted after using a drug to escape from life's issues. As the player, you determine when that is, since it's a Condition. Once addicted, the character must indulge in her chosen vice daily. Any day she doesn't, she cannot gain Willpower. As well, she loses Willpower every day, once per day, until she's lost Willpower equal to the drug's Toxicity, or she indulges. She becomes irritable and testy, suffering a cumulative –1 dice penalty (to a maximum of the drug's Toxicity) to all Mental and Social actions. This leaves her needing to spend her few, dwindling Willpower points to succeed in all but the most menial actions. These penalties all go away the moment she indulges in her drug of choice.

Once at their most potent, the effects of psychological addiction will persist for an additional number of days equal to the drug's Toxicity. After this, the penalties fade at a rate of one per day, and she becomes able to regain Willpower normally. However, psychological addiction can come rushing back at any appropriate trigger. If she sees her drug of choice, if someone talks about it too much, or she just feels too bored, the floodgates can open. When that happens, take a Beat, and the addiction returns fully and immediately, with the maximum possible penalties.

Alcohol

Toxicity: 1

Being legal, alcohol is the most common mind-altering drug in New York. You can buy it at the corner store, in dozens if not hundreds of varieties. What constitutes a common dose is fairly abstract, from a couple of beers, to a shot, to a glass of wine. Deaths from overdose are rare, but overindulgence leaves many people calling in sick from work the day after, spending hours in front of a toilet bowl.

Being drunk offers a +1 bonus to Presence, but a –1 to Dexterity. This increases to +2 Presence, –2 Dexterity, –1 Composure with more than the common dosage. Effects last a couple of hours.

Special Notes: A character is highly unlikely to suffer overdose from a couple of drinks. All rolls to resist overdose benefit from +2 additional dice.

Cocaine

Toxicity: 3

Cocaine saw a rise in popularity in the 1970s. It was stylish. It was hip. It was full of excitement, energy, and all the things pleasant hippie drugs were not. It was a drug that pushed disco that much further, and outlived its host. Used in limited quantities, it's a drug that many people could walk away from with minimal lasting repercussions. That made it all the more tempting, and led to deadly excess.

A normal dose of cocaine grants a +1 to all Physical dice pools (not Attributes), and a –1 to Resolve. These effects double with additional dosage. The effects last about a half an hour, to an hour with higher dosage.

Special Notes: Even without overdose, characters who frequently use cocaine will suffer lasting effects. Consider temporary Flaws or Conditions exhibiting paranoia, general discomfort, or heart complications.

Depressants

Toxicity: 1–3

This is a general category for a broad group of drugs that reduce stimulation and relax the muscular and nervous systems. While alcohol is technically a depressant, its legality affords it a different enough delivery to warrant a separate entry. Quaaludes are a common example in the period; many weaker opiates and anesthetics can use these rules as well.

A character adds the drug's Toxicity to Composure, and subtracts it from Dexterity. Additional doses levy a cumulative –1 penalty to all Physical actions. The character also ignores wound penalties equal to the Toxicity score. The effects last for a couple of hours.

Special Notes: The umbrella of depressants has a wide variety beneath it, and each has its own effects. When taking a depressant, determine a side effect. Reflect this with a conditional –2 penalty. For example, Quaaludes cause photosensitivity, so a character on Quaaludes suffers –2 to all actions taken under bright lights.

Heroin

Toxicity: 4

Heroin use became an epidemic with the return of Vietnam veterans who used the drug as an outlet during the war. Many couldn't find the drug, so the effects of withdrawal stood fearsomely in the faces of many Americans. It's a strong opiate well known for being highly addictive, with terrible withdrawal symptoms, and easy to overdose on.

A dose of heroin causes intense euphoria and numbness. The character ignores all wound penalties, and can ignore any penalties due to distraction or overwhelming circumstances. He also gains dice that he can divide however he'd like across any number of rolls. The number is equal to 3 + the number of doses taken. However, if he's not using any of those bonus dice, he loses the 10-again quality on the roll due to lackluster performance and dedication. The effects last for one to ten hours, depending on the amount and quality of the drug.

Special Notes: Heroin is particularly addictive. Rolls to resist physical dependency suffer a –1 penalty. As soon as the drug wears off, the user immediately begins feeling withdrawal symptoms as if he'd been without for a full day.

Marijuana

Toxicity: 1

Marijuana is the most commonly used illegal drug in our setting. Many people barely even consider it a drug. Particularly since Vietnam veterans commonly used marijuana in the field, it's easy to find on the streets of New York.

A dose of marijuana leaves the user slightly euphoric and calm, free of pain and often with a heightened appetite. It offers a +1 to Composure, but a –1 penalty to extended action dice pools for a couple of hours. Additional dosage doesn't afford further effect, beyond an additional –1 to extended action dice pools. These effects will last a couple of hours.

Special Notes: Marijuana is not a particularly addictive substance. It doesn't cause physical dependency. Your character may become psychologically dependent, however.

Mescaline and Peyote

Toxicity: 2

Mescaline and peyote are naturally occurring mild hallucinogens. They rose in popularity as the stronger LSD became less trendy. Mescaline occurs naturally within the peyote cactus, and is a common refinement of the plant for recreational use. While mescaline doesn't generally cause full visual hallucinations, it enhances color senses, causes some minor visual phenomenon, and can give an altered sense of time. It can also cause synesthesia, where one sense triggers stimuli in other senses. For example, sounds may be perceived as having color, despite not having a visible appearance. Also, objects can appear distorted beyond physical possibility under certain circumstances.

In game terms, mescaline causes a –2 to Wits, as distraction takes over. However, the character's newfound senses act as a secondary Vice, offering Willpower when the character explores her altered state. These effects last a couple of hours.

Special Notes: Peyote has long been used for spiritual awareness. Depending on your chronicle, you may wish to lend some credence to the drug's abilities. If you do, a user can gain the benefits of the Two World Eyes Gift while the drug remains active. However, he cannot focus on either world at one time; both senses are forcibly active.

Betrayal

The Bowery Dogs apes certain genre conventions. That era of film was loaded to the brim with stories of loyalty and betrayal. You couldn't trust anyone (except the one guy you could...) and everyone's a possible backstabber.

When creating your *Bowery Dogs* characters, everyone gets their normal allotment of Merit dots. But atop those, everyone gets one free dot in Allies, Contacts, Mentor, or Retainer. For this style of chronicle to work, the characters have to be connected; they have to be grounded in the setting.

The Risk

When a character taxes her relationship with a Social Merit, the Storyteller rolls her rating in that Merit. Use the modifiers in the table on this page to reflect the character's behavior toward her associates, letting those behaviors influence the chance of betrayal.

If the roll succeeds, the connection stays loyal. With an exceptional success, the connection improves. The character gains a free dot in a Merit reflecting that connection. It may be an additional dot of the same Merit, or a different Merit broadening the relationship.

If the roll fails, the connection betrays the character. Maybe the informant snitches on his employer. Maybe the character's wife has a one-night stand with his rival. The player has two choices at that point. He can roll with the betrayal, and keep the connection close. If he does that, it builds a cool cynicism in the character's disposition, and his character regains a point of spent Willpower. Otherwise, he can swap out the Merit dots reflecting that connection. Those dots can be spent on new Social Merits of equivalent ratings, reflecting a new connection. The new connection must make sense, but the player gets to dictate its introduction. For example, if his crooked cop buddy plants some hot drugs in his house, he might make friends with the dealer the cop took the drugs from, since they now have a common enemy. Whereas the cop might have been reflected in Allies 3: Police, the new dealer might be Allies 2: Street, and Contacts 1.

With a dramatic failure, the connection becomes a nemesis. Create the connection as a full Storyteller character. Make the nemesis with three Experiences per dot invested in the relationship. The player then receives equivalent Merit dots to reflect a new relationship, as if the roll were a regular failure.

Betrayal Modifiers

Character betrayed the ally	–2
Characters just broke up	–3
The ally has a monetary incentive to betray	–1
The ally has reason to fear for his safety	–2
The ally has reason to fear for his life	–3
Ally is a relative	+2
Characters are in romantic relationship	+2
Ally would lose a job with the betrayal	+1
Character offered an incentive to guarantee loyalty	+1 to +3

Keeping Your Enemies Closer

This rules shift implies a lot of things. For one, almost nobody is truly loyal. But also, it implies that betrayal isn't always the end of a relationship. So when you're creating your characters, or buying Merits, think with betrayal in mind. When buying Social Merits, look to rivals, ex-lovers, and other "negative" relationships for possibilities. Look to film noir for inspiration. There's no such thing as a worthless relationship. Everyone has a value, if you look at them from the right angle. And if you keep your enemies close, you don't have to be disappointed when they betray you.

True Friend

One clear exception stands against the Betrayal rules: characters in the Chronicles of Darkness might have a True Friend. True friends are represented with the True Friend Merit from p. 56 of the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**. It renders a character completely immune to these betrayal rules; the Storyteller cannot force a True Friend to turn on the character.



EVENTS

Instead of a full, cohesive story, this section favors modular events, things you can string together as you see fit. They're designed to help you build momentum, not to deliver a complex arc. They're important historical events — or events that happen in the periphery of those historic events — that help you to build the foundation for your *Bowery Dogs* story. They exist to help you dress the set, and hit home on the themes and moods. The Storyteller characters tie the scenes together and give them conceptual continuity.

Every scene offers an action that could be used to further the plot or resolve the issue at hand. This of course is a suggestion; your players will likely take the threads of the plot and run far with them. But use it as an idea of the directions you could take the story.

WHISTLEBLOWING

Frank Serpico's famous whistleblowing caused a revolutionary change in the way the people saw the police, and ended much of the corruption that was rampant in New York City. However, it had unintended consequences for good cops. Detective Stephanie Dimera (p. 589) was one of those good cops.

She was working on a murder investigation that coincided with a drug sting operation. The victim and suspect lived in the same transient house with ten other addicts. The suspect was wanted in the cases of at least three other murders. The problem came down to a leak in the department, which put dozens of protestors on the scene when the police arrived. The protestors asserted that Johnny Sampson, the suspect, was innocent, and simply guilty of a police smear campaign. They wouldn't hear logic.

At the moment the scene starts, Johnny's using the opportunity to escape. Detective Dimera's attempting pursuit. The mob is trying to stop her. Unbeknownst to Dimera, one of the protestors is armed, and this close to drawing and firing on the detective. Also unbeknownst to Dimera, her culprit is *Beshilu*. Even if she avoids being shot by the civilian, she's in for a much more complicated arrest.

Hook: The crack house is a den of *Beshilu*, and on or otherwise near the characters' territory. Most of the junkies are infected with the rat hosts. The characters trace leads back to the house.

Conflict: The balance between the police on the scene, the *Beshilu* junkies, and the protestors. To solve one of these problems, you need to push hard enough to set another ablaze.

Example Action: Distraction

Dice Pool: Presence + Subterfuge

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The diversion goes terribly awry. The mob becomes a riot. A handful of rioters become infected with the rat hosts. Dimera counts herself among the infected.

Failure: The diversion fails. The mob continues their protests, blocking Dimera. If Dimera doesn't withdraw (which she won't without an additional roll to convince her), someone in the crowd will pull a gun and fire on her.

Success: The crowd parts enough to let Dimera through safely, along with any of the characters who need to enter the *Beshilu* nest.

Exceptional Success: The crowd parts, and even manages to position itself in such a way as to corral the *Beshilu*. Any attempts they make to flee suffer a –3 penalty, and pursuing them gains +3.

Recommended Modifiers: Characters know protestors (+2), Characters threaten violence (–2), Characters demonstrate violence (–4), Characters bring evidence of Johnny Sampson's guilt (+3)

BLACKOUT

A series of unfortunate lightning strikes caused the 1977 blackout. The 1977 blackout brought unprecedented bedlam in New York. This occurred in the midst of the Summer of Sam murders, an economic slump, and a time of general civil unrest. While the blackout didn't necessarily cause the riots, it was the catalyst an uneasy population needed to step over the line. Thousands of businesses were looted.

In this scene, Hard Donny (see p. 588) and a group of rioters are tearing shit up in the characters' territory. They're smashing windows, kicking in doors, stealing anything they can carry, breaking anything they can't, and otherwise devastating everything in sight. Not only does this cause complications for a pack looking to secure its territory, but it's also a quick path to *Kuruth*, as anger overtakes Uratha whose homes are violated so thoroughly. Hard Donny doesn't know shit about shit; he's just trying to be part of the excitement. However, he's highly intuitive, and will be the first to intervene when things start going south. This puts him right in the line of fire.

To make matters worse, it happens when most or all of the characters are sleeping. This riles the beast immensely. Those woken by the riots suffer a –5 penalty to rolls to resist *Kuruth*. Other characters suffer –3.

Characters trying to fight back the flood of people must not only shout over the members of the crowd to convince them, but must physically hold them back as they seek to trample anyone within.

Hook: This scene comes to the characters. It starts *in media res*, as a brick shatters a window. A door busts off its hinges.

Example Action: Fighting Back the Flood

Dice Pool: Strength + Expression

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The mob overcomes the character. Everyone in the immediate vicinity takes four dice of lethal damage per turn they are trampled and beaten by the mob. Defense does not apply. Escaping the mob is an extended Strength + Stamina action requiring five successes, with one roll representing a turn of struggle. Any Uratha in the mob must resist *Kuruth*, requiring five successes.

Failure: The mob overcomes the character. Everyone in the immediate vicinity takes six dice of bashing damage per turn they are trampled and beaten by the mob. Defense does not apply. Escaping the mob is an extended Strength + Stamina action requiring three successes, with one roll representing a turn of struggle. Any Uratha in the mob must resist *Kuruth*, requiring three successes.

Success: The mob withdraws after a slight struggle. Much property damage still occurs. Uratha exposed to the mob must resist *Kuruth*, requiring only a single success.

Exceptional Success: The mob withdraws rapidly, barely affecting the property.

Recommended Modifiers: Characters barricade the location (+2), Neighborhood knows and hates the characters (–3), Characters pissed Donny off (–2), Donny likes the character (+2)

Institutional Violence

In New York, roles get complicated. Protectors can be abusers. Abusers can be protectors. This era brings that uncertainty to light, as a few high-profile cases of police brutality shook the populace.

This scene doesn't center on the death of an innocent person at the hands of the authorities, but on its aftermath. If that happens in play, this could follow. Alternatively, offer an experience point or Beat to a player who offers up a character in their character's network, a friend, family, or associate, to suffer that tragedy.

The neighborhood is shaken by the loss. Protests, vigils, and patrols run all day and night. At one particular vigil, one the characters happen to attend, things go awry. Two factions emerge: the first is Pastor Washington (see p. 588), the second is a quickly growing gang. The gang is advocating an attack against the officer responsible for the tragedy. Pastor Washington believes that violence only begets more violence, and is trying to talk them down. The situation is tense, and could end badly for everyone. The gang doesn't want to hear reason, only a chance for revenge.

An additional problem here is that the struggle is generating an immense amount of infectious Essence that draws something dark, something malevolent. And worse still, Pastor Washington is a living locus; a perfect way for the monster to come across and devastate the already downtrodden people. The characters must try to stop the spirit from coming across, while remaining unnoticed by the vigil's participants.

Hook: The characters should know the victim, and thus have reason to attend the vigil.

Example Action: Intercepting the Spirit

Dice Pool: Wits + Stealth

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: This is the metaphorical equivalent of stepping on a twig in the quiet forest. The character goes loud, and draws the attention of everyone in the vigil. If the character is in the *Hisil*, all local spirits are alerted, and cause havoc. The spirit uses the opportunity to manifest.

Failure: The crowd just runs too thick and too attentive. The spirit finds its way to Pastor Washington, and uses him to manifest, but manifests slightly away from the crowd.

Success: The spirit cannot make it to Pastor Washington to manifest. The characters must find a way to deal with the spirit before it finds an alternative path through the *Hisil*.

Exceptional Success: The spirit is not only blocked from using Pastor Washington for entrance, but finds the pack overwhelming enough to flee, hoping to live to fight another day.

Recommended Modifiers: Character already in the *Hisil* (+2), Characters dispersed the vigil (+1), Pack argued with the gang (–3), Pastor Washington complies with the plan (+2), Thorough plan (+3)

Stonewall

The Stonewall riots happened because real people made real decisions that hurt other real people. Cornered victims lashed out, and the whole thing spun into something altogether bigger. It didn't happen because of malevolent spirits, or unknown monsters. That doesn't mean the monsters didn't benefit.

A pack of Pure have been eyeing the Stonewall Inn for a while, since a few of their wolf-blooded males have been using the Stonewall as a shelter from life as Pure breeding stock. Unfortunately for the Pure, their regular tactics for retrieval wouldn't work in the middle of the city. They've been looking for an opportunity to strike, and the riots are the perfect time for that. They're staging a guerrilla operation to abduct their kin in the middle of the chaos.

Their operation assumes at least some of the Forsaken are in the area. So they're prepared to fight, and fight ruthlessly. Their tactics are sound. If they uncover Forsaken, they'll divide and conquer, ganging up on a single member at a time for a quick and efficient kill.

Ultimately, their plan succeeds when all four of the wolf-blooded are removed from the site. The four Uratha in the strike team each have their own role to play. One dresses as a police officer, trying to "arrest" one of the kin and get him into a police car. One dresses as a bar patron, attempting to trick the kin away to "safety." Two are posing as rioters, one physically kidnapping one of the kin, and one attempting to knock another out in the fray for ease of abduction.

Snuggy Roscoe (see p. 588) is around, since he makes a lot of his money dealing to the gay community. He's not interested in having some of his prime customers hauled off. If he's clued in, he may at least be able to support the pack's plan.

It's highly unlikely the Forsaken will emerge fully victorious here, as the Pure have extensive evasion plans, and the Pure will abandon packmates in order to get their prized breeding stock.

Hook: The characters have found evidence of the Pure encroaching into the area. All evidence points to an upcoming strike; the characters find some used stakeout locations near the Stonewall.

Sample Action: Halting the Pure

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Strategy, extended

This roll requires 20 successes. The characters have four attempts to make the goal. Each attempt is a half hour of strategizing and executing their plan. These rolls are teamwork rolls; the main actor makes a Dexterity + Strategy roll to situate herself in such a way as to intercept the Pure for engagement. The other actors may use other, relevant dice pools to support the primary actor.

Every five successes means the Forsaken intercept one of the four Pure, potentially saving one of the four wolf-blooded. When they intercept, cut away to a combat scene or other scene attempting to stop one of the abductions. With an exceptional success, the Forsaken could intercept two of the Pure with a single action. Situate them together, and let the Forsaken deal with them as a pair at that point.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Dramatic failure means that not only have the Pure succeeded in their actions, but the Pure procure some essential piece of evidence pointing to security breaches in the Forsaken territory. This lines them up for a later guerrilla assault from the same pack.

Failure: Failures add no successes to the total. Because of the limited number of rolls allowed, this could be devastating for the operation.

Success: Add successes to the Forsaken's total. If they've reached five, 10, 15, or 20 successes, they intercept one of the Pure.

Exceptional Success: Add successes to the total. Whatever the current total is, the Forsaken intercept two of the Pure. This potentially lowers the total number of successes required for a fully successful operation.

Recommended Modifiers: Enemies in the gay community (–3), Enemies in the police (–2), Spies on the inside (+2), Spies in the police (+2), Thorough plan (+2)

The Summer of Sam

The David Berkowitz killings had much of New York looking over its shoulders on the way home at night. One man killed six or more people. That's not much in the scope of New York's population, but it was frightening enough to make a million people pay attention. Unfortunately for the Forsaken, attention's the worst thing in the world.

In this scene, one of the pack, the one closest (but not necessarily that close) to David Berkowitz's description, is assumed to be the Son of Sam killer. The citizen who makes the accusation doesn't necessarily know the character well (but might), but knows enough of his or her daily habits to direct law enforcement to investigate.

Police detectives, including Detective Stephanie Dimera (p. 589), investigate wherever the character may have been seen, questioning witnesses and researching his actions. This could bring up some questionable material. Early on, characters with access to Snuggy Roscoe (p. 588) or Doubting Thomas (p. 587) could receive warning about the investigation, and have the opportunity to cut it off. Alternatively, either of these two could run interference for the character.

The problem is, a good enough detective will chance on something incriminating, something that'll raise more questions. And a detective like Dimera won't turn a blind eye to a solid lead. To avoid causing problems with the Oath of the Moon, the character will have to get shut Dimera down. They might cause her problems with her career, distract her, convince her they're innocent, or even hunt down the real Son of Sam, but she won't stop her investigation without damned good reason.

Hook: One of the characters vaguely fits the description of the Son of Sam killer. Keep in mind, dozens of sketches went around the city, most of which looked nothing like Berkowitz.

Sample Action: Seeding False Evidence

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Investigation

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Not only does the false evidence not fool Dimera and her investigators, she finds evidence that they're trying to throw her off the trail. She hastens her investigation, and adds "impeding an investigation" to the list of charges.

Failure: Dimera continues her investigation, ignoring the false leads.

Success: Dimera follows the false leads, in turn investigating someone else, unrelated. She drops the investigation on the character. The case remains open.

Exceptional Success: Dimera drops the case, and follows the false leads. She closes the case, and a corrupt cop offers a significant bribe to stay silent about the invasion of personal privacy.

Recommended Modifiers: Character has Police Allies (+dot rating), False evidence is for another, real crime (+2), Character has a police record (–2, –4 for felonies), Character was witnessed committing a crime (–2)

Blitzkrieg Bop

The punk scene's a good place to feel like you're part of something. That is, unless you're undergoing changes that even the young punks can't understand. In this case, a teen is about to undergo her First Change, and the high energy of a punk rock show is just the thing to set her off.

It's the full moon. The Ramones are playing at CBGB, and Hannah, our would-be Uratha, goes with a few friends to the show. With the traffic, the heartbeats, the music, and the aggression, Hannah's this close to officially becoming Rahu. This will not end well for the people around her.

Hannah's going to change tonight. It's just a question of how long it takes, and where it happens. She's a physically fit young girl that's seen more than a few scraps in her short lifetime. So when she changes, it'll be explosive. Whether or not it happens in a crowd of people — that's up to the pack. Depending on the way this scene goes, the pack could end up with a new member before the night is through.

Hard Donny's (p. 588) on the scene, and if he realizes something's wrong, he'll do everything in his power to help

the pack evacuate Hannah. Doubting Thomas (p. 587) is right outside, bumming for change from the young punks. He doesn't want a bloodbath; it's bad for everyone around, and puts his sleeping places at risk.

Hook: Tonya Lawson (p. 590) caught wind of the Change coming in Hannah. Since Hannah was living in the characters' territory, she told them of it so they could keep an eye out and intercept.

Sample Action: Evacuating Hannah

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Empathy, and Dexterity + Socialize –2, extended

This action has two parts. First, in order to get Hannah out safely, she needs to be calmed enough to resist the change. So each turn, the characters must succeed in a Manipulation + Empathy roll to help calm her nerves. If successful, they can maneuver through the club to remove her. That requires an extended Dexterity + Socialize roll with a –2 penalty for the crowd. It requires a total of ten successes, with each roll, each turn representing one minute. Failed rolls — either the Empathy or Socialize rolls — impose a cumulative –2 to all further rolls.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Right there, dead center of the place, Hannah explodes into Gauru form, and enters *Kuruth*. Within seconds, two punks die. Each turn thereafter, she kills another until stopped.

Failure: Hannah lashes out violently, screaming, kicking, or even clawing at something as her body moves closer to its new form. She injures one of the crowd. All further rolls are made at a cumulative –2 penalty.

Success: The characters make headway toward the exit, and successes are added to the total.

Exceptional Success: The characters find a quick and easy escape, one that gets Hannah out with minimal risk to the bystanders. She has at least another five minutes before she loses herself to the First Change.

Recommended Modifiers: Characters do something to Hannah to piss her off (–3), Characters get Hannah a drink to sooth her nerves (+2), Characters get the music stopped (+2), Cops arrive (–2), Donny helps machinate an escape (+2)

Storyteller Characters

These characters tie together the various scenes. If you're making characters to play in this story, encourage the players to take these characters as Social Merits. Most could be Allies, Contacts, Mentors, or possibly Retainers. This isn't a requirement, but some initial connections with the characters will make for easier hooks.

They don't have full character sheets; they're meant to be supporting characters. So we've listed a few important dice pools they might use. They're also mostly not Uratha. *The Bowery Dogs* assumes most plots will center on the Uratha and the people around them in the setting. Nothing's stopping any of these characters from being Uratha; they could represent other packs in New York City if that's the way you want to go. They're positioned in prominent roles, so each could easily be an alpha. Snuggy Roscoe, for example, would lead a pack of prostitutes and dealers. Stephanie Dimera may be wolf-blooded, with her father being a prominent Uratha. She shepherds a large crew of wolf-blooded within the NYPD.

DOUBTING THOMAS

Cool out, baby. Things ain't gonna explode if you take a deep breath. What's the worst thing that could happen? You lose your house? Well, baby, I lost my house, and I'm livin' it large. You gotta do better than that.

Background: Doubting Thomas is an old homeless man, living wherever in the Bronx he feels like it from night to night. He has a story, but it's not a remarkable one in this day and age. He worked in gas stations. As the economy slumped, people stopped buying cars. People bought less gas. Gas prices went up. Stations closed and consolidated. He tried working other jobs, but the job market just wasn't there. So he lost his house. He didn't have kids. His wife left him during the decline. So, he didn't bother finding something else. He couch surfed for a while, then eventually ended up learning the shelter circuit.

He's been doing this for a decade now, and knows the streets better than most anyone. The homeless of New York are all but invisible, so he can get wherever he wants with little hassle. He tells the people on the street that he was a religious man until he learned the truth, and figured out that God wasn't listening. He goes by Doubting Thomas for that reason. Because of his alertness, and living all over and wherever, he's stumbled upon more than a few strange coincidences. While he doesn't understand the truths of his experiences, he knows there's more to the world than the establishment lets on.

Description: Thomas dresses for everything. Which is to say, he wears numerous layers of varied, versatile clothing he's acquired over the years. Underneath it all, he's a tall, lanky old man with just a little bit of hair, all gray. With his clothing on, he looks big, bulky, and grounded. He wears hoods and hats which obscure almost his entire face. He usually wanders the town with an old wheelchair he's been using as a cart for all his belongings.

Roleplaying Hints: He speaks slowly, as if nothing could make him rush. He's always calm and collected; he's seen enough tragedy to know that right now is never the worst it can get. Thomas genuinely likes helping people, but he's been around the block enough to be suspicious of everyone. Because even if someone isn't worth suspicion, that means someone else is lining up to take advantage of them.

Common Dice Pools: Causing Distraction (5 dice), Discreet Delivery (6 dice), Foraging (7 dice), Information Gathering (6 dice), Theft (5 dice)



HARD DONNY

No, fucker. I don't think anarchy's cool because I think it'll work and everyone will be peachy fucking keen. I think anarchy's cool because I'm better than you.

Background: Hard Donny's dad was a banker. If you ask Donny, he'll tell you his dad was a fucking scumbag capitalist tool, set to enslave the working class and yadda yadda yadda. Donny was an overachiever. Brilliant in school. Excelled in everything he tried. He was smart enough that he got bored. And when he got bored, he turned to rebellion. Rebellion was exciting. He didn't know that he wasn't alone. He didn't know he had kin in his rebellion. A high school friend dragged him out one night to a concert. It was an early New York Dolls show. From the moment they started playing, he was hooked. The music was okay. But there was a swagger, a power, an undeniable gravitas that he'd never seen before.

He dove in full-bore. He was part of the scene, right when the scene was born. By the time the Ramones came around, he was well known in the clubs. He got his name when that fucker Stacy busted a chair over his head, and he kept dancing. He's made his reputation on being at ground zero every time there's a riot, every time the people stand up and tell the authority to fuck off. Now, he's pushing 30, and he's the old mentor to all the young punks.

Description: Hard Donny is punk as fuck. He's rocking a full Mohawk, a hand-riveted leather jacket, and jeans with more holes than a New York City street in February. Today, his Mohawk is blue. Next week, it'll probably be green. He's thin, muscular, and covered with little nicks, scars, and burns. They're not awful; they're kind of appealing if you're into that sort of thing. His eyes are always wide, and when you look at him, he looks like he's looking through you and back about 10 feet.

Roleplaying Hints: Be loud. Be uncompromising. Donny's not a bad person, but he's passionate enough about every little injustice, he might come off like it. The thing about Donny is, he's been doing the counter culture thing since it was a thing. All these kids? They don't know what it's like, and they're walking into the same mistakes he did when he was a kid. So he takes it upon himself to teach them before they fuck up and go through the same hell he had to.

Common Dice Pools: Carousing (5 dice), Fighting (5 dice), Inciting Riot (6 dice), Political Debate (5 dice), Teaching (4 dice)

PASTOR WASHINGTON

Sure, it's hard to see the light when you're distracted by the piss smell of the city streets, and the sounds of the police sirens, wondering if they're coming for you. The path wasn't designed to be easy. You've got to put your chin up, your feet on the ground, and tell the world you're going to find what you're looking for.

Background: Pastor Washington grew up as Little Bobby Washington from Hollis, Queens. He was the good kid on the block, always getting good grades in school, and keeping his nose clean. But he never strayed from the trouble in his neighborhood. He delved right in, and tried to fix it. He would set good examples for his peers, and help show them a better path. His grandma taught him about Jesus, he taught his friends likewise. But it was always a casual affair, just a thing about Bobby Washington. And frankly, Bobby never had much luck. His friends ended up in jail, hooked on drugs, whatever. But Bobby kept trying, because like his grandma said, "if you save just one soul, your entire life's worth it."

His life changed when his friend Trevor died during a drug deal gone awry. Bobby was trying to get Trevor's life back on track. Trevor was staying with Bobby at the time, to get away from the drugs. Bobby watched him well, until one day, Bobby had a couple too many beers, and Trevor snuck out. Trevor didn't come home. Bobby swore he'd devote his life to helping any other Trevors of the world. Bobby became a pastor.

The thing Bobby doesn't know is, he's a channel, a living locus. When Trevor died, it wasn't Bobby's fault, but Bobby was the gateway for the spirit that infected the dealer and killed Trevor. Bobby remains unaware of his strange place in the world's cosmology, but he continues to be a risk to those around him.

Description: He's a young man, well put together. He has short-shaven hair. He wears inoffensive sweaters and khakis most of the time, unless he feels the need for a suit. He's soft-spoken, but confident with his every word. He speaks with the wisdom of one way past his few years. His face is kind, empathic, and hard to say no to.

Roleplaying Hints: He's only been doing this for a year or so, so he's still got the fire, the passion, and the optimism. Right now, it looks like nothing could leave him jaded. Even though he's in his late 20s, he has a bit of wisdom for everyone who will listen. He's an expert at getting people to talk, and doesn't mince words. He'll offer his services any time he thinks it could prevent mistreatment of a prisoner.

Common Dice Pools: Calming Nerves (5 dice), Finding the Pain (5 dice), Getting Them To Talk (7 dice), Placating Authorities (6 dice), Spouting Relevant Wisdom (6 dice)

SNUGGY ROSCOE

You want the good shit? Snuggy Roscoe can get the good shit. But you ain't looking for the good shit. You're looking for mandrake root? If you can smoke it, snort it, shoot it, or drink it, Snuggy Roscoe can get it. But... oh what the hell. But don't say Snuggy Roscoe never did you any favors.

Background: Snuggy Roscoe, born Thomas Worthington, went to a private school. Then, he went to Syracuse for a degree in Chemistry, with a minor in Business. Don't ever let anyone say that in front of him. He didn't live an awful life on



the streets; he consciously chose to make his fortune out there. His friends all went off to get medical degrees, taking on insurmountable debt, working long hours, and tying themselves to jobs for 20 or more years. He decided instead to live the American Dream, and take advantage of his education. He became a dealer.

He started off by building loyalty with local street kids, offering free liquor, holding parties, and paying off cops. He used the neighborhood's good will to help push out the gangs, because they'd cut into his business. Then, he got in good with the local prostitutes, using his new connections to keep them safe and in business for themselves. Quickly, with business acumen, Snuggy Roscoe built a powerful network that locked down his territory. Now, he lives a comfortable life, with all the trappings, and none of the obligation.

Description: Snuggy Roscoe wears what he calls "the uniform." He favors gaudy, fancy coats, expensive jewelry, and other over-the-top trappings of wealth. Without that context, he's a rather average guy. But in costume, he walks with swagger and authority; every movement suggests he's the king of his neighborhood.

Roleplaying Hints: Snuggy's always looking for the edge, the lead, the advantage. He will find a way to profit from any situation, and he will pursue that profit unless it means hurting his bottom line later. He's a ruthlessly efficient business strategist, and could make millions a few blocks down on Wall Street. Instead, he prefers to be the biggest fish in a smaller pond. He'd rather be the undisputed best than in the running with the other sharks. His voice should always be rhythmic, soothing, and confident. He's always trying to calm the scene around him. Even in a firefight, he should be chill.

Common Dice Pools: Better Living Through Chemistry (6 dice), Business Negotiation (7 dice), Fitting In (5 dice), Strategy (6 dice)

STEPHANIE DIMERA

I'm not here for you, unless you're the one causing this ruckus. Are you causing it? Do you know who is causing it? Are you going to give me a better answer than that 'I just got here, officer' bullshit you give me every time we just happen to be on the scene together at a crime scene? I thought so.

Background: Stephanie Dimera did everything right. She performed well in school. She participated in extra-curricular activities. She volunteered at her church. But when her father, the chief of police, died of a gunshot wound, she took it as a personal punishment for not trying hard enough. She tried harder. She fought. She struggled. She spent every waking moment working toward her goals. And her new goal was to fill the void her father left in New York.

After college, she made the beat. She quickly saw a series of promotions, and is currently a homicide detective who consults in vice, her previous office. Everyone knows she's the dead chief's daughter, so they try to coddle her. She's been turned down for more than a couple promotions because the chief just couldn't stand to see her grind herself into the ground, but she's advanced despite that prejudice. She's not the ranking officer in her department, but she's tasked with every major homicide case, since everyone knows she's the best at her job. She's seen some direct action, but more



importantly, she trains constantly for the time she finds herself in an action movie scenario.

Description: She's only 30, but everything about her demeanor and appearance says she's lived a lot in those 30 years. She's serious, wise, and weathered. She has broad shoulders and a strong, uncompromising posture. She's solid, powerful, and imposing. Nothing in her behavior suggests she's Unchained, but the air about her has a menace. She gives some Uratha a run for their money in that regard.

Roleplaying Hints: Whatever they tell you, you've heard it before. Nobody can lie to you.

Common Dice Pools: Bureaucracy (6 dice), Crime Scene Investigation (8 dice), Detect Dishonesty (7 dice), Firefight (6 dice)

TONYA LAWSON

Doc says he's not willing to give up this turf. But he says if you're willing to stay away from the locus, and give 20% of your business here, you can come through and do your thing. I'm just the middle man. I've got ten packs to work with here, and I don't have all day. Can I tell him you're game?

Background: Tonya grew up with drugs, with violence, with abuse, and with all manner of awful things that so many other kids in New York grew up with. She got into prostitution young. She never graduated high school. Her story isn't the best, or the worst. It's just a story. At least until her First Change.

It took her a while to even meet another of the Uratha. She went under the radar for months. By the time a pack tried to recruit her, she was too used to being on her own; she decided to stay solo, a Ghost Wolf. As she met more and more packs, she organically popped up as a go-between for them. She's a diplomat between territories, and keeps close tabs on each pack's membership. She builds alliances with the alphas, and does her best to deliver messages, adjudicate disputes, and otherwise keep the peace. She's like the Elodoth for the whole city.

Description: Tonya's thin, always wearing colorful, flowing clothes that hang off her and catch the wind like a kite. Her afro-style hair is cut short and practical, and she wears minimal gold jewelry, just enough to catch the eye. Her cosmetics are simple but immensely effective; she doesn't need to try to demand attention. Her alternate forms have soft gray fur. She's lithe and muscular, but fluid in expression.

Roleplaying Hints: She's impatient. She's all about helping Uratha make the right connections and broker deals, but she wants it done now, now, now. She's a busy woman, and she doesn't have time to fuck around. Right now, she's looking for something that'll benefit her, because so far, she's been doing this job free of pay.

Common Dice Pools: Identifying New Uratha (6 dice), Navigating the City (6 dice), Remaining Neutral (7 dice), Solicitation (5 dice)

INSPIRATIONS

Across 110th Street (dir. Barry Shear, 1972) — Brutal film, and one of the grittier, more Chronicles of Darkness-appropriate entries in the blaxploitation genre. It's a solid little investigation story, with strong tension, some nice quips, and urgency. It doesn't dig into some of the less dignified blaxploitation space.

City Boy (Book), Edmund White — This great personal accounting touches on much of the themes and feel of this Dark Era. It hits on artistry, struggle, and intellectualism. It approaches cultural shifts toward sexuality, including Stonewall (which of course happened in 1969, but the ripples from those riots help to build the foundation for some of our stories) and life in a world that's starting to recognize but not quite accept lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer lifestyles. The author encounters many known names throughout his tale; this not only gives great fodder for bringing famous people into your stories, but does well to frame exactly who they were during this time, in this place.

The French Connection (dir. William Friedkin, 1971) — Right time. Right place. It's a strong take on real world events. It's a lovely inspiration for any crime drama in your *Bowery Dogs* games, and could help to inspire compelling Storyteller characters. Most of it's filmed on location in New York, so it's a great source of authentic imagery. It's also a solid way to get into the mindset of a criminal investigator during that period, before all our modern technology and forensics.

Serpico (dir. Sidney Lumet, 1973) — In *Serpico*, Al Pacino plays the named police whistleblower. Pacino did his homework, spending time with Serpico, and getting deep in the role. His portrayal of the one honest man in a sea of corruption will ring true for your players. The Forsaken have purpose and duty, but that duty and purpose flies in the face of everything that surrounds them, and puts them in more danger, and gets them no thanks.

Shaft (dir. Gordon Parks, 1971) — *Shaft* is deeply stylized, and maybe a rough direct influence, but it carries much of the feel of the era from a theatrical standpoint. If you avoid the sequels like the plague, Shaft not only has a lot of bit elements you can nab for your chronicle, but it also boasts a soundtrack that's bound to put anyone in the mood for The Wolf From Harlem.

Soylent Green (dir. Richard Fleischer, 1973) — Do you want a pre-made *Hisil* for your *Bowery Dogs* chronicle? Turn on Soylent Green. It's a classic. Everyone knows the twist ending. But as this surreal, disgusting, hopeless cesspool of a world, it functions as an iconic Shadow for your games. The perpetual summer, the scoopers, the hunger, it's all right there for the picking.

Summer of Sam (dir. Spike Lee, 1999) — Of course, earlier on, we touch on the Son of Sam killings. But this film goes above and beyond showing you that particular crime spree. It hits home on what the Chronicles of Darkness in the late 1970s might look like. Spike Lee fills the film with imagery, punks,

The Chronicles of Darkness

New York wasn't just a hotbed of werewolf activity; it was a microcosm of the whole world of the Chronicles of Darkness.

Vampires were all over the fucking place. They popped up like shopping malls, and were just about as hurtful to the locals. The Carthian Movement expresses a long-standing, forceful form of progressivism on the populace. In fact, the locals claim the Carthian Movement was created in New York in 1778. Maybe it was?

This is a great way to lead in to **New Wave Requiem**, which addresses Requiem in the 1980s. A lot of important 1980s themes work better when contrasted with the 1970s.

Mages are currently fighting over Wall Street. Half of them think Wall Street needs to be controlled. Half think it needs to be destroyed. The local Consilium has a hard battle to fight with the Seers; it seems the stark economic shifts, from rich to poor and back again, are causing Awakenings here and there and everywhere. Both sides battle in a recruitment war, because numbers may very well determine the future.

Prometheans existed in New York, if only by virtue of statistics. It was such a populated area, with such a concentration of innovative minds, that numerous Created found genesis in the region. In particular, many such scientists hid away in the Catskills, creating life hidden away from civilization, but close enough to New York's vast resources. With the booming wealth at the highest ends of New York's spectrum, some people just had too damned much money. What better to do with that money than play god?

New York's a city of orphans, and **changelings** are the ultimate orphans. The city boasts up to ten different Courts at a time. This number changes wildly, because for some time, the established rule has been that Courts must be temporary, with stated beginnings and endings in their charters. The idea was, with a population like New York's, the Lost have to keep the Gentry and the Huntsmen on their feet. The longer a Court exists, the greater chance the Gentry can wholesale topple it and claim everyone within.

New York is practically a weapon for the God-Machine. The city has more Infrastructure than anywhere else in the world right now. Angels scour the city streets. **Demons** live high risk, high reward lifestyles in the Big Apple. Many are caught and dragged back into the machine. However, those that make it tend to do very well for themselves.

Hunters in New York have their work cut out for them. Not only is New York one of the most populous cities in the world, but it has a disproportionate number of monsters, committing a disproportionate number of crimes. In a city with six reported murders a day, why would a flesh-eating monstrosity even think twice about taking a second meal in an evening? Here, the Union stand strong. The Cheiron Group maintains one of their biggest affiliate offices. And the Lucifuge joke that the Devil himself is a high-profile defense attorney, and that's why they have so many local members.

and attitude. In fact, the crimes even happen on the periphery of the story's strangely paced narrative. It's full of atmosphere, and will give you all sorts of ideas to bring your chronicle to life. Its strength isn't in the story, but in the stylized depiction of an era, a place, and a time. It does that wonderfully.

Taxi Driver (dir. Martin Scorsese, 1976) — *Taxi Driver* has the fever pitch and downward spiral that fits right in with the stories we're telling. It's full to the brim with misunderstanding, unorthodox justice, and tragedy. It's dark. It's painful. Even if you're not watching it for your Werewolf chronicle, watch it. It's renowned as one of the most important films of all time for a reason.

The Warriors (dir. Walter Hill, 1979) — This is probably the single best source for **Werewolf: The Forsaken** stories in this particular setting. It has the violence, the relationships, and the dynamics you should expect. The visuals are powerful and over-the-top in all the ways a good *Bowery Dogs* game should be.



Kickstarter Backers

Army of the Night

Borna "anothga" Pekaric
Bryan Allen Hickok
Charles "Revlid" Raspin
Chris Niewiarowski
Danielle Harper
Dheyrdre Machado
Drew A. Calderone
Drew and Kimber Miller
Gareth Hodges
Harald Hellerud
Jim Ryan
JoZninja
June Ricottilli
Konstantinos Rosmpoglou
Lindsey Rode
Mark Huba
Matt Murphy
Michael Tree
Moreno Bianconcini
Sergey Komar
Stephen Ciastek
Time is but a window.
Wolff Designa
Zdeněk Skoupý

Vampire Follower

Anthony Ussery
Brad Lawrence
Gracie Mason
Graham Ward
Grumpy RPG Reviews
harlokin
Lady Elizabeth Helleby
Matt Griffiths
Peter Klevvall

Werewolf Follower

Akela Hohnihohkaiyohos
Bryan Hilburn
Cason Snow
Chris Allen
Gunner Gawith
Katherine L Brown
Michael Blair Jr
Rahuman101
Roland Magnusson
Runs-Like-The-Wind
Vrigän Selank

Mage Follower

Alan Waletsky
Allyson Fanning
arthexis
Baltazor
Jacob Rich
Marcelo Sepúlveda
Mark Kung
Michael Duxbury
Robert Daines
Stewart Wieck
Timo Moisio
Tobias Schenk
Tufan "Aranlui" Disli
Xanthidus

Promethean Follower

eaoin
Thomas Franklin

Changeling Follower

Alexander Eklund
Argonometra
Benjamin C Perkins
Bryce Augustus-Robinson
Carl LeCompte
Casidhe Nebulosa
Christy H
Cliff "Copper" Stone
Daevid Nyvarre
Dr. Racheal Glass
Elora Winterdark
Emmer Lain
Forest Bell
James Small
John Carr
K. Naib
Krampus
Marco Generoso
Marina de Santiago
Nicolás Castagnet
Oliver Hong
Oliver Peltier
Seth, the Jackdaw Prince
Tiemi Hashizume
Zeke Hubris

Hunter Follower

Andrea Ciceri
Darren G. Miller
John T. d'Auteuil
Matt M McElroy
Ryan David Johnson
Shachar Gold
Simon J. Hogwood
Somalucard

Geist Follower

Bob Hanks
Craig Bice
Damien Dachary
Emily G
Story Morris

Mummy Follower

Karl The Good
Tamsyn 'Destroyer of Worlds'
Kennedy
Volkan Eke

Demon Follower

Burak Türköz (On behalf of Anadolu Hikaye Anlatıcıları)
Christian Knoeppler
Daniel Whitmer
Eric Iacono
Huhn
maitrecorbo
RdMarquis
Steven Nicholson

Dark Follower

Aaron Berkowitz
Aaron Buttery
Aaron Mouritsen
Aaron Pothecary
Adam "Karpomatic" Karpolorich
Adam Daniel-Wayman
Adam Drew
Adam J. Solis
Adam Krump
Adam Miller
Adam Rajski
Adele Taylor
Adrian Praetorius
Adriano "PresaDePrata" Rodrigues
Afro Luigi
Ahmed
Aki Heinlahti
Al Gonzalez
Alan-Michael Havens
Aldo "Kuako" Montoya Reynaga
Alex Bauer
Alex Burnett
Alex Koza
Alexander "Kuein" Yatskov
Alexander Y. Hawson
Almarion Saintclair
Alok Baikadi
Alyssa Hillen
Amanda "Hyena" Johnson
Andreas Bauer
Andreas G Schramm of the House of Past Secrets
Andrew Comb
Andrew Moriarty
Andrew Rowe
Andrew Wilson
Angela Granger
Anonymous
Anonymouse
Antonio Manca
Arghya Raihan, Mystagogue
Arlene Medder
Ash Walter
atamajakki
Atando
Atticus Winterton-Perks
Aurèle Nicolet
Backed by Isaac Lorrain
Bastian Lange
Bela Dragosani
Ben McFarland
Ben Richetti
Benoit Devost
Bishop Vincent C. Langley
Bitter Old Joe O'Toole
Bob Lewis
Bob Ooton
Bowie Sessions
Braden Kanipes
Brent Naylor
Brent Nellis
Breon Halling
Brian "Chainsaw" Campbell
Brian Gates, generally-in-motion
Brian H. Wilson
Brian King
Brian Macdonald
Brian 'Time Mage' Haddock
Bronx Coyle
Bryan Lee Davidson-Tirca
Bryce Phillips
Buck Marchinton
burningcrow
Bwgustaf
Calder Rooney
Calla Harris
Calvin Hill
Cargo Manshark
Carlos E. Martin
Carlton & Lisa Anderson
Caroline Berta
Casey Ingram
Charles A. Wright
Charles M. Watford Jr.
Charles Siegel
Chis Jensen Romer
Chow Matthew
Chris Allen
Chris Avery
Chris Handley - Darker Days Radio
Chris Mawford
Christian Emminger Richard Wappel
Christopher Duesler
Christopher Miranda
Claire Reynolds
Clay Rogers
Colin Fredericks
Colin Wilson
Connor McGann
Corey Elliott
Cristiano "Leishmaniose" DeLira
CtL ftw!
Cullen Lewis
D Howard
Daimon
Dan Hagy
Dan Mycroft
Dan Summers
Dani Moran
Daniel "Arista"
Daniel "Dukal" Bell
Daniel Arbuckle
Daniel G. Dyrda
Daniel K Smith
Daniel Milne
Daniel Rael
Danny White
Darth Gerry
David "Yoda" Odie
David 'dj' Coleman
David E Mumaw
David Ebsworth
David Paul
David Rego
David Ross
Davin Wärter
Deke Reisig
Derek "Pineapple Steak" Swoyer
Derek Guder
Derik Dunning
Deyel Bokor-Charlier
Diana Devoss
Diego Rivera
Dimitra Nikolaidou
DoeMan
Don Mann
Doug Hagler
Douglas Bramlett
Dr. Jonathon Kently
Drew Clowery
Drynyn
Dustin Westfall
Dylan L. Rogers
Eddie Sanchez
Edward Morland
Egil Brautaset
Elias Helfer
Eoin G. Maloney
Eric "Lameth" Folco
Eric C. Magnuson
Eric Parks
Erich Lichnock
Erin Short
Étienne Aubin
Evelling Castro
Ezra
Faux
Felipe Nascimento
Fernando Autran
Finian westergaard
Flint of the Cremated
Frank Clements
Frank Toich
Fred Janney
Froth
G. Wright
Gabriel heraldstorm
Gajoos
Genevieve Cogman
George Koutsikos
Ghuolgrixibed the Beautiful
Giacinto Mango
GlitterGrim
Graeme Lewis
Gre
Gregory Eburn
Gregory Rolfe
Guy Reece
H. Rasmussen
Hannah Bruders
Hedgespun
Herman Duyker
Idril
Iris of Ether
Isaiah Bahr
J Mcknight
J.E. McKeever
J.T. Mahany
Jack Never
Jackson Book
Jacqui Macgregor-Pahl
Jake Foster
Jake Ivey
James Alan Gardner
James Finton
James Woodman
Jamie Wheeler
Jasmine Mullin
Jason "Jadasc" Schneiderman
Jason Martinez
Jason Nell
Jason Pitre
Jax Telford
Jeanette M. Frost
Jeannie Starcher
Jeff Crowl



Jehanne Thistle
Jeremy Mettler
Jesse Rodriguez
Jessica 'Lyrebird' Arden
Jesus Luzon
Jim Burdo
Jimmy "Superhorse" Aaron
Jinnapat Treejareonwiwat
João Mariano
Joe Craig
Joerg Gering
Johannes Paavola
John "Labyrinth" Gill
John C Mousley
John Canter
John Christensen
John Hollar
John 'johnkzin' Rudd
John Lowney
John Veltman
Johnathan Stavros Prescott III (deceased)
Jonathan D. Harter
Jonathan Grimm
Jonathan Lang
Jonathan Loyd
Jonathan McMonigle
Jonn H Perry
Jonny Ehrich
Joonas Iivonen
Jordan Gibson
Jordan Lennard
José Alarico Texeira Manzano
Joseph Virnig
Josh "dalarpguy" Parrish
Josh Fidelak
Josh Greenberg
Josh Kubat
Joshua Benavides
Joshua Sexton
Juan Ignacio Bolaño
Julia Alvarez Boado
Julia Robison
Julius Müller
Jürgen Hubert
Justin Delaney
Justin Woo
Karen Defown
Karl de Vries
Karl Larsson
Karol 'WyrdHamster' Litwińczuk
Karoly Kopataki
Kathandras
Katie Harwood
Keegan "Tinkergoth" Bateman
Kees D. van den Berg
Kergonan
Kevin Chauncey
Kevin Combs
Kevin Mueller
Kevin Oliver
Kiith
Kim Biebaut
Kimberely Altomere
Kjetil Kverndokken
Konstantinos Bakas
Kylan Day
Kynligbein St. Andrew
Landen "Maugris" Heath
Lanthis
Late Knight Games
Lee Applegarth
Lee Kolb
Link Hughes
Lisa Padol
Logan H
Logomachist
Łukasz Korzeń
Lupin Chevalier
Macint0ush
Malcolm Jackson
Manuel Hora
Marc Margelli
Marc T Davies
Mark Townshend
Markus Veit
Marshall Cain
Martin J. Manco
Martin Prytz
Martin Terrier
Marwin
Matt Petruzzelli
Matt Ross
Matthew Dunne
Matthew Earlywine
Matthew Gollschewski
Matthew Joel Stewart
Matthew Rees
Max Sibrits
Melissa Houston
Metal Fatigue
Michael Agapeyev
Michael Brewer
Michael Cantin
Michael David Stein
Michael Kahan
Michael Kelly
Michael Kusnetsov
Michael Mendoza
Michael Parker
Michael Pietrelli
Michael Sandlin
Michał Rusinowski
Mike Darkone Cowles
Mike Montgomery
MIke NUtt
Mikhail Rekun
Mischa Wolfinger
Misha H.
Morgan, the Magnificent Bastard
Morty
Moxxie Noble
MrParaduo
Murom
Nadia "Atarun" Cerezo
Nate Zaccari
Nathan Carroll
Nathan Rice
Nathan Sundberg
Neal Dalton
Neall Raemonn Price
Nice Brian
Nicholas Ahlhelm
Nicholas Peterson
Nick Lippolis
Nick wingedferret Brown
Nicodemus deLaurent
Nicola Went
Nin
Ninjar
Nix
No One Important
Ol' Jarty.
Old Morphy
Olivier Bérubé-Fortin
Oomizuao
Owen Wesley Kerschner
Ozan Korkmaz
Pablo Valcarcel
Paolo Biggio
Paolo Iantorno
Pat Murphy
Patrick Singer
Paul Beakerface
Paul Bendall
Paul Hunting
Peter Gates
Peter Steponaitis
Petrov Dmitry
Phil Edwards
Phil Hattie
Phil Stafford
Philippe Fenot
Picks-at-Flies
Preston Bruce
Rachel Andrews
Raúl "Thorbes" Bastida
Raul Galli Alves
Ravraxas
Rich Warren
Richard Javier "Blaque" Stephenson
Richard Morris
Rick Wilson
Ricky Filion
Robert Watson
Robert Wyatt
Ronaldo
Rosie Patterson & Douglas Johnston
Ross Gleason
Ross Lavelle
Rovert Darling
Runs With Bears
Ryan Macklin
Ryan Van Every
Ryan Wheeldon
S Hellyer
Sam Billington
Sam Read
Samuel Gonzalez
Sander van Zuidam
Sandoval Nomad
Satchel
Scott Adams
Scott McDaniel
Scott Southwick
Sean and Katherine Handcock
Sean Sullivan
Sean West Money
Seth Ruskin
Shannon Keniry
Shawn Gustafson
Shelli -Charity's Edge- Addams
Sigrid Hex
Silvio Herrera GEa
Simon Dugard
Stav Hinenzon
Sten Bugge
Stephen Ford
Stephen Holowczyk
Steve Lord
Steven "Pholtus" Jones
Steven D Warble
Steven Jones
Steven K. Watkins
Steven Thesken
Swallow
Synadra
T. R. W.
T.J. Hafer
Tanya Cohan-Diaz
Tara Cameron
Tara Zuber
Tathel
tavernbman
Ted Ludemann
Teddy GERAN
Tememn
The Nate
The Plaid Mentat
Theo
Thomas McDonald
Thomas Pontette
Timothy A. Raspin
Tobias Dornbusch
Todd Rieger
Todd Vandecasteele
Tom Hunt
Tom Ladegard
Tom Rachel Kolar
Tomi Sarkkinen
Tony Strongman
Totenrand
Treelior
Uirá "TheMadCount" Resende
Ulf "McWolfe" Andersson
Urial
v furstenberger
Van "Octavo" Webster
Vasily McCausland
Vera Vartanian
Vincent Eaton
Vincent Hatakeyama
Vitani
Vito D.
Vladislav Lazarov

Vojtech Pribyl
W.M.P. Tusk
Walter Mecham
Warren Elsken
Weltwandler
Whistler
Will Hochella
Will Rotenberry
William 'Beej' Carson
William Greystone
William Powers (Aiden)
Wraith_Magus
WTP
YamiB.
Zachary Chapderlane
Zoe Amsel

113420
Adrian Cordiner
Alden Wings
Alex M. Mooney
Andy Stanford
Awn Elming
Bamf Royal
boombrakh
Castles & Nonsense
Chris Stewart
Christoph Welsch
coraxbio
Daniel Bayer
Dave "Wintergreen" Harrison
David A. Cuneo
David Dalton
David Harrison
David Levkowitz
Devon T Golub
Drew Wendorf
Dustin Rector
Edward Palmer
Elaine of York
Garon Niehaus
Greg Peterson
Gromveka
Josh Huls
Kenny "Krivvin" Bailey
Lucky Strike,
Queen of the Spring
Court of the Providence Freehold
Matthew Whittaker
Oscar Clark
Ralph Pizarro
Regis Renevey
Ren Sandalio
Rob Justice
Roxane Tourigny
Russell Ventimeglia
Shepard of Lost Tears
Sherana
Stephanie Jacobs and Blake Harris
Steven Blewett
Steven L. Muschelli
Vildea
W Spears
Zeven

Dark Seeker

A. Leslie
Aaron "Tzurah" Canning
Aaron Fennell
Aaron Reimer
Aaron Woodside
Abner Rodrigues
Adam "Koshi" Shang
Adam J. Thaxton
Adam Lake
Adam U.
Aenaiyah, Acanthus Mage
Agena Allen
Aidan Menzies
Aidan of the Wolves
Aidenn Ossorio & Rain Pletcher
Alasdair Watson
Alex Nealy
Alex Robin
Alexander "Almacov" Overton
Alexander Rodatos
Alexander Scott
Alexis & Jeremy
Almoni
Alvaro "Sixaola" Madrigal
Aly C
Amanda Costigan
Amanda Lea Green
Amy Tayloe
Amy Veeres
Amy Waller
Andara Shadowfang
Andreas "Zanity" Bengtsson
Andrel
Andrés Santamaría
Andrew D. Portner
Andrew DiNovo
Andrew Guerr
Andrew Hebert
Andrew Howell
Andrew j Parker
Andrzej Kubera
Andy Evans
Angelina Mak
Angus Bartlett
Anna Marie van der Wal
Annie S
Araknee
Ari Dorros
Ari Multhauf
Arianhro
Arno Le Blanc-Ringuette
Arnout Montald
Arthur Bishop, Horror Author
Arthur Jackson
Ashley and Graham Chancellor
Audrey Rae Cox
Aurély Sabourin Messina
Austin "The third time as sarcasm" Loomis
Austin Haught
Batronoban
Beachfox
Ben Baccaert
Benjamin Brown
Björn S
Blair Monroe
Blaise
Bonnie
Brad D. Kane
Brandon Holfeltz
Brendan McCann
Brett Anderson
Brian Griffith
Brian Kearns
Bruce Gray
Bruno Pereira
Bryan Fowler
Bryant Durrell
butts Butts BUTTS! McCoy
Byron Black
Calle Andén
Callum Borthwick
Calvin D. Jim
Cantoredombre
Carles Fornes
Carthage to Cairo
cerealkiller
Chad Berger
Chad Hastings
Chad Valdes
Chadwick
Charles and Ashley Oliver
Charles Crowe
Charles Minucie
Charles Myers
Charles P Ellis
Charles Patric Alexander Henry
Charles Wheaton
Charlotte Mcfinnigan le Fae
Chasym
Chazz Kellner
Chimera
Chris Aumiller
Chris Butler
Chris Dickerson
Chris Hartford
Chris Johnson
Chris Lavin
Chris Snyder
Chris 'Stitches' Upton
Chris Willett
Christer Malmberg
Christian A
Christophe Loyce
Christopher "StormRunner" St.Louis
Christopher Campione
Christopher Hall
Christopher Hauschild
Christopher Macabre
Chuck Childers
Cire
Clara Harper Darbee
Claus Mahler Larsen
Clayton Freund
Colin Anderson
Colin Urbina
Collette Estorge
Conor O' Sullivan
Constans Voight
Craig Bonnes
Craig Oxbrow
cthos
CtrlAltFaceroll
Cyndri
Dace
Dakkon
Damon Keller
Dan and Amy Deschenes
Dan Dillon
Dan Schindler
Daniel "Morthar" Wernered
Daniel "Sir Scooby" Abreu
Daniel C. Barton
Daniel Eder
Daniel Fidelman
Daniel Gochnauer
Daniel HP Campbell
Daniel Istad Larsen
Daniel W. Throckmorton
Daniel Williams
Darker Days Radio
Darren Buckley
Darren Hansen
David "Scutarii" Last
David and Julie Scott
David Chart
David Connell Olsher
David DuMont
David Ehlen
David Fergman
David Hayes
David Laine
David Liming
David Starner
David Tapanes
David Yellope
David Zurek
Dawid "Dievas" Wojcieszynski
Dawngreeter
Decerto
Denis Zdanovsky
Dennis Humm
Dennis Lugo-Coll
Derek Grimm
Derek Semsick
Dernière Lune
Devin Williams
Diogo Tristão



Doktor Oster
Dolmaron
Domonic Bailey
Donato
Doug Blakeslee
Doug Grayson
Douglas Packard
dr Michał Sołtysiak
Dr. Evil
Dr. Trevor Egret
Dr.William Frank crane 3
Dragomir Vulpes
Drew "Industrial Scribe" Scarr
Duane Moore
Dylan Greyson Moore
Edmund Gilbert
Edwin Ab Enion
Elliott Freeman
EmanantVolition
Emile de Maat
Emma Jones
Eric Altmyer
Eric Christian Berg
Eric R Fleischer
Erik Kristoffersen
Eris Adelinde Falconer
Erwin Burema
Ethan Zimmerman
Evan "Cenobite" Johnston
F1R3W@LL
Filip Danielsson
Filip Van Huffel
Finder
Florian Küsener
Flyer
Francis Garcia
Franco Frare
François Potvin Naud
Frank Bauroth
Frank Marcelli
Frank McCormick
Fraser Imrie
Fredrik Forssen
Fredrik Lyngfalk
Gabriel Night
Game Ordinance Director
Gareth White
Geoffrey Joosten
George Corder
Gerald Claycomb
Gilbert Isla
Gilles111
Graham De Young
Greg Conant
Gregory Faber
Guillaume Boutigny
Guinevere Green
Gustavo Tenorio
Hal "Osric of the Marrow Flame" Wierzbicki
Hayley Margules
Heimi
Heirarch Vulcan
Henrik Augustsson
Ian "Cheapshot" Sarat
Ian A. A. Watson
Ian MacRae
Ian Price
Ian S. Cunningham
Ignacio Granados Jiménez
Ignatius Montenegro
Illigard
Imran Inayat
Ireena Faraway
Irian
Isaac Sterling VanDuyn
Ithris
Ivo Goudzwaard
J Quincy Sperber
J. H. Frank
J.M. Porch
Jack Milton & Steph Williamson
Jack Stephenson-Carr
Jacob G. Corbin
Jacques DuRand
Jakob Maretti Bengtsen Kiilerich
Jakub "Behalior" Roczniak
James Cartwright
James Iles
JAMES L DAVIS
James Martin
James Ristig
James Surano
James Vincent
James Yarton
Jamie Denholm
Jared Koon
Jared Wadsworth
Jason C Marshall
Jason Corley
Jason Dennison
Jason Freston
Jason Krueger
Jason Laprade
Jason Ross Inczauskis
Jason Schindler
Jayna Pavlin
JD Reid
Jedidiah Brolliar
Jeff Erwin
Jeff Kachenko
Jeffrey Palmer
Jennifer Fuß
Jennifer Jenkins
Jeph Lewis
Jeremy Kostiew
Jeremy Quinn
Jesper Julskov Schlie
Jess
Jess Purdy
Jesse T.
Jessica Orsini
Jim Brinkman
Jim Long
Jim Stanton
Joe McNamara
Joebobjoe
John "King" Roberts
John Bogart
John Cohen
John Doyle
John Henry Ricks
John Jeffrey Holland
John Mathys
John Prew
Jon House
Jon Thulu
Jonas Beardsley
Jonas Cerberus
Jonathan and Tesla Peltzer
Jonathan Morello
Jordi Torres Serra
José Antônio Bernardelli Júnior
Jose Hernansaez
Joseph Oliveira
Josh A.
Josh Pietrok
Josh Syl Wyant
Joshua Baum
Joshua 'Motherfreakin'' Caine
Joshua R. Pitre
Joshua Ramey
Joshua Ramsey
Julian B.
Julien "Selpoivre" Rothwiller
K.NAKAMA
Kalad "Caesar Salad" Hovatter
Karen, Kris, Katie
Karl Fournier
Karl-Kristoffer Johnsson
Karvorus
Kate Crittenden
Kebhab
Kenjo
Kenny Crowe
Kerry Birmingham
Kevin Knox
Kevin Satra Schwarz
Kevin Wine
Kier Duros
Kimberly Horne
Kjell Kenneth Moens
Korusef
Krister M. Michl
Kristine Roper
Ksinin (Dario Giardini)
Kyle Perdew
Kyle Rimmer
Lance Hosaka
Landi Garcia
Lane Carman
Lars Lauridsen
Laura
Lauren Harrison Rossato
Lauri Hirvonen
Lee Tate
Leonard Helding
Lewis 'Crashes The Reef' Baustian
Lloyd Eley-Smith
Logan Rollins
Lorrraine
Lou Silvers
Louise Champion
LouLi
Lucian Fontana
Lucille Thompson
Lukas Hofreiter
Łukasz Rączkowski
Lyttleton Callender
M McClelland
M. Aurelius
M.W. Dougherty
Magdalena
Malcolm White
Maleesha Thompson
Mandavar the Seeker
Marc DuBois
Marc Seidel
Marcel Kral
Marcelo "Quadrasaurus" Caraballo
Marcin Rozycki
Marcus Kerensky
Marianne Pease
Marina Patelos
Marisa Varney
Marius dell'Aquila
Marjan ap Kerniw (D. B. Rosengard)
Mark "Toroid" Rae
Mark A. Moore
Mark Aasal
Mark Hunter
Markus Kostarczyk
Martin Vaillancourt
Martin Wagner
Masl
Matt "Catapult" Wang
Matt Roberts
Matthew Dawkins
Matthew Galloway
Matthew Junge
Matthieu "Nepher" Mestepes
Megan Jenkins
Meghan "Alastor" Fitzgerald
Meles Badger
Melinda Hawes
Mellam Ingoth
Michael "Hollywood" Tomasek Jr.
Michael "Monghani" Watkins
Michael Bauer
Michael Bolitho
Michael Bristol
Michael Buchheim
Michael Ehrhardt
Michael Grasso
Michael H. Stuewe
Michael Jacobson
Michael Laitinen
Michael Maggs
Michael Mooney the Tyranny of Books
Michael Murray
Michael Richards
Michael Tully

Míchel González
Michele "Mighty" Masala
Michele "MKI" Beltramini
Mike Powers
Mike Ruch
Mike Wells
Mikhail of Regensburg
Milosz Nawrat
Miranda Ives
Mitchell Roggeveen
Modest Badger
Molly Auldington
Monica "daemonchild" Valentinelli
Morgan the Cowardly Scion
Mown
Mr Flavius, Free Council Advocate
Mym Z. Borogove
Nadia S.
Natalie Ingram
Natalie Knight
Nathan "Jebedias" Luster
Nathan "Moonbeast" Skank
Nathan Bjerke
Nathan Legg
Nathaniel H Pace
Nevym
Nicholas Guidotti
Nick and Katia Schrier
Nick Davis
Nicole Porter
Norngremlin
notanautomaton
Nox Ascensa
Octavio Arango
Ols Jonas Petter Olsson
Orion Corvus
Pascal Alexander
Pascal Sigel
Patricia Willenborg
Patrick Healey
Patrick Hume
Patrick Knowles & Tyler Lominack
Patrick McGeachie
Patrick Purcell
Paul & Tamara Whan
Paul Derda
Paul 'Five Eyes' Harries
Paul Grindrod
Paul Ryan
Pauline C
Paulo Contopoulos
Pedro César "Phersus" Díez Ramón
Pedro Coppola
Pedro Figueiredo Dupret
Pedro Loco
Peter Holland
Peter 'Malkira' Lennox
Peter Nielsen
Peter Rolf
Peter Svensson
Peter Troia
Petri Wessman
Phidias Chiang
Phil Bloui
Phil Bordelon
Philip Jaques
Phillip Karst
Pia Bolenz
Pierre Chaloux
Pierre Coppet
Pip Padden
Preston Poland
Prince Brandon Wolfgang Boyer
R Sean Callahan
R. Stark
Raiden Drake
Rajiv "BBQLord" Bartol
Randall Crawford
Raphael Bourdot
Raptor
Rasmus Nicolaj West
Rebelcat
Redfuji6
Renee Ritchie
Renee Wanger
Rest
Reveka Waters
Rex Ruthless
Ric Steele
Richard Bowers
Richard McNutt
Richard Taylor
Rick Neal
Rik "Furb" Nalley
Rik Downing
Robert "Ayslyn" Van Natter
Robert and Amanda Daley
Robert Carnel
Robert McClanahan
Robert RIttenhouse
Robert Small
Roberto Hoyle
Robin Longhurst
Rodrigo Moreira Fagundes
Rodrigo Ragabash
rogue7sg
Rolf Eklund
ROMzombie
Rose Bailey
Ross Ramsay
Rosutsu
Rowan Fae
Rune Printzlau
Ryan Cobb
Ryan Green
Ryan Perrin
Ryan-O, Lord of the Thunderbats
S T Tan
Samira Melzer
Samuli "Hertzila" Hannuksela
Sarah Gulbrandson
SaxMan
Scott Jenks
Scott Kendrick
Sean M
Sean Silva-Miramon
Sean Smith
Sebastian Fray
Seth Hartley
Seth Rutledge
Severin Rytz
Shad Scarboro
Shadowstripe
Shaun Davis
Shaun Wykes
Shawn Polka
Shawn Schafer
Shelby Mehl
Simon "Beldro" Boucher
Simon "Nithael" Floden
Simon Witheridge
SiouxsieQ
Sita
Skarsol
Slaz
Son of Ahriman
Stanley Swierzewski
Stefano Monachesi
Stephen Mulligan
Stephen Witham
Steve "Bearly Normal" Discont
Steve Burnett
Steve Hefley
Steven J. Pope
Stuart "Spider" Adam
Taryn 'Taz' O'Donnghaile
Ted A. Sanne
Teoxihuani
That Damn Meddling Mageling
The Dead Gamers Society
Thibaut Gaillard
Thijs Ballière
Thomas "Radium" Sowik
Thomas Kisselbach
Thomas Ramsli Rasmussen
Thomas White
Tiago Barão
Tiberius Nazamir
Tiffany D Brandt
Tiffany Korta
Tim D.
Tim Flannigan
Tim Geraghty
Timothy Hanson
Tobias Schulte-Krumpen
Toby Hillmann
Tom Bobomb
Tommaso De Benetti
Tommy Svensson
Tracy Pinkelton
Travis Bryant
Trevor Schroeder
Tribute of a Dark Heart
Trish Pettinati & Stephen Michael DiPesa
Trista & Daniel Robichaud
Tristan Smith
Tyler Brunette
Tyler Hazeslip
Tyson "Daji" Pink
Valbjorn
Varga Zsolt
Vaughn Allen
Victoria E.S. Pullen
Vincent Gonsalves
Vincent Pasko
violinjosh
Vixala Gourd
Vladimir "Mark Newman" Dzundza
Vujhren Isleheart
W Ryan Carden
W. "Shaman" Obenshain
Wade Geer
Wade Rosebrook
waelcyrge
Walks with Darkness
Wayback
Wayne Kostencki
Wayne Welgush
WD Ables
Wes C.
Will and Melissa Wise
Will Munoz
William "Evil Midnight Lurker" Ashley
William B
William Cappelletti
William J Schebler Jr
Wong Kai Chung, James
Yesha'Chi
Yong Huang
Yoshi, Rocky and Tobie
Zach "Zed" Dando
Zach Best
Zach Diamond
Zach Welhouse
Zak Frey
Zhivko Yakimov
Ziv Ragowsky

(un)reason
NIKOLAI STEEN
Adam Preston
Adam Reik
Adam Whitcomb
Adam Zielinski
Ahmesseker
Alan McNevin
Alec Humphrey
Alec McClain
Aleksandr Rollosson Halbhuber
Alessandro Vario
Alex Billman
Alexander Gaw
Alexander Rodriguez
Alexandrite Draconis
Allan Jenkinson
Allen Thornton
Alonso O. Rubio
Alwin Penterman
Andrew Elliott
Andrew Harper
Andrew Laliberte



Andrew Persichetti
Andrew Waterfall
Andrew Whitby
Andrin Casimir
Andy ANTHOINE
Andy Lever
Andy West
Angus "The Ref" MacDonald
Anthony "Selketh" Dennetiere
Antoine de le Tellec
Antonio Borrani
Ash & Theo
Ash Miller
Ashley J Bennett
Avram Lytton
Bael the Cruel
Bashar
bastsbreath
Ben Kesner
Ben Pimlott
Benjamin "BlackLotos" Welke
Benjamin and Lauren Rieker
Betty Osthoff
Bidel of Crawling
Bilious "Exploding Frogs" Slick
Bjørn Kobæk Søndergaard
Björn-Ole Kamm
Bob Harrison
Bobby Goforth
Brad & Lulu Walston
Brandon Armentrout
Brandon Urey
Brandon W. Steed
Brendan Whaley
Brett Easterbrook
Brian Koonce
Brian S Piorkowski
Bryan Hunsberger
C. Haynes
C.H.E.W. Games c/o Raymond Hemphill
Caitlin Eckert
Calder Heorogar Reginlaf
Caleb Cushing
Camilla Chalcraft
celtictriune
Cesar "Kimble" Luz
Chapa Pampa
Charles Wulff
ChickenMaker
Chris Bekofske
Chris Chaney
Chris Cowger
Chris Shaffer
Chris Wong
Christian Cunningham
Christoph Schulz
Christopher Coppin
Christopher Crossley
Christopher Greer
Christopher Maloney
Claudia du Blanc
Comrade Buttons
Conor Kenny
Conrad Julian White
Corey "Kenhito" Davidson
Cornelius Milertens
Cornelius P. Wensleydale
Counselor Bill
Crüjen A. Geist
DaemonChrno
Damon Wilson
Dan Trailescu
Dana Powers-Green
Daniel "hunting moon" Weber
Daniel Gaghan
Daniel H. Spain
Daniel House
Daniel Jupp
Daniel Keppler
Daniel Peterson
Daniel Sculler
Daniel Yauger
Danthulhu
Dashekita N. Brooks
Dave Brookshaw
David "Aegis" Paterson
David A
David Bresson
David E. Melgar
David Elhammer
David Futterrer
David Gearhart
David Ghosh
David Guilbault
David Homola
David Hunt
David M. Hubbard
David Meloche
David Rose Fraser
David Shankles
Davide Ferlan
Davildihno
Dawn Hammett
Deacon - Flayer of Witches
Desmond Woolston
Detective Mark Quinzel
Diablerist, The Eater of Souls
Dimitrae Keetan
Dolan Ross Scherfel
Dom Ellis
Donnie "Lord Aludian" Roos, Jr.
Doug Atkinson
Doug Caillard
Dr. Lars Bang
Dragosmire Akoimetai
DRC
Dreaming Johnny
Dustin Dunaway
Earnest Carothers III
Eat at Joe's
Ed Moretti
Eddie Hawke
Edouard Contesse
Eidan Rodriguez
Emily McCabe
Emmanuel "Tito" Betancourt
Ender Adams
Entrope
Erez Shomron
Eric "Dicklicious" Crabtree
Eric "Garfink" Lai
Erica "Vulpinfox" Schmitt
Ernie Sawyer
Etienne Gagnon
Eugene Parker
Evan "JabberWokky" and Sarah Edwards
Evelyne Schreiner
Everett Lo
Falthen Viscera
Ferdinand von Schenk
Florian Hofmann
Fnord
Frank Tenace
Frank Weitzel
Frédéri "Volk Kommissar Friedrich" POCHARD
Frederick R. Bloss III
From the Outside
Fuzzy
Gabriel Perez
Gabriel Sorrel
GARCIA Emilien
Gary R Smith II
Geoffar
Glenn Clifford
Greg "Nitemare" B.
Greg Foster
Greg Phillips
Gugli
Guilhem
Guillaume Leclef
Guillaume 'Lenny' Asset
Harry Hopkinson
Harry J J Gardner
Heath Horne
Heinrich Krebs
Henry F. Bruckman Vargas
Henry Lopez
Howard Copland
Ingo Beyer
Ioannes Palaiologos
ipsi
Isaac Carr
Ismael Souza Kenig
Iulia Alpina
J. W. Bennett
J.R. Cillian Green
Jack of Hearts
Jacob "Ryoku" Walker
Jacob Guldbrandsen
Jacob Ian Hiatt
Jakub "Dell" Zegarski
James "Callidus" Foster
James "Strigoi" Minot
James Mendez Hodes
Jared Tibbs
Jarred Eichorn
Jason Barbare
Jason Dickerson
Jason J. Chapa
Jason Ludwig
Jason Marks
Jason Miller
Jason Ross
JAYSON "the14thguest" TURNER
Jeff Clark
Jeff Dieterle
Jeff Senn
Jeff Sinclair and Stu Skeel
Jeremy and Natasha Cue
Jeremy Brown
Jeremy Pignat (Quire)
Jesse Breazeale
Jesse Goble
Jesus Eduardo Cortes Sandoval
Jim Fisher
Jody Bowman
Joe "Prince of Los Angeles" Burgos
Joel "Pika" Keeney
John Benn
John Carnathan
John Dartanyon Kennedy
John Doe
John J Gillick, CEO, Castles & Chemo
John Lambert
John Littrell
John Morel
John P. Baggett
John R. Trapasso
John Robertson
John Vikør Green
Jonathan A. Cohen
Jonci Aguillard
Joonas Teurokoski
Jordan Queen
Jorden Varjassy
Jorge "Digital Necro" Reyeros
Jose Ryan Garcia
Josephine Wicker
Justin Hukle
Justin Jones
K
Kai Schiefer
Kara Beyer
Kathryn Tucker
Keenan Parker
Keith E. Hartman
Kelley Barnes
Keltzon
Ken Finlayson
Kenneth Miller
Kevin C. Wong
Kevin Hislop
Kevin R. Dombrowski
Kevin Wicks
Kimberly A. Brown
Kimberly Morris
KJ Wall
Kokiteno
Komstedt
Kristopher William McLane-Leavitt
Larry D. Napier II
Lars Bengtsson

Lars Haymaker
Lars Holgaard
Leandro Raniero Fernandes
Lee Dignam
Leonardo Ascorti
Liam Greenwood
Lin Wyeth
Livia von Sucro
Loken Jae
Lord Brian Johannesen
Luciana e Rafael Devera
Luke "Martin" Van Buren
Luke Brewer
Lyrics-Of-War
M.R. Innes
Madelyn Waits
Madmanmind
Maëlys Darillian
MageMistress.com
Maggie Kelly
Majdi Badri
Malabron de Malafas
Marc Collins
Marc Kuczborski
Marcos Almeida Leite Bomfim
Mark Garbrick
Mark Hulsman
Marq
Martin Blake
Martin Gattis
Mathew Irizarry
Mats "Xats" Dahlström
Matt Corkum
Matt Duggan
Matt Johansen
Matt Parkes
Matt Pascal
Matt Timm
Matthew Hedge
Matthew Lynn
Matthew McDonnell
Matthew Sanderson
Maxime Berar
Maxime Lemaire
Melanie Newcomb
Melech Starbrow
Mi. M "Kyodar"
Michael Bednar
Michael Homola Jr.
Michael Kusternig
Michael Lenzo
Michael Patrick Foight
Michael Watts
Micheal John Elliott
Michel Foisy
Mikel Mecham
Mirko a. Mitta
Monika "Gryf" Biskupska
Monsieur Meuble
Mordicai Knode
Morgan Weeks
Moritz Böhm
Nack The Penguin
Nancy Calvert-Warren
Nathan Ballard
Nathan Henderson
Nathan Raymond McNeill
Nicholas Cler
Nicholas Faust
Nicholas Racz
Nick Canu
Nick Pilon & Sasha Dillman
Nicolas Vandemaele-Couchy
Nikika Giovanni
Nimbral Montes Rosa
Oliver Steckmeier
Pablo M.A Vazquez III
Palpacwel
Panu "Possessed" Laukkanen
Paradim
Patrick Walters
Paul "Anorak" Record
Paul Baughman
Paul Contreras - Kurt Iriart, Redeemer Hunter.
Pete Woodworth
Peter Golaszewski
Peter Mars
Peter Ong
peter peretti
Philip Minchin
Philipp Neurohr
Phillip Bailey
Phillip Heglar
Phillip L. Johnston
Pieta Delaney
Qlippoth
Quasi
Raymond "Fen" Sempek
Remy Handler
Rev. Ezekiel Parrish
Rhys O'Madigan
Riccardo Zampieri
Rich (Dark Knight) Palij
Richard Chilton
Richard Neary
Richard Pleyer
Richard 'Vecna' Husey
Rob Coutu
Robert "Rev. Bob" Hood
Robert Biskin
Robert Biskup
Robert Brown
Robert Hipschman
Robert Jason "Mason" Branham
Robert Jordan
Roberto Hiroshi Kina Filho
Robin "Jarval" Farndon
Rodrigo Cuevas Espinoza, Wizard of Eraba
Rogan Hamby
Roman Lanzarotta
Russell Graham
Ryan Evans
Samata
Santo!
Sarah Torino
Scott A Hall
Scott E. Vigil
Scott Milner
Scott Mullock
Sean 'Ariamaki' Riedinger
Sean K.I.W. Steele/Arcane
Sean Mattox
Sean W
Seana McGuinness
Seidmadr
Shaun D. Burton
Shawn Kehoe
Shawn Murphy
Shudder
Simon `Flatliner' Jones
Sithas Faux
Sjothun
Steffen Thorbjørnson
Stephen Rhead
Stephen Shulusky
Sterz Sebastian
Steven Lau
Stewart Robertson
Sylvain "OgGy" Tanguy
Tahirah Almasi
Taliesin the Storyteller
Tanja "Clawdeen" Thome
Teresa Oswald
Terry Zimmerman
The Adams Family
The Howard House
The Kefalonian
The Mordak
TheNyphoon371
Thomas 'Afyon' Müskens
Thomas Faßnacht
Thomas Martin
Thomas Maund
Tim "Dach Kludde" Vettel
Timo Sand
Timothy Mushel
Topher Ruggles
Tracy Cook
Travis Carpenter
Travis Mayes
Trent Lindt
Tristan J. Ciceran
Tristan Valentine
Tucker Williamson
Ty Bailey
Vernon Brosecki
Vesper Abaddon
Vicknesh Suppramaniam
Vistani Radanavic
Vivien Bledsoe
Walter B. Schirmacher
Whelan0kkult
William "Alexander" Delmar III
William Dovan
William F Scrimsher III
www.noordinaryobsession.com
Xavier Aubuchon-Mendoza
Yann Krehl
Yuta Watanabe
Yuyue. Sun
Zack Szechenyi
Ziv plotnik (the hero?)
Zyfram Tyrjala

[!!!] Rainbow Stalin
Adrian Walker
Aker "Leachhunter"
Alessandro La Valle
Alexei Gregorij Dolochov
Anders Olsen
Andertech
Andrew R. Wilson
Andy Kwong
Ari Suntioinen
Ben Neilsen
Ben Taxman
Black Lotus Kult
Bryce Undy
Carl Strauser
Cash D.
Catherine Stanford
Charlotte Rose
Chinmargad Bayarsaikhan
Christopher 'eChryxius' Wai
Christopher Partin
Colin J. Mitchell
Cora Anderson
D Sonderling
Dalst Aldruin
Dan Waszkiewicz
Darin Kerr
Darran MacMaghnusa
Darrell "In the Shadows" Lusardi
David Bounsana
Donald J. Gori
Dylan Siegenthaler
Edwin Wessels
Elldaryck
Erik Hansen
Fabio P F Carvalho
Frankie Mundens
Franz Georg Rösel
Fred Pilarczyk
Fritz O'Hara
GamesEnd
Hung-Yang Shen
Ian Smith
Ian W
Jack O'Bryan
James Lewis
Jason Bessonette
Jason Lund
Joan Anonical Sartori
Joe "Delmain" Lunder
Joe Dubé
Joe Evans
Joe Parrino
Johnathan Rummage
jonathan de rouck
Jose Guzman
Joshua D. Mellor
Kat Rhodes
Kevin and Meg Weaver
Kevin Lama

Khadija Hussain
Lachlan Smith
Liam Gallagher
Lucio Rosadini
Luke Cunningham
Magus
Marcus Arena
Mark Bussey
Mark Cockerham
Mark S
Martin Bourque
Matt Hudson
Matthew Wasiak
Matthew York
Maximillian Brahms
Micheal R Meyer
Mike & Brian Goubeaux
Nat Kisa "Kizna" A
Nicolas Villatte
Nicole Mezzasalma
Owen Milton
Pantera Laranja
Paul J. Banyai
Pawel Lubkowski
Peter Gallagher
Phil "Herr Direktor Funranium" Broughton
PK
Poetic Dragon
Quincy Maleo
Rafael Peixoto de Moraes
Ralene Miller
Rasmus Liljeholm
Rene Christopher "Lord Sephleon" Suarez
Richard Libera
Robert N. Emerson
Robin LaChance
Rodger S Graham Jr
Romain Darmon
Ryan Junk
Ryan Porter
S.E. Stone
Sam Wright
Samuel Gordon Mitson
secondsun
Shawn P
Sinellil
Steve Huntsberry
Steven Jefferson
Svend Andersen
Tad Duncan
Taran Williams
tarrask
Tawiscara Blackwing
Thierry De Gagne
Tyrnis
Valore
Vinicius Salles Dias
Warren P Nelson
Wesley Carder
William Neil
William Yan
Yashakami
Yes
Zerin
Zhann Carcerri

Aemilia and Leoncio Black
Arron Smith, Andrew Bradley
David Simmons
Justin Alcala & Nathaniel Brannick
Matt May-Day and Ben May-Day
Matthew Payton
Melody Haren Anderson and Brandon Quina
Michael Raymer, Justin D. Harris
Niels-Martin Trier Josefsen and Sanden Bjørkan
Nik May, Nathan Dorey
Petros Panagiotidis, Manolis Kemerlis
Prometheus, Fwooosh
Raul Urbina
Rohel Terrazas, Thomas Johann Voit
S3rv3r1n0 and Dante Alighieri
Stuart Martyn and Mickey Holman

A. Tompkins, K. Embree
Aaron Jacob Kelly & Eleanor Mae Kelly
Adam C. Hamilton, Matt Matthew
Bentley W. Chism, Alexandria Patience Bailey
Bruno Soares Jardim and Tiago Maciel Villanova
Christina Shirley; Dark Ridge Requiem
Daniel "Illuminos" Persson and Adam "Boman" Persson
Fabio "Alastorh" Ermidoro, Marco "Stretto" Moriggi
Hannes Elliott & Alexander Persson
Knuchi
Lucas Bonsignore-Boisset
Nicholas D. Dragisic , Tim Prisching
Robyn Welsh ; Hawk Infernus
Rod Powell and Allvar Eigerson
Sharon "Knallis" Sillan, and Athanasius
Steve 'Sad' Pennington & OddConUK
T.J. Compton, Mackenzie Compton
Taylor Jeude, Frank Allen
Thomas Martin Eifried, Charactername: Urufu Takato
Wyrd Skinner Stalks the Night; Cruor LunUmbra

Dark Traveler

Ching-Cheng-Chuan, Leon Edmund Lockheart, Arthurbearmex, Chok Hernández, Coyote Thyrsus
Lory "Boss Lady" Aitken, Steve "St. Evil" Lemberg,
James "Joker" Nettum, The Pegasus Games Minions, The Pegasus Games Customers
Shepherd, Lily Armadou, Lebron McCollough, Randolph McHurst, Prince Bessie

---

Lady Synthe, Black Eye Vexed, Scathaigh, Overlord Nobody, Ruinlord of the Nameless

---

1.H.C.K., from Taiwan 2.Cirdan Fang 3.Schaow Fang 4.Hsieh, Wei-Hua 5.Caeures Fyu
Fabien Fernandez; Hvedrung Laymore; Charles Trécourt; Louis Trécourt; Trollune

Dark Master

Devilskebab
Jamie Myers
Martin Lehmann
Maxwellion
Remy de Lioncourt
Robert K Stephenson

Bae Nam-Gyu
Brad Whitcomb
Corwin Wright
Cuban Pete
Dhaunae De Vir
Henrietta Ravensong
Jean "Troll Traya" Faiderbe
Luxwyn Frigussica
R. K. Mooney
Ryan Schwartz
Zachary Thomas Tyler, Gangrel Qalandar/Bone Shadow Cahalith/Jnanashakti Thyrsos

---

Alex Robertson
Chris Handforth
Christopher Gunning

"Reseru" Sansone
DannyK
Jason Italiano



Darkness Is Always With Us

We have shared the world with monsters for millennia. In the time of Alexander the God-King, mages fought their secret wars. In Elizabeth's London, vampires built their own empire brick by bloody brick. Before the founding of America, hunters fought enemies within and without. And in the Cold War, as the clock ticked towards Armageddon, we could have been damned by fallen angels.

Secrets Revealed

Chronicles of Darkness: Dark Eras reveals the world throughout its long and storied past. Through sixteen eras, you'll learn the secret history of the world, from the flame-lit tales of the Neolithic to the drug-fueled rebellion of the 1970s. Delve into the past, and learn that the Chronicles of Darkness began long before the modern nights.



Chronicles of Darkness





