

"People crushed by law have no hope but from power."
– Edmund Burke

CONTAGION OF LAW

An adventure for Exalted
using the Storytelling Adventure System

Written by Shane Cherry Developed by Eddy Webb Edited by Carl Bowen Layout by Brian Glass Art: Misty Coats, Andrew Hepworth,
Imaginary Friends Studio, Aaron Nakahara, Pasi Pitkanen, Mark Taduran, Joshua Gabriel Timbrook, UDON and Melissa Uran



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STORYTELLING ADVENTURE SYSTEM			
SCENES 15	MENTAL	●●●●	XP LEVEL 35-70
	PHYSICAL	●●●●	
	SOCIAL	●●●●	



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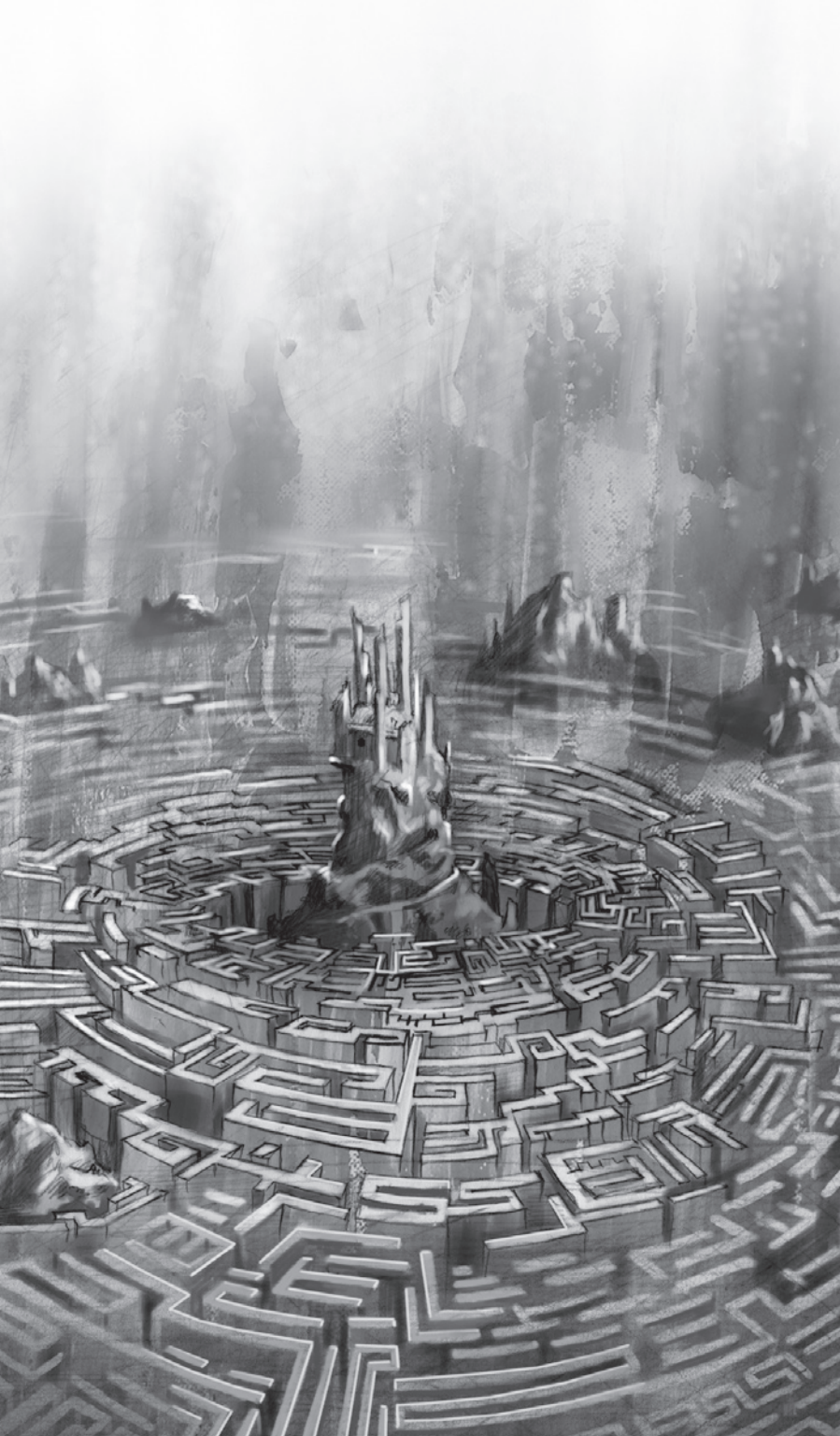
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Introduction

Gethamane, a city buried under stone and ice, has been the target of evil entities for centuries. Ancient beings lie entombed in the deepest recesses of its tunnels, marauding predators claim the flesh of anyone foolish enough to seek the treasures below, the gods spread their centuries-fostered insanity, and now even Deathlords seek to control this refuge of civilization in the vastness of the North. The people of Gethamane keep to themselves, fearing outsiders only slightly less than they fear the monsters that live in the ancient hollows beneath them.

Yet, this frozen region holds not only dangerous monsters, but also great treasure. Some secrets will lie buried for ages, but one treasure, a crown capable of ruling nations, is about to be uncovered. Will it fall into the hands of Solar Exalts or become the property of the many evils that plague the city under the mountain?

What's Inside

The Contagion of Law is a complete story for any **Exalted** series. Contained within is everything needed for even a novice Storyteller to run the entire tale. It can be used as part of a longer series, or as a smaller one-shot game—though it might be difficult for newly Exalted characters. Characters will be pushed to their limits as they fight to recover lost artifacts and prevent the spread of a death cult across Creation. It should present a challenge to five experienced Celestial Exalted. Characters will rarely have a spare minute to breathe between braving horrible tempests and fighting colossal jade warriors.

Also included are several new elements for existing games, from new creatures to new Charms to a plethora of new artifacts that can be added to your own series.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Although **The Contagion of Law** can be run with only the **Exalted** core rulebook, the following supplements are also recommended to ease game play:

- **The Compass of Celestial Directions, Vol. IV—The Underworld**
- **The Compass of Terrestrial Directions, Vol. V—The North**
- **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Abyssals**
- **The Books of Sorcery Vol. I—Wonders of the Lost Age**
- **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. II—The White and Black Treatises**
- **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. V—The Roll of Glorious Divinity II**

Treatment

The story opens as the players' characters' circle arrives in Gethamane, a city buried within a mountain in Creation's northernmost recesses. Shortly after their arrival, the characters are ushered into a meeting with Merek Loshan, the Captain of Gethamane's Guard. A Ghost-Blood by the name of Iridescent Nightmare has been terrorizing the city and retreating into the underground network of caverns called the underways. Dangers have festered there unseen since the First Age, but if the circle is willing to face them, Loshan is willing to bet on expendable mercenaries.

After negotiating payment, the circle heads underground with a small group of soldiers from the Guard. There the characters encounter a unit that has been wandering the caverns for days. These wanderers are actually simulacra created by an ancient entity, Vodak, and they attack the circle. After the circle defeats the simulacra, the search continues.

Eventually the characters find the haven of Iridescent Nightmare, a room filled with human bodies. They do battle, and although Iridescent Nightmare claims that all is not as it seems, he will likely be dispatched. The characters have the option of sparing him, but they might decide he doesn't deserve such mercy. In either case, they examine his quarters and find some strange notes. Iridescent Nightmare had been searching for something before the circle put a stop to his plans.

The circle, attempting to report to Loshan, returns up the passage to find that the entire path has changed. The tunnel is now much longer, and when it eventually ends, the characters see a dull, clouded sky, nowhere penetrated by moonlight. They have emerged from the safety of the mountain into a storm of elements to which they are unaccustomed. They are in the Underworld. Worse, although there is a path before them that leads to Iridescent Nightmare's goal, it is quickly being destroyed by the storm. Their only option is to press forward despite the hazards.

The trail leads the circle to an ancient Underworld city. Once inside, the storm fails to strike anyone, even under open air. The characters search through the city and find that it consists entirely of temples to various gods. This city is an Underworld reflection of the City of Altars—a lost temple-city in Creation built by a First Age Solar named Granite Archetype.

Entering the temple at the center of this Underworld city, the characters are overwhelmed by the smell of bodies piled against the walls. Iridescent Nightmare, they find, has sacrificed mortal after mortal to disable the temple's defenses. Unfortunately for the characters, the Ghost-Blood had not been able to deal with the final defense, and they are greeted by the grave-goods version of an artifact automaton left behind to protect the treasures buried here. The automaton attacks relentlessly upon seeing them, and the characters have no choice but to fight it.

After they best their foe, the characters proceed into the final chamber. They find many grave goods, the vestiges of Granite Archetype's life that were created for him in the Underworld when he died and his panoply was buried with him. These shadow artifacts give the circle clues about what type of man Granite Archetype was. More importantly, the characters find among his possessions the Contagion of Hate, an artifact crown capable of manipulating the emotions of an entire nation.

WHAT ARE GRAVE GOODS?

Ideally, Creation's dead succumb to the natural cycle of reincarnation. Many souls linger, however, descending into the Underworld instead. There they exist as ghosts until either they find the peace needed to move on or a worse fate befalls them. To help a loved one who has become a ghost, the bereaved in Creation sometimes sacrifice mementos of his life, as well as money and any other useful tools that come to mind, as part of his burial rites. Exceptional-quality copies of these sacrificed items appear in the Underworld with the newly deceased. Such items are called grave goods.

Technically any item involved thus in the deceased's death rites is a grave good, but generally the term refers to artifacts of power that served the deceased in life. The ghost of a dead Exalt might open his eyes for the first time to find a dark reflection of his daiklave in his hands, even though the true daiklave remains in Creation, entombed with his body. Grave goods are practically part of the ghost who owns them, and they are tied to the Underworld. Any grave good that is touched by the light of Creation's sun is immediately destroyed. They are essentially dead artifacts, and just like ghosts, they cannot permanently exist in Creation.

For more on grave goods, see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. V—The Roll of Glorious Divinity II**, p. 105.

The characters have two options open to them. First, they can use what they learned in the Underworld to seek out the lost City of Altars

in Creation (without reporting to Loshan first). In this case, they are trailed by the Silent Inquisitor of Wayward Souls, a Day Caste, who has been secretly manipulating them the whole time. The Silent Inquisitor killed Merek Loshan and now uses Loshan's identity and power to seek out the Contagion of Law, Granite Archetype's most powerful and dangerous artifact. When the Solars arrived in Gethamane, the brazen deathknight decided to use them to his own ends as well.

Alternatively, the characters can report to the man they know as Loshan. In so doing, they complete their mission, but unwittingly give their enemy all the information he has been seeking.

If the characters do inform the Silent Inquisitor of where to find the City of Altars, they are visited by Iridescent Nightmare—likely a fully dead ghost at this point. He explains that he was trying to get to Granite Archetype's panoply before the deathknight could. He even explains the nature of a grave good, if the circle has not yet figured it out. Realizing the deception, the circle will likely start off after the Silent Inquisitor, and the chase is on.

Despite extreme cold and harsh winds, the characters push past various hazards en route to the City of Altars. What the circle finds on arrival depends on who showed up first. If the characters skipped the return meeting with Loshan, they barely find evidence of the city and must dig it out themselves. If, however, they have allowed the Silent Inquisitor to arrive first, they find that he has excavated a large portion of it using a workforce of zombies and hateful souls... which promptly attack.

Upon arrival, the characters find all of the city's traps active, meaning the circle must fight through the central manse's defenses. The first trap is a series of four statues, each representing one of the Unconquered Sun's arms. If the characters stop and pray to the Unconquered Sun at an altar in the room, they can pass without harm. If not, the statues come to life and pursue them.

The second puzzle seems to be an impenetrable door. It has a single lock on it, but all attempts to open it (even magical ones) fail. Worse, the lock attempts to destroy any character who tries to break in. The only way to enter is by simply knocking on the door.

The characters must then face the Sentinel, the artifact automaton set to guard the heart of the temple. It challenges the circle to select a champion for a one-on-one duel—which the circle can choose or refuse to accept. After defeating the Sentinel, the characters enter the final chamber, where they engage the Silent Inquisitor.

The fight with the Silent Inquisitor happens one of two ways. If the deathknight arrived first, he has the opportunity to raise the corpse of Granite Archetype to fight at his side. Otherwise, he attacks one of the characters from surprise. All-out combat ensues either way, and he is a very difficult opponent, but if the characters can defeat him, they can prevent his evil ambitions.

Theme: Solar Dominance

The Contagion of Law is a story about the unstoppable force the Solar Exalted represent. At first, every turn yields one more surprise, each one deadlier than the last. But as the characters explore ancient relics and reconnect with the past, they will likely find their own way, guided only minimally by a handful of clues. As the story progresses, the circle has more options and blazes its own trail through the remaining hazards, defeating the harshest opponents and triumphantly seizing victory. Only the Chosen of the Sun could break the reins of the many forces that seek to manipulate them. Solars choose their own destiny.

Mood: Hope and Defiance

The structure of **The Contagion of Law** is designed to take control away from the players' characters in the beginning, only to return it in time for them to dictate the end of the story. The characters are given a seemingly simple situation, but they quickly find themselves in a nightmare. They are plunged into the Underworld without any means of preparation. They are forced to deal with every problem that comes their way regardless of whether they are ready for it.

When they reach a vast city connected to the ancient past, the characters explore it on their own terms. They begin to find clues themselves rather than allowing others to dictate their actions. By the end of the story, they are acting on their own, and anyone who attempted to control them falls by the wayside.

A Chapter in Your Series

The Contagion of Law could be the catalyst of a lot of change in the North. If you run a series based in the North, you might wish to integrate it. Characters could be drawn to the city as treasure hunters, potential traders or even simple refugees. Gethamane's policies regarding Solars and other Exalted are no secret, and being one of the few places in Creation without a Realm presence makes Gethamane particularly appealing to Celestial Exalted.

The characters should have had time to grow in wisdom and experience before **The Contagion of Law** begins, lest they find this story particularly difficult. That said, take note that **The Contagion of Law** is actually set slightly prior to the status quo established in **The Compass of Terrestrial Directions, Vol. V—The North**. A gruff man called Merek Loshan is the Captain of the Guard when this story begins. The adopted icewalker Golden Stag will not assume the rank of Captain until the end of the story. If, however, your characters have been in Gethamane for a while and Golden Stag has already been introduced as Captain of the Guard, simply introduce Merek Loshan as a high-ranking officer who has been charged with the task of capturing Iridescent Nightmare. That cosmetic change should eliminate any continuity concerns.

A Story by Itself

The Contagion of Law can also be run as a single adventure. As it is a particularly difficult story, it is not recommended that novice players attempt to tackle it without the benefit of artifacts and treasures gained in earlier stories. But keeping its difficulty in mind, there is no reason your gaming group could not enjoy **The Contagion of Law** as a one-shot. Further, there are several potential hooks for continuing the story, should you later decide to continue.

CHOSEN OF ANOTHER TYPE

This story is designed for Solar Exalted, but the circle doesn't have to be limited to Solars. The circle could contain a mix of Exalt types. Circles that consist wholly of other types of Exalted have their place in **The Contagion of Law** as well. Lunar Exalted have the same interests in protecting the city as Solars do. A circle of Sidereal Exalted could have known of the crown's power and been dispatched to remove the threat it could cause to Creation. A circle of Abyssals could be working for a rival Deathlord. A group of Infernal Exalted might even want to use the Contagion of Law to spread the propaganda of their Yozi masters. Terrestrial Exalted could be trying to ferret out the Ghost-Blood Anathema, Iridescent Nightmare, to make a case for why the Immaculate Order should be fully accepted in Gethamane. (Players of Terrestrials should keep in mind, however, that the story is designed to challenge Celestial Exalted.)

History

A millennium ago, a Zenith king by the name of Granite Archetype ruled a nation now lost to time in Creation's frozen North. He was known for being a just and righteous ruler, but his people were a reflection of their king, whose very nature was law. All empires crumble, however, and time eventually ended Granite Archetype's reign. Now, buried somewhere under the glistening snow is Granite Archetype's final resting place, and within its walls is the Contagion of Law, an orichalcum crown that helped him spread his influence over his people.

Recently, somewhere in the Underworld near the modern city of Gethamane, an Abyssal Exalt calling himself the Silent Inquisitor of Wayward Souls has been seeking the Contagion of Law for his master, the Bishop of the Chalcedony Thurible. In his employ was a Ghost-Blood called Iridescent Nightmare. The Ghost-Blood learned of the Silent Inquisitor's plot, stole his notes and went to search for the Contagion of Law on his own. The Silent Inquisitor would have taken action on his own, but when his master's astrologer spies in Creation reported that a circle of Solar Exalted would make their way to Gethamane, he hatched a new plan. Killing and impersonating the Captain of the Guard, Merek Loshan, the Silent Inquisitor laid his plans to have the Solars defeat Iridescent Nightmare and lead him to the Contagion of Law themselves.

Set-Up

The heart of the story begins when the characters enter Merek Loshan's office. Coming up with an excuse to get a circle of armed and armored outsiders to the office of the Captain of the Guard should be no problem. Plus, as outsiders, the characters are considered easily expendable and generally assumed to be poor refugees. This combination of qualities will make it relatively easy for the Silent Inquisitor, posing as Loshan, to send a messenger to the circle with a formal invitation to a meeting.

Setting

When the current society of Gethamane was founded, the refugees who founded it thought they had finally found a place of solace, where they could hide from the ravages of both winter and marauding tribes of Wyld mutant scavengers. Led by Bethan Redeye, the group found

the mountain hollowed out, an entire intact city crouching within. The refugees slowly moved inward, hesitant of their fortune, taking each step with caution.

The city seemed perfect. The mountain cradled the refugees from the cold and hid them from their enemies. Fresh air was swept underground with the help of spirits bound there long ago. But the city itself hid a bevy of dark secrets. Every building was made of hollowed stone, carved from the heart of the mountain itself. The only light came from glowing crystals embedded in the walls. Houses were found completely intact with stone plates resting on empty slab tables. The previous people had simply vanished an era ago, leaving behind their entire culture.

The early explorers' caution was soon validated as the darker influences over the city began to show themselves. Three large temples the refugees discovered had to be maintained to appease the gods of the mountain. Yet, those who stayed in the temples would often become deeply disturbed, either fanatically serving the temples' patron deities or frantically fleeing the city, the mountain and (if they lived long enough to cross the tundra) the entirety of the North.

Moreover, the group discovered the underways, a network of tunnels that spread out from under the city in every direction. These caves at first seemed as polished as the city itself, but quickly deteriorated into passages worn by the movements of various creatures over hundreds of years. The monsters of the underways took quick notice of the fresh meals that had returned to the mountain. All Bethan could do was establish a border guard to protect the city from anything that would find its way up from the underways, and to tell her people that if any fools dared to enter them, she would give no condolences to their family.

Years after the founding of the city, representatives of the Guild happened to find their way to the mountain. Welcomed by some of the hunters, they were accepted into the city and began wresting control from Bethan by controlling trade. This was the first of Gethamane's interactions with outsiders, and it began a long tradition of mistrust for those not born under the mountain. From this mistrust, an increased familial structure formed and a nobility class emerged. Children were raised knowing nothing of the world beyond the mountain, and the distrust of outsiders was fostered to modern times.

Now there remains a tumultuous balance between the powers of the city. The current ruler of Gethamane, Mistress Katrin, governs the city with her councilors. The Guard can strong-arm the nobles into bending to its will. (After all, without the Guard, nothing would protect the city from incursions from the underways.) The Guild remains a power because it has become the only major connection to the outside. If any one of the powers were to falter, the city could collapse, swallowed by the hounds outside or the hellhounds beneath.

When the Scarlet Empress took control of the Realm and declared herself Empress of Creation, she included Gethamane in that proclamation. The children of the mountain, however, were unwilling to give control of their city to an outsider, and she was too far away to send any forces to collect her demanded tribute. Although the Empress has failed to gain any actual control, a handful of Immaculate supporters springs up from time to time. Fortunately, they have never managed to actually cause any harm to the city, being outspoken missionaries at worst.

The key to Gethamane's survival is a program of socialist food regulation called the Dole. Consisting mainly of an edible but somewhat bland fungus grown in the Gardens and wild game retrieved by gatherers, the Dole is a government-issued meals program. Individual families are allocated an amount and quality of food befitting their station, though additional portions of the Dole can be bartered for relatively easily. Trading away a portion of one's Dole can fetch a high price and is common practice when it can be spared. Outsiders can also trade for portions of the Dole, but they usually find the price higher than they would like. Exorbitant local costs force outsiders to rely on Guild trade for their meals, the price of which is only low enough to look like a deal by comparison.

Without a major Immaculate presence, Gethamane remains somewhat amicable to Anathema, at least as much as any other outsiders. They are mostly permitted free rein for a period of a few months, which can be renegotiated later. Any outsider who wishes to become a permanent resident must be formally adopted by a family, an arduous goal. For more information on Gethamane, see **The Compass of Terrestrial Directions, Vol. V—The North**, pp. 34–50.

The Cast

Iridescent Nightmare, Ghost-Blood Scavenger

Quotes: *I am Iridescent Nightmare, the last dream you shall ever have.*

A hundred lives for a million. It's a good trade.

We're all bad people. At least I recognize it.

Background: Iridescent Nightmare's mother was ostracized for her love affair with a ghost. She left her family, forsaking the Bethan name, and sought refuge among the Guild, who will shelter any refugee for the right price. There she gave birth to a son, Col, and raised him secretly. Col watched his mother worked to death by the masters of the Guild, and he noticed the hate in their eyes as they looked at him. It was obvious he was a tool to them and nothing more.

As a boy, Col spent most of his time trying to better himself. He practiced with a spear daily and studied in secret, finding he had a penchant for the occult. When he was old enough to begin formal work, the Guild sent him on the most dangerous missions they could find. It was during one of these missions that Col encountered a death cult dedicated to the Shining One. He eagerly joined their ranks and took his new name. Iridescent Nightmare became an adept necromancer and began working on a project within the cult—to find the Contagion of Law, a First Age crown capable of showing all nonbelievers the way.

Working under a deathknight called the Silent Inquisitor of Wayward Souls, Iridescent Nightmare aided in the search for the Contagion of Law. After learning that the cult's true purpose was to lead all of Creation into Oblivion—which they consider the only means of escaping the pain of life—Nightmare decided to leave the cult, for he had not finished getting his revenge against those who'd slighted him. He vowed to take the Contagion of Law for himself and make his own cult.

Realizing the resting place of the Contagion of Law was somewhere near Gethamane, Nightmare covertly returned to the city to find it, setting up a base in a secret area of the underways that he had learned during his youth was marginally safe. The legends indicated the city would be hidden somewhere under the snow, so he began to search for its reflection in the Underworld instead, hoping to ex-

trapolate its location in Creation thereafter. For ease of access into the Underworld, he needed to create an access point. He dragged a number of Gethamane's citizens into the underways and slaughtered them to create a shadowland. When he eventually found the magically protected Underworld city, he continued his project, further slaughtering men, women and children—any who came close enough to the tunnels for him to kidnap—to slowly work his way through the city's defenses.



Description: As a Ghost-Blood, Iridescent Nightmare has quite a bit of gray in his mien. His eyes are dull and his skin pale, but his hair is dark. He maintains a firm demeanor over his sharp features, trying to remain as intimidating as possible, like a dog bearing his teeth.

Storyteller Hints: Iridescent Nightmare learned at a young age that most of Creation is worthless. Moreover, death is not a punishment in his eyes, so he feels no remorse in using Gethamane's citizens as his objects. He knows what death brings, being half-dead himself. The strong will cling to Creation and become ghosts (not that he'll treat them any better), and the weak will move on to Le-the. Similarly, he does not fear death, knowing he is guaranteed by his parentage to rise again. Nightmare does, however, see a definite difference between embracing the afterlife and embracing Oblivion. He wants vengeance against those who brought him pain, not the cool release of nothingness. In his mind, Creation doesn't deserve to end its suffering.

Notes: If Iridescent Nightmare dies, he can shuffle off his body and become a ghost immediately. When he does, he gains a few basic Arcanos Charms. The only way he can be prevented from this form of revival is if a Zenith Caste forcibly destroys his body before his ghost can physically exit it. Additionally, Iridescent Nightmare has an artifact spear and well-made armor, both of which are listed on his character sheet.

IMPROVISING NECROMANCY

If you do not have a copy of **The Books of Sorcery Vol. II—The Black Treatise**, you can improvise Iridescent Nightmare's necromancy. Give him at least one power that slows enemy movement rates so he can single out his foes, and allow him to cast *Death of Obsidian Butterflies* (**Exalted**, p. 252) as a necromancy spell. You may opt to have it deal aggravated damage. You can even allow him to use *Demon of the First Circle* (**Exalted**, p. 252) as a substitute for *Bone Puppet Dance*. Make it a simple action spell that targets one of the members of the circle. If successful, he controls the victim's next three actions in addition to taking his own actions, but the victim can use reflexive Charms to defend himself, and Iridescent Nightmare cannot force the victim to activate Charms to attack his comrades.

A FULLY DEAD NIGHTMARE

If Iridescent Nightmare is killed, he automatically rises as a ghost, and is granted six Arcanos Charms. One such Charm is *Pyre Smoke Form*, which allows him to become incorporeal. For more on the Arcanoi and their Charms, see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. V—The Roll of Glorious Divinity II**, pp. 126–160.

Pyre Smoke Form

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Temperance 2, Essence 2;

Type: Simple (Speed 6, DV -0)

Keywords: None

Duration: Six ticks per success

Prerequisite Charms: None

In their natural environs, ghosts are just as materially solid as mortals are in their homes in the living world. With this Charm, however, a ghost can make herself incorporeal even in locations where she should naturally be solid (such as the Underworld). Activating this Charm requires a (Stamina + Temperance) roll. If it succeeds, the ghost remains incorporeal for six ticks per success. Although she is incorporeal, the character remains as visible as she normally would be in that location.

A ghost who is incorporeal can move through solid objects at will. She can dive through walls or doors or startled onlookers, or pull herself up through ceilings with all the grace her (Dexterity + Athletics) pool allows. The only surfaces that prove impenetrable to incorporeal ghosts are the solid ground beneath their feet and ones that are specifically warded against such behavior.

Merek Loshan, Captain of the Guard

Quotes: *I'm not gonna lie; you outsiders are completely expendable.*

The pay's as high as the mortality rate.

Elk shit is elk shit. I didn't get this job by hiding it with pretty words.

Motivation: (Formerly)

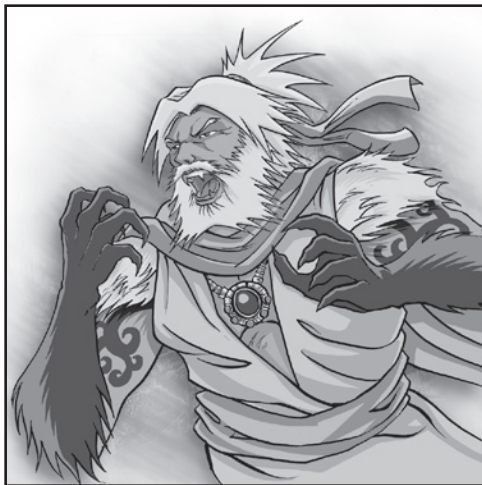
Bring glory to the Loshan family name.

Background: Merek was born into a militaristic family of Gethamane nobles and quickly learned the value of power. Not caring for the façades and games of political life, he knew his only other option was to join the Guard. He enlisted at a young age, and through tactical prowess, physical power and a few dirty tricks, he rose steadily in rank until the Council recognized him as the Captain of the Guard. He still makes backroom deals now and then to make sure no other up-and-comers can seize his post. That is, he *did* until his death.

The Silent Inquisitor of Wayward Souls recently assassinated Merek Loshan and took his visage. The Silent Inquisitor portrays every detail of Merek's life almost perfectly. Moreover, any of Merek's closest officers who could notice the nuances that the Silent Inquisitor can't seem to master have already been sent to their deaths or thrown into the cold beyond the mountain on trumped-up charges of treason.

Description: Loshan is best described as an honest brute. He has a gruff visage and a blunt demeanor. His face has grown worn, but he covers it with a scruffy silver beard. He always seems a little distracted, and his breath chronically smells of alcohol. Nevertheless, expectations of him are exactly what he likes—that he'll get the job done by any necessary means. His men respect him for his blunt effectiveness and feel like he's as much their drinking buddy as their commander.

Storyteller Hints: Be an asshole. Merek never appears to be trying to subtly manipulate any situation, because he lays all the cards on the table as quickly as possible. He's a proponent of straightforward



talk, brazenly stating the fact that he dislikes outsiders such as the players' characters. Because Merek has been replaced by the Silent Inquisitor—who is actually quite fond of subtle manipulation—the Storyteller should hint at cunning undercurrents beneath “Merek’s” blunt demeanor. The characters might assume that there is more to Merek than meets the eye, never guessing how right they are.

The Silent Inquisitor of Wayward Souls, Day Caste Assassin

Quotes: *Surrender yourself, and I shall grant you peace.*

You claim to save, but on the day you fail, will you accept it? Or will it fester, Sun-spawn, until even your righteous shoulders cannot bear the pain?

The only true peace comes when all things end.

Background: The Silent Inquisitor was also born a native of Gethamane—not that he remembers it. He retains only a blurred vision of his past. He knows he was a poet, though perhaps not a good one. He also remembers he once loved a woman, and they could not be together, but he has forgotten her name and her face. Still, he is haunted by the ideal that his few memories of her represent. He knows it was his love for her that somehow got him banished from the city, forcing him to wander the Northern snows.

He cursed her visage. He cursed the city. He cursed the mountain. He cursed life. This is why the Bishop of the Chalcedony Thurible thought he was a perfect convert to the path of the Shining One. As the scorned lover's legs gave way beneath him and he felt his lungs too frozen to draw breath, he was visited by the Bishop, who offered him wrath to replace his pain. The scorned man rose again as the Silent Inquisitor of Wayward Souls.



The Silent Inquisitor found his talents lay in deception and martial prowess, so he was often sent on assassination missions, targeting influential individuals across the North who opposed the cult. After eliminating the threat, he would pose as his target for long enough to absorb their resources into the cult's coffers or make trade agreements and other laws that just happened to allow for easier operation for the death cult. It was during one of these missions that the Silent Inquisitor learned of Granite Archetype and the Contagion of Law.

The Silent Inquisitor organized a search for the vast city-like assortment of temples in which Granite Archetype was buried. His task force included the cult's prominent Ghost-Blood Iridescent Nightmare. Nightmare betrayed him, however, stealing all the notes they had assembled and fleeing just as they were on the cusp of a breakthrough. The Silent Inquisitor was prepared for it, but before pursuing Iridescent Nightmare, he consulted living astrologers loyal to the Cult of the Shining One and learned that a circle of Solar Exalted would be coming to Gethamane. He decided that the Solars could do all his work for him.

Description: The Silent Inquisitor doesn't show his true form often, as he spends most of his time wearing someone else's visage to further the goals of the cult. In fact, he spends the majority of this story wearing the visage and portraying the personality of Merek Loshan. He enjoys wearing his own face while fighting, though.

His true skin is a canvas of white, and the only color comes from frozen blue of his veins and lips. Even his eyes are frozen over. Despite looking like a frozen cadaver, he keeps a noble bearing about him and dresses in the finest luxuries.

Storyteller Hints: Although very few followers of the Shining One are capable of believing the insanity that makes up the cult's tenets, the Silent Inquisitor manages it. The arrogance that supports his belief makes him dangerous. He strives to make his victims suffer, so they can know that life is pain and only by embracing death will true peace come. He arrogantly lords this belief over the mortal populace, rationalizing his torture of the "unenlightened" as a good deed. He welcomes his own death and the sweet embrace of nothingness. His only reason to live now is to spread his philosophy.

Notes: The Silent Inquisitor is a relentless opponent and a vicious murderer. He holds several artifacts, listed on his character sheet (p. 57), including two new artifacts. He also has a few hearthstones,

some Underworld and some within Creation, that you may feel free to define. Shortly after the Silent Inquisitor's death, his Deathlord master will alter the geomancy of the manses just enough to destroy the hearthstones and allow new ones to form.

A SLIGHTLY SUNNIER ABYSSAL

If you don't have a copy of **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Abyssals**, you can still use the Silent Inquisitor of Wayward Souls. The Silent Inquisitor is incredibly good at Thrown and Dodge, as well as anything required for infiltration. He is also quite stubborn. Give him the majority of the Thrown, Integrity and Dodge Charm cascades, as well as a smattering of Investigation, Larceny and Stealth Charms. Aim for Charms that cripple or assassinate; nothing needs to be excessive or flashy. The Silent Inquisitor might slash tendons, but will never take off limbs. He favors efficiency in combat first and dramatic flair only through his efficient devastation. Finally, be sure to give him the ability to recover motes in combat somehow, and include that Charm in any Combos you design for him.

NEW CHARM

Oblivion's Jowl Postulation

Cost: —; **Mins:** Integrity 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Avatar (3), Mirror (Undaunted Wrath of the Sun)

Duration: Instant (Story)

Prerequisite Charms: Freedom in Slavery Understanding

The Abyssal knows that all of life is pain and revels in the joy of knowing that Oblivion will end it all. The first time in any story the Abyssal is brought to a new wound penalty, he gains a number of Willpower points equal to that penalty. This effect cannot increase his Willpower points above his permanent rating, and he cannot gain this benefit again until a new story begins. Charms that increase a character's wound penalties do not grant the Abyssal more temporary Willpower points. Only by suffering levels of damage that genuinely injure him does he gain the Willpower, though such damage may be self-inflicted.

New Solar Charm: Undaunted Wrath of the Sun (Prerequisites: Transcendent Hero's Meditation; **Exalted**, p. 201). This Charm functions identically to Oblivion's Jowl Postulation, except that the Solar fortifies himself with tenacity and determination to live. His cause revived, his retaliation is swift and brutal. The Avatar Keyword is ignored in the Solar variant; however, the Solar's primary Virtue must have a rating of at least 3.

Shakan,

Head Intelligencer to Mistress Katrin

Quotes: *It would be a shame if the authorities found out about your indiscretion...*

What happened is inconsequential. What does the situation look like?

Perhaps we should heed reason's call.

Motivation: Protect Gethamane from political incursions by gathering and controlling information.

Background: Since the entire Bethanite family secretly gathers information for Mistress Katrin, even the most socially inept citizen of Gethamane watches what he says in front of a Bethanite. That being the case, Mistress Katrin was forced to search outside her family for a network of informants. Her current Head Intelligencer is a man known only as Shakan. Unfortunately for this enigmatic emissary, even this fact is relatively common knowledge, and Shakan finds himself plagued with a certain inescapable celebrity. Yet, Shakan manages to continue his work unimpeded with his most frequent weapon—blackmail.



Shakan's blackmailed agents are instructed to locate further potential informants by seeking even more leverage. According to the rumors, Shakan is guilty of slander and fraud as he crafts situations to blackmail potentially useful informants. He does so only rarely, but his reputation for it is an effective scare tactic.

Description: Shakan has very hawkish features. His eyes are sharp and he seems to be always looking for something. He wears dark, simple clothes far beneath his station in order to foster a persona of mystery—on the off chance someone he speaks with is unaware of who he is.

Storyteller Hints: Shakan primarily uses blackmail and deceit to get the information he needs, but he thinks he is perfectly honorable. He holds his duty to Gethamane above all else. Keeping that

in mind, he is aware that losing his own life is likely to do little good for Gethamane. The secrets he keeps could quickly quiet a number of potentially ambitious merchants who might be willing to deal with the Guild or the Immaculate Order, and he has learned the value of this control in keeping the city stable. He talks down to individuals when he is agitated.

Notes: Shakan has been aware for a while that something strange is going on within the Guard. Two of his informants within the Guard were recently sent into the underways on a mission—an uncommon practice—and did not return. Their deaths were called accidental, but Shakan found the situation suspicious and investigated. He now knows that Merek Loshan either has been replaced by an Exalt or is under the control of one, and he is aware of the competition with Iridescent Nightmare. He has even learned the legend of the Contagion of Law. Still, he's not prepared to act without a legitimate plan. Throwing his life away will do Gethamane little good. He makes his presence known only if Iridescent Nightmare is dead and the circle has led the Silent Inquisitor to the Contagion of Law.

Given his passive role in this story, no character sheet has been provided. If you need traits, you can use those of a mortal hero (**Exalted**, p. 280) as a basis, increasing Abilities such as Investigation and Larceny as necessary.

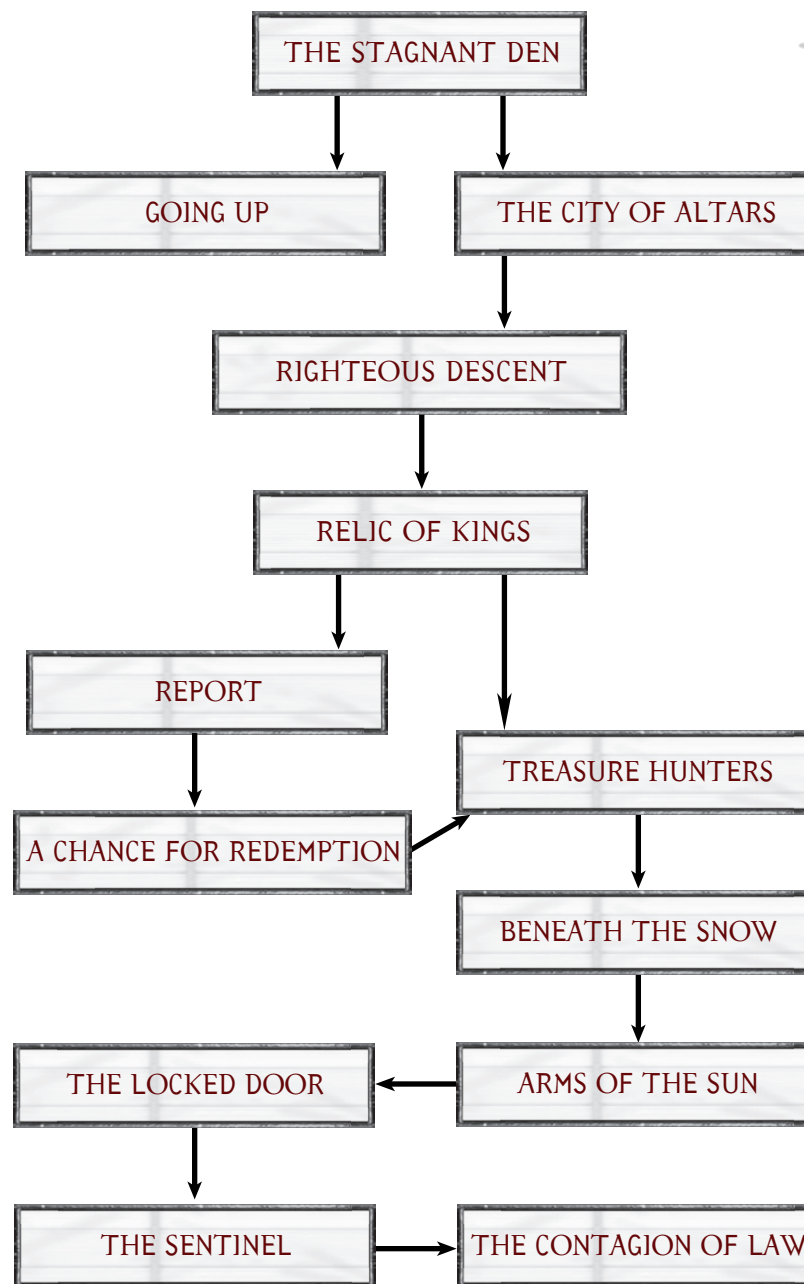
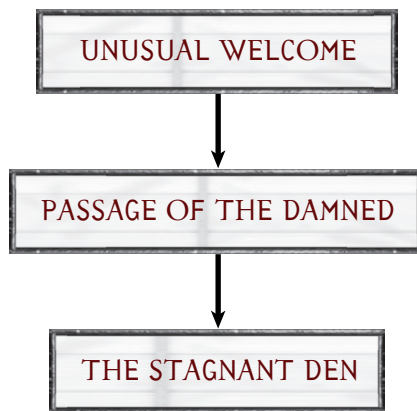
Plotting

This story can be fast paced. Characters will only rarely have an opportunity to rest. The scenes should move quicker as the story continues, becoming an avalanche that can end only with the circle crushing its foes. Don't give the characters the luxury of rest too often. This will heighten the drama.

During scenes of exploration such as "Passage to the Damned" and "The City of Altars," the pace can slow down a bit. Let the characters breathe in deep when you are building ambiance. Feel free to describe at length the caverns of the underways to develop an eerie feeling and extrapolate on the ghostly temples of the Underworld's City of Altars to instill a sense of awe.

It can also be worthwhile to slow the story slightly in moments with deadlines such as "Treasure Hunters." Taking a few extra minutes to describe the scene could foster a feeling of urgency as the characters know that the Silent Inquisitor is ahead of them and getting away. Don't take too long with it, however, lest you make it seem like there is no urgency and flush the drama out of the situation entirely. Try to find a balance, and when in doubt, always push forward. It is better to let the players feel rushed as their characters are trapped in a desperate situation than to slow down the story and risk the players losing interest.

Scene Flowchart



Unusual Welcome

MENTAL •

PHYSICAL –

SOCIAL •

Overview

Although Gethamane does not warmly welcome outsiders as a whole, it finds them distinctly expendable. The Captain of the Guard, Merek Loshan, has sent messengers to the group to see if they will aid with a problem: A Ghost-Blood calling himself Iridescent Nightmare has been raiding the edges of the Outer Ring, the area of residence for Gethamane's middle class. Nightmare has been attacking members of the Guard and anyone foolish enough to go near the underways gates, kidnapping them and dragging them into the underways. None have returned.

Merek reveals that the Guard has narrowed the location of Iridescent Nightmare's haven down to a small portion of the underways. Although the Guard does not traditionally enter the underways for any reason, the threat was so great that Merek has already sent several teams to ferret the Ghost-Blood out. They haven't returned. Therefore, Merek has decided to offer mercenary work to those he assumes are willing to take it, making the offer to outsiders first.

Merek needs the circle to find Iridescent Nightmare's haven, discover why he is slaughtering the citizens of Gethamane (if he even has a reason) and put an end to his evil. He is willing to send the characters with a small cadre of guards to guide them through the tunnels. Iridescent Nightmare is a powerful necromancer, so the job should not be taken lightly, but Merek is able to offer suitable compensation. He has arranged for the circle to register for the Dole as lower class citizens upon completion of the job—something not typically available to outsiders.

Unbeknownst to the characters, the man they are talking to is not actually Merek Loshan. The real Merek has been killed and replaced by the Silent Inquisitor of Wayward Souls, a deathknight working for the Bishop of the Chalcedony Thurible. He has received a tip from his master's Creation-side astrologers that a circle of Solars has arrived in Gethamane, and he is actually sending the characters to go do his dirty work as part of his plan. His disguise, however, is almost perfect, and the characters should have little reason to suspect his deceit at this point.

Description

The office is sparse, with little decoration other than the faint light of glowing crystals embedded in the wall. Behind a wooden desk sits Merek Loshan, his boots kicked up over the edge. He rubs his stubbled chin as you enter and, barely acknowledging your presence, flicks his hand in the direction of a couple of shabby wooden chairs. He takes a swig from a bottle and smiles in your direction, showing his yellow teeth in a crooked smile.

Storyteller Goals

Give the characters enough exposition to launch them into the story. Additionally, try to hint slightly that Merek might know a little more than he's telling them.

Character Goals

Work out a deal with Merek Loshan that is beneficial to the circle.

I'M NOT AN OUTSIDER

This story assumes the characters are from various parts of Creation, meaning they would be outsiders in Gethamanian eyes. Some players, however, might wish to portray characters from Gethamane itself. In that case, work out a reason with the player why the character has been included with the circle in this meeting. The character could be a spy for the Council to make sure the rest of the circle does not betray the city, or he could be a member of the Guard sent to guide the others through the caves. If a character is from the city, he can negotiate for a larger portion of the Dole, a favor from the Council or a position within the Guard. Alternatively, he could be an outsider who has lived in the city for some time, seeking formal adoption into a major family.

Actions

An Odd Aroma

There is a strange smell in the air, but it is light and difficult to notice because the room has been aired out.

Dice Pool: (Perception + Awareness), difficulty 3

Action: Reflexive

Hindrances: None

Help: The character is addicted to bright morning (two bonus dice)

Roll Results

Botch: The character is agitated by the smell and overcome by a sneezing fit. This causes him to look like an idiot and take an external penalty of -2 on any social combat rolls this scene.

Failure: The character fails to notice the odd scent and continues the scene normally.

Success: The character notices the faint aroma of bright morning in the air, a drug smoked to allow an individual to perceive spirits and Essence flows.

Negotiating a Price

Negotiating the price is a standard social combat, but it might not need to be rolled. The players might wish to simply talk out the situation or accept the opening offer. The Silent Inquisitor (as Merek Loshan) starts by offering the characters a portion of the Dole for one month and an accompaniment of two guards on the mission as compensation. Although this offer is already quite generous, he can be driven as high as one year of the Dole and a dozen guards. Anything further requires unnatural mental influence, or he will simply laugh at the characters.

The Silent Inquisitor does not care if the characters know that he considers them expendable. In fact, he tries to use it to his advantage. He makes it clear that he does not expect the circle to return (though in reality he not only expects them to, but is depending on it for his plan to succeed). He claims that they are his last resort and will gladly pay anyone who manages to survive. He is very blunt, and gives the impression of someone who takes life for what it is and deals it back with a shrug.

Hindrances: None

Help: The Silent Inquisitor is distracted by keeping his true motives secret (-2 internal penalty). He has smoked bright morning and feigns failure depending on the Essence he finds (1–3 motes, he yields slightly; 4–6 motes, he hesitantly accepts; 7+ motes, he instantly accepts). The Silent Inquisitor spends Willpower to resist unnatural mental influence, but accepts the terms of the offer in order to maintain his disguise.

Useful Charms: Any Excellency Charm for Bureaucracy, Performance, Presence or Socialize will be useful during social attacks to manipulate the scene. Any Investigation Excellency could be useful

in reading Merek's motives, while an Integrity Excellency could be used to defend against the Silent Inquisitor's attacks. Also, Irresistible Salesman Spirit will double a character's successes when haggling.

Roll Results

Botch: Apply a -2 external penalty to further rolls by the character, as the Silent Inquisitor views him as a complete idiot.

Failure: Social combat continues.

Success: Merek reluctantly pays the characters what they ask for. If a character spends more than six motes, he quickly agrees to whatever the circle asks.

Piercing the Disguise

The Silent Inquisitor's disguise is a conglomeration of various Abyssal Charms resulting in a perfect unnatural Illusion effect. This includes the appearance of his Essence being changed to match Merek Loshan's. Only if a character is using Eye of the Unconquered Sun is the player able to roll to pierce the disguise (in which case, she adds twice her Essence rating in automatic successes). A truly suspicious character, however, can spend four Willpower points to break the mental influence. The Storyteller should be very careful to allow only the truly suspicious this benefit. It is unlikely the characters will have any legitimate reason to suspect him.

A PLOT AVERTED

The likelihood of the players' characters seeing through the Silent Inquisitor's disguise is very low, but it is there. If it does happen, the deathknight sighs, "Pity," and launches into attack posture. Regardless of how the fight goes, it changes the course of the story beyond the scope of this SAS. You can use the other scenes as potential inspiration for future stories, however.

Consequences

The price agreed, a time is set the following night for the circle to head into the underways accompanied by several of Merek's men. Alternatively, the Solars might decide to investigate on their own, which could include them searching the tunnels during the day. The guards at the tunnels will not stop them from doing so. Either way, move to "Passage to the Damned."



Passage to the Damned

MENTAL ••

PHYSICAL ••

SOCIAL •

Overview

The circle will presumably enter the tunnels at night, accompanied by several members of the Guard, but if the characters attempt a daytime venture, the Guard at the access point will not bother to stop them. (Anyone foolish enough to enter the tunnels deserves what he gets, and these outsiders are no different.) They search for Iridescent Nightmare's lair.

As the characters delve lower under the mountain, any accompanying guards strike up a conversation to end the silence. They discuss the possible fates of the last team to challenge Iridescent Nightmare—a team that never returned. As discussion waxes, a group of ragged men appears in the tunnel. These men composed the last party to be sent below. They claim to have been trying to find their way back since encountering monsters.

In reality, however, those soldiers were killed and replaced with these simulacra by the monster Vodak. (See **The Compass of Terrestrial Directions, Vol. V—The North**, p. 153–155). They begin attacking the circle and its allies mid-sentence. They try to drag the characters deeper into the caverns, where Vodak can absorb them. When defeated, they turn into a fine silvery powder.

Description

While walking:

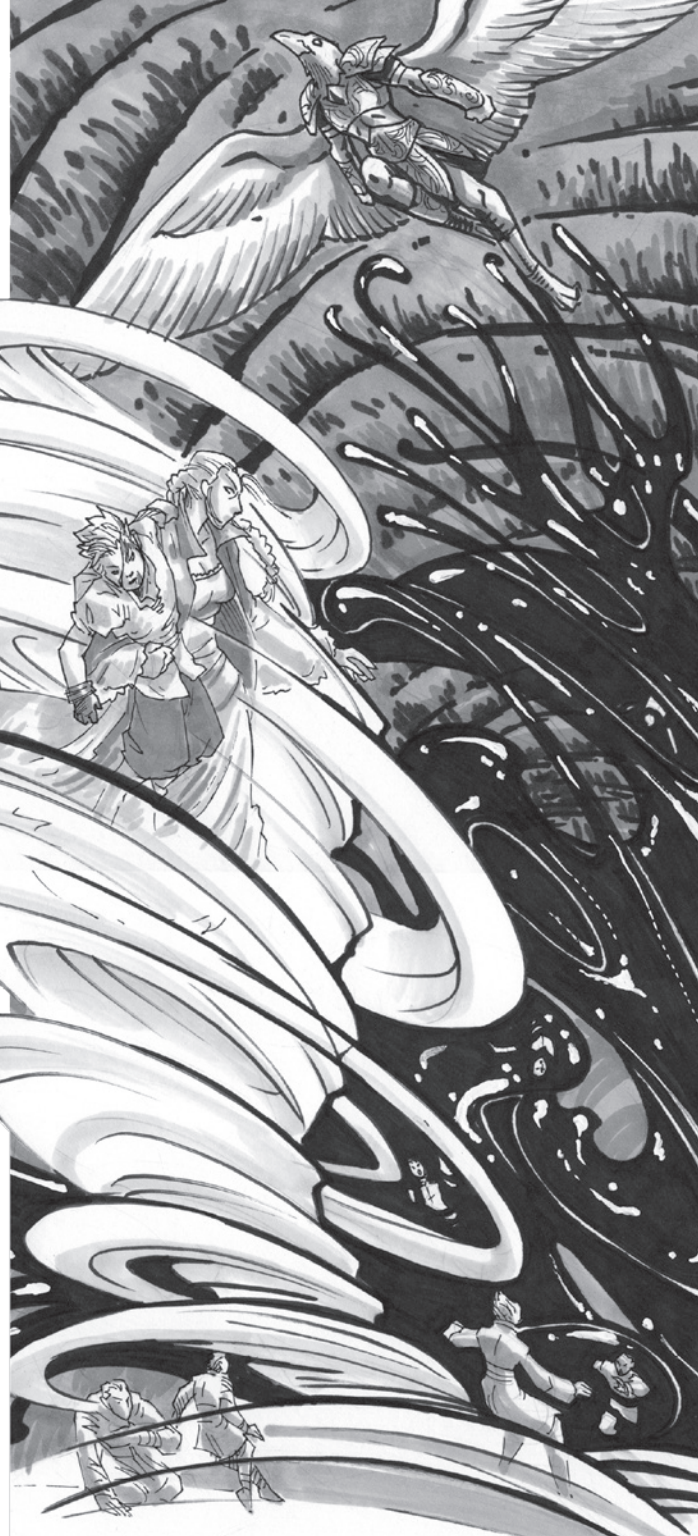
The tunnels under the city start as smooth and perfect as the city's caverns, but they soon become scarred with the marks of claws and corrosives. The air grows stale and the cool breezes cease, subtly replaced with a stagnant heat. The gems that line the wall here are broken. Soon the line of gems peters out altogether, leaving torches or anima banners as the only source of light. A sense of foreboding emanates perpetually from deeper below.

Soon all the ambient noise falls subservient to the clacking of your heels on the polished stone. The echoes linger briefly before the unnerving twists and turns of the passages swallow them. Occasional movement can be seen fluttering off to the side while a skittering noise clicks away above your heads. Every twist of tunnel and side passage hides the potential for a painful death.

As the simulacra approach:

From the passage before you, the sound of labored breathing can be heard. A shadow moves, shambling against the wall.

It approaches slowly, and it's not alone. It enters the light, revealing a pale face worn down by stress and panic—a man wearing the uniform of the Gethamane Guard, leaning against his spear for support. "By the gods..." escapes his lips as the rest of his unit slowly comes into view behind him.



Storyteller Goals

This scene helps put a face to the story. Allow the characters to interact with their escorts so they have some human element to feel responsible for defending. Although the members of the Guard might not survive this scene, to say nothing of the remainder of the story, try to build a connection between them and the circle so the characters have additional motivation to see out the entirety of the events.

Also, emphasize suspense. The underways are among the most notoriously dangerous locales Creation has to offer. Take extra time to describe the eerily vacant caverns and strange noises or movements. It will make the characters seem more triumphant when they wrest control of the situation from their manipulators later if they are frightened now.

Character Goals

Defeat any monsters and make it to Iridescent Nightmare's lair.

Actions

Navigating the Trail

The characters must plot the way to Iridescent Nightmare's lair based on information given to them by Merek Loshan.

Dice Pool: (Perception + Survival), difficulty 3

Action: Dramatic. Only the character leading the search needs to make this roll.

Hindrances: There is no natural light, and caverns often lack identifying characteristics (-2 external penalty).

Help: The guards have some clues gathered by previous teams (+2 bonus successes).

Useful Charms: Hardship-Surviving Mendicant Spirit can prevent the character from suffering the external penalty due to poor terrain and conditions. Unshakeable Bloodhound Technique can perfectly find the lair by tracking Iridescent Nightmare.

Roll Results

Botch: The character leads the circle near an unstable vein of raw Essence. The vein explodes, dealing two levels of lethal damage to the character. At your discretion, the circle can be attacked by a pack of hungry ghosts (**Exalted**, p. 317) or cthritae (**The Compass of Terrestrial Directions**, Vol. V—**The North**, p. 156) before the roll can be attempted again.

Failure: The circle wanders through the underways for a while. At your discretion, the circle can be attacked by a pack of hungry ghosts (**Exalted**, p. 317) or cthritae (**The Compass of Terrestrial Directions**, Vol. V—**The North**, p. 156) before the roll can be attempted again.

Success: The character eventually leads the circle and its allies to Iridescent Nightmare's lair.

Talking with the Guards

In order to break the tension, the members of the Guard will strike up conversations with the circle. Give them names and personalities befitting a group of young soldiers. Most are below the age of 30, and none of them has ventured into the underways for any more than a few minutes at a time. They mention that they looked up to the last group, a veteran troop led by a Lieutenant Reinhart. None of those veterans returned, and the current unit of soldiers is not in high spirits. It could become clear that the men of the Guard are, perhaps subconsciously, relying on the Solars to protect them from any dangers they encounter.

Dealing with the Simulacra

When the group of six simulacra arrives, the Gethamanians instantly recognize and hail Lieutenant Reinhart. Reinhart explains that he and his men were ambushed by monsters and dragged farther into the tunnels before they managed to get away. They have been looking for the way out ever since. As soon as the characters let their guard down, Vodak commands the simulacra to attack, trying to drag the characters and their allies down to its lair so it can absorb them. During the combat, the veteran simulacra use the traits of elite soldiers (**Exalted**, p. 280) but the novice Guardsmen accompanying the circle use the traits of a regular troop (**Exalted**, p. 279). Further, the Guardsmen have trouble attacking the visages of their superiors, suffering a -2 internal penalty to attacks. If any of the simulacra become incapacitated, Vodak removes his committed motes, turning them to a pile of quicksilver dust.

Consequences

The characters and any remaining members of the Guard reach the haven of Iridescent Nightmare. They should prepare for battle. Move to "The Stagnant Den."

The Stagnant Den

MENTAL –

PHYSICAL ...

SOCIAL •

Overview

When the circle descends deep enough into the caverns, the path opens into a large chamber with walls decorated in human remains. In the center of this charnel house stands a throne of crudely piled rocks; on it sits Iridescent Nightmare. It is important to note that Iridescent Nightmare is not there if the characters have decided to search for him during the day for any reason. This room is a shadowland (though the characters are unlikely to notice it), and he is not foolish enough to leave the safety of the Underworld until just before nightfall.

Iridescent Nightmare was expecting Guardsmen and is happy to discuss their obvious desire for death before engaging the characters. He has mastered a few necromantic spells, and will start the battle by casting Field of Fell Dreams while his opponents are still too far away to disrupt him. After that, he intends to whip his spear into the skulls of his enemies or unleash more death magic, intentionally aiming to be gruesome in his blows. If he is killed in battle, he immediately rises as a ghost and uses his new Arcanos Charms to make a hasty escape.

If Iridescent Nightmare recognizes his foes as Solars (if, for instance, an orichalcum weapon is shoved in his face, a character spends peripheral motes, or an Obvious Charm is used to attack him), his tactics immediately change. He screams, “This isn’t what you think!” and attempts to beg for his life.

After the battle, the circle searches Iridescent Nightmare’s lair. If the characters let the Ghost-Blood live, he can help them do so or give a few clues while he decides how much the circle can be trusted. He might even take his own life, knowing he will rise as a ghost immediately.

Description

With every breath, the stagnant air seems to rot inside your lungs, and you recognize the smell of old meat. The odor comes from a deceptively large chamber decorated with the bodies of soldiers and treasure hunters impaled on their own blades. Even the walls are packed with splayed organs, blood and flesh. They pulse now and then with the movement of a few maggots sturdy enough to live this far below the mountain.

In the center of the room is a man with gray skin and hair of obsidian cascading down his back. His features are as sharp as bone, but his smile is like smooth alabaster, offsetting his otherwise harsh visage. He stands before a throne of rocks and bone, holding a soldier dressed in Gethamane colors by the scruff of the neck. As he notices you, he thrusts his black jade spear through his victim. The soldier lets out a short scream before the alabaster man wipes the remains off the spear and points it in your direction. “It’s about time they sent more for my collection,” he says, his smile widening.” That one was beginning to bore me. I am Iridescent Nightmare, the last dream you shall ever have.”

Storyteller Goals

The characters have met their quarry, so the battle needs to be cinematic, but Iridescent Nightmare is simply no match for a circle of Solar Exalts. This scene is an opportunity for you to hint that there is more going on than the characters were led to believe. Allow the characters to feel dominant for a moment, but hint that maybe it was a little too easy.

When he becomes aware of the fact that he is fighting Solars rather than members of the Guard, he attempts to convince them to put down their weapons. He’ll explain that he’s been trying to locate an artifact called the Contagion of Law to prevent it from falling in the hands of a deathknight called The Silent Inquisitor of Wayward Souls. The Silent Inquisitor himself is working for an even greater evil, the Shining One, who intends to bring all of the North (and possibly all of Creation) into the fold of his death cult. Iridescent Nightmare offers to send the characters in the right direction to find it if they spare his life. He is not willing to reveal anything further until his safety can be guaranteed, so he leaves out the remainder of the story. He explains the décor of the room as what he considers necessary sacrifices.

If the characters stop to talk to Iridescent Nightmare, the story could take a drastic turn. Nightmare has only two major goals: to survive and to prevent the Silent Inquisitor from getting the Contagion of Law (by getting it for himself, of course). Keep these goals in mind as you decide whether Nightmare is going to work with the circle or not.

Character Goals

Face the enemy of Gethamane and search his haven.

Actions

Noticing the Shadowland

Usually, noticing a shadowland is automatic. Trees are always barren as though it were winter, the air is cold and stagnant and so on. Such signs are unnoticeable in the depths below Gethamane, however. A character will only be able to notice that she is about to enter the shadowland if she has some means of seeing Essence flows, such as smoking bright morning or using All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight.

Dice Pool: (Perception + Occult), difficulty 5

Action: Reflexive

Hindrances: The player cannot attempt the roll if her character cannot see Essence flows.

Help: None

Roll Results

Botch: The strange Essence overwhelms the character's eyes, like staring directly at the sun. She suffers a -1 penalty to Awareness rolls for the rest of the scene.

Failure: The character does not notice anything wrong prior to entering the shadowland, and continues unaware.

Success: The character recognizes before entering that the circle is about to cross into a shadowland.



Combat

Iridescent Nightmare is a strong melee combatant as well as an accomplished necromancer. He knows he is less likely to slaughter the characters if he allows everyone to attack him at once, so he will try to separate them. He prefers to open with Field of Fell Dreams (**The Books of Sorcery, Vol. II—The Black Treatise**, p. 28) to help him control the battlefield and limit attacks made against him. After that, he uses his spear to excavate organs from bodies, saving his motes for a final necromancy blast if he needs the extra force in his attack. He is also unafraid of death, assured of his rise as a ghost (though, of course, he'd rather stay alive if given the choice), so he is willing to intentionally botch a necromancy spell in order to do as much damage as possible if he is assured he will lose.

If the Solars kill Iridescent Nightmare, Nightmare can shuck his body and rise as a ghost, unless his body is completely eradicated through use of the Zenith caste ability before his next action. Failing his destruction, Iridescent Nightmare becomes a ghost, but hides in his body long enough to activate the Arcanos Charm Pyre Smoke Form (see p. 7). Doing so allows him to become temporarily incorporeal, even when that would normally be impossible, such as in the Underworld. He flees into a secret passage (without opening the door) and hides while he formulates his next plan.

If he escapes, Iridescent Nightmare can return in "A Chance for Redemption."

HEARTHSTONES IN THE SHADOWLAND

Although Terrestrial hearthstones function properly in shadowlands, the geomancy of a shadowland is too different from that of Creation for any Celestial hearthstone to function, except during Calibration. The characters gain no benefits from Solar, Lunar or Sidereal hearthstones. This effect might prompt the characters to notice something is amiss if they use particularly noticeable hearthstones, such as the Gem of Perfect Mobility.

Searching the Room

After defeating Iridescent Nightmare, the characters might wish to search through his lair. They automatically succeed at finding his black jade dire lance (**Exalted**, p. 386) and perfect reinforced breastplate (+8L/7B soak, no fatigue or mobility penalties), as those are on his body.

Dice Pool: (Perception + Investigation), difficulty 4

Action: Dramatic

Hindrance: The character has Compassion 3 or greater and is disgusted by the bodies lining the walls (-1 external penalty).

Help: The character is already aware of the shadowland's presence (2 bonus dice)

Useful Charms: Any Investigation Excellency could be useful in discovering the false wall that hides the secret door.

Roll Results

Botch: Searching through the innards of a former scavenger, the character cuts her hand on a sharp surface. Although this abrasion does not deal damage, the character is exposed to leprosy and must roll to resist it (see **Exalted**, p. 350).

Failure: The character finds nothing of note under the sludge of human waste that paints the room.

Success: The character finds a secret door in the rear of the cavern. The door leads to a smaller side room with a makeshift bed and some food that tastes like charcoal. Iridescent Nightmare also kept a variety of papers littered with occult symbols here. There is a map of unrecognizable terrain with many locations marked off and a single area circled. Scribbled on the map are the words, "If not in Creation, search the Underworld and extrapolate. The avalanche couldn't have covered the dead altars. If the deathknight gets there first, the Shining One will be unstoppable." The room is attached to more tunnels that go farther down into the dark.

If the characters came during the day, the secret door leads only to rock, because the side room exists only in the Underworld. As it is just outside the shadowland, it is just a part of the mountain during the day.

Consequences

Failing to defeat Iridescent Nightmare likely means he has killed the entire circle. It's possible to work around this problem, using the circle as more means for Iridescent Nightmare to get through the traps of Granite Archetype's tomb, but this significantly changes the story, making this product more of a guideline.

More likely, the circle will defeat Iridescent Nightmare and begin a trek back to Gethamane, unaware of the fact that they entered a shadowland on the way to Nightmare's Haven. Leaving it will result in their being caught in the Underworld. Move to "Going Up."

Alternatively, the circle might continue to descend (using the tunnels in the secret room) to a path to the Labyrinth, the underground means of travel in the Underworld. Doing so leaves the scope of this SAS and is incredibly dangerous (see **The Book of Celestial Directions, Vol. IV—The Underworld**, p. 111). Allow characters who begin exploring the Labyrinth the chance to backpedal quickly. If the characters insist on delving into the twisting chaos of the Labyrinth, however, they can reemerge inside the tomb city of "The City of Altars."

If Iridescent Nightmare survives at all, either as a Ghost-Blood or a full ghost, he sneaks into the Labyrinth to escape. Mark off any remaining points of temporary Willpower he has, as well as several Virtue channels to represent the harrowing experiences he has there. He escapes to the Underworld where he waits for day so he can return to Gethamane and check the circle's progress. Depending on the characters' actions, he might meet up with them again in "A Chance for Redemption."





Going Up

MENTAL ••••

PHYSICAL •••••

SOCIAL –

Overview

The characters begin to make their way back to Gethamane, unaware that they have entered a shadowland. The path up is strangely unfamiliar to them, and signs of a struggle are evident. The circle travels for several hours longer than expected.

The circle emerges from the side of the mountain in the middle of a supernatural storm. A trail made from the remains of Iridescent Nightmare's victims highlights a path away from the safety of the mountain, but the storm threatens to eradicate it. The characters are forced to brave the hazards of the violent weather while following the trail, lest they forever lose the chance to investigate the path and discover what Iridescent Nightmare sought.

Description

Walking through the tunnel:

As you follow the path back, the tunnel seems somehow different, as though it shifted silently when you weren't paying attention. Occasional patches of dried blood on the wall or floor, chips in the stone, shards of weaponry—these are the only signs life has ever been here, forming a desperate trail up through the intestines of the mountain.

As the circle reaches the opening:

You should have come to the city long ago. Finally, the tunnel opens, revealing a vast field of ashen snow. Frozen blood cascades in a torrent from tumultuous clouds stretched across a pitch-black sky. The wind howls the last screaming prayers of dying warriors as it kicks debris, rocks and ash into your faces. A trail extends into the distance. It is a path ingrained by repetitive conflicts, but it is quickly being demolished by the screaming tempest. The footprints, blood and human remains that compose it are sinking deep below the ash tundra.

Storyteller Goals

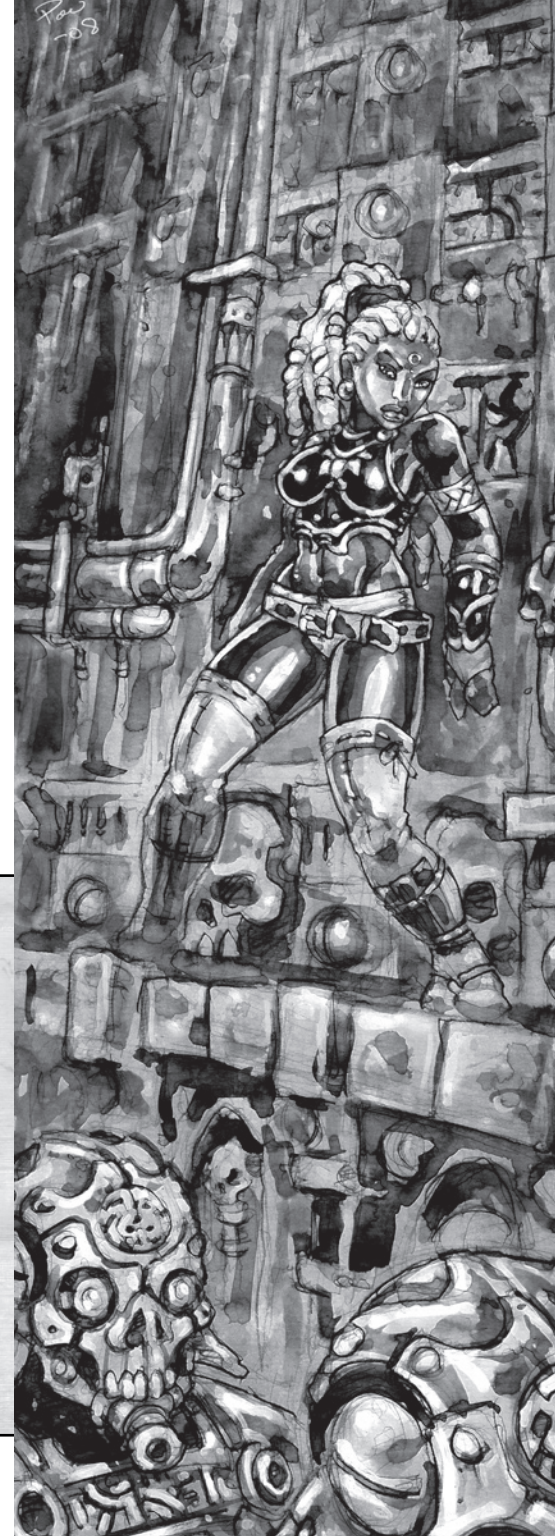
In the tunnels, you might want to use a slow reveal. Let the characters talk to each other. When they reach the opening, take care describing the landscape and the storm. Try to instill a sense of both awe and fear.

Also, keep in mind that this long walk is the closest to a rest the characters will have in a while. Remember to award them the motes their hearthstones allow. The exact number of hours that pass during the walk depends on how much you want to refuel them before their next set of challenges.

Once outside, the action can play out as a mad dash through a deadly storm or as a stoic endeavor against the erosion of the tempest, but it should feel stressful. It seems like the characters are acting of their own volition, but at this point, they are still being manipulated by the Silent Inquisitor. Put pressure on them now so they can feel all the more triumphant when they eventually defeat him.

HEARTHSTONES IN THE UNDERWORLD

Due to the difference in the geomancy, Terrestrial hearthstones regenerate motes at half their normal rate in the Underworld. Solar, Lunar and Sidereal stones cease to function entirely, allowing no mote regeneration and not offering any of their unique powers. This will occur until the characters leave the Underworld, so keep it in mind when awarding motes for time passing, such as marching through the storm.



Character Goals

Characters will likely initially wish to return to Gethamane to report Iridescent Nightmare's death. As the scene progresses, however, their concerns become surviving the storm, investigating the trail and finding a way to return to Creation.

Actions

Bearing the Storm

The characters have the option of either following the trail or seeking shelter from the storm in the mountain. If they follow the trail, they expose themselves to the fury of a supernatural storm. The effect of the storm requires a roll to determine what kind of damage they take as they are battered by blood hail, pyre flame lightning, and—quite literally—the screams of the wind.

Dice Pool: (Stamina + Resistance), difficulty 3

Action: Reflexive. The players must roll for every 15 minutes their characters are exposed.

Hindrances: Because this is an environmental hazard, Charms that perfectly dodge or parry attacks are inapplicable.

Help: A Twilight's anima ability can protect her from damage, even if the player botches the roll.

Useful Charms: Infinite Resistance Mastery allows the characters to continually use Excellencies without much mote cost. Element-Resisting Prana makes a character perfectly immune to the damage of the storm.

Roll Results

Botch: The character is struck directly with a blast of pyre flame. The character suffers three levels of aggravated damage while she scrapes it off. If she has a natural soak against aggravated damage, she may soak the damage to a minimum of one level.

Failure: The character takes three dice of aggravated damage from the storm's screaming winds, frozen blood hail and pyre flame lightning. This damage can be soaked by any natural aggravated soak to a minimum of one die.

Success: The character stands tall against the storm. She suffers three dice of lethal damage, and she can soak with her natural lethal soak.

Navigating the Trail

Dice Pool: (Perception + Survival), difficulty threshold of 2. This is an extended roll requiring a total of 15 successes beyond the difficulty threshold.

Action: Extended. Rolls occur every 15 minutes.

Hindrances: The storm is erasing all evidence of the trail (-2 external penalty).

Help: Only one individual needs to roll. The members of the circle can trade off who is leading.

OFF THE BEATEN PATH

The characters have been thrown into unusual circumstances, and it can be difficult to predict how they will react. This SAS assumes they will brave the storm and follow the trail left by Iridescent Nightmare, their only clue. Your characters, however, might decide to take other actions. You have several options for dealing with this.

First, you could initially opt to have a lightning bolt striking the cave entrance or have a variety of monsters to chase the characters forward. Doing so forces them into the scene as written, but could make the players feel like they have no control over the story. Although the *characters* are being manipulated, the *players* should always feel like they are in control.

Alternatively, you could allow the characters to wait out the storm and let them rely on Iridescent Nightmare's map to find the way. This tactic increases the difficulty of the (Perception + Survival) roll to 4, as the area has been significantly distorted since the time the map was made. It also negates the aid of Hardship-Surviving Mendicant Spirit, as the difficulty is not due to any ongoing environmental hazards. As the characters decipher the map, they are attacked by several packs of ghostly animals. Use traits of animals such as claw striders and strix in *Exalted*, pp. 346–350, except that they are susceptible to Holy attacks and deal aggravated damage. Also, allow them to automatically coordinate their attacks as they attempt to pick off a single target.

As a final solution, characters who wait until morning and return all the way to Merek Loshan can suffer one of two fates. Either Merek sends them back (possibly for higher pay) or, if they still refuse, they leave the scope of this SAS as the Silent Inquisitor uses the information they provided to find the Contagion of Law on his own. The Bishop of the Chalcedony Thurible uses it to vastly expand his death cult, possibly gaining complete control of the North, if not all of Creation. This outcome could be the turning point of an entire series.



Useful Charms: Having Infinite Survival Mastery allows the continued use of Survival Excellencies for no additional cost. Hardship-Surviving Mendicant Spirit removes the -2 external penalty of the storm. Trackless Region Navigation causes a character to automatically succeed at the roll; however, she gains only one threshold success.

Roll Results

Botch: The character has somehow led the circle backward along the path. She loses six from the cumulative successes.

Failure: The character is overcome by the storm and disoriented. She makes no progress and loses a number of successes from the cumulative pool equal to the difference between her successes and the difficulty threshold.

Success: The character ignores the storm and marches on triumphantly. Any successes she has beyond the difficulty threshold are added to her cumulative total. Once she reaches a total of 15 successes, she leads the circle to a magically warded city. There the circle can find sanctuary from the storm.

Consequences

The trail hewn in the snow is consumed as the characters come upon a massive wrought-iron gate in a wall that surrounds an empty city. The gate has been forced and then frozen open, so they can enter easily. The power of the mausoleum at the center of the city keeps the storm at bay. The trail leads straight to it. Move to “The City of Altars.”



The City of Altars

MENTAL ••••

PHYSICAL –

SOCIAL –

Overview

The circle enters an assembly of temples to various gods. There are so many temples that it appears to be a city. The characters have the opportunity to explore the area in depth as they follow Iridescent Nightmare's trail. Characters who take the time to explore might be able to identify the Colossus Sun Temple, which will help them determine their location. Following the trail leads the circle to the tomb of Granite Archetype.

Description

Entering the city:

As you approach the wrought-iron wall, you can see arcane runes etched firmly in the metal. The gate has been forced upon wide enough for two men. A sudden warmth envelops you as you enter, and you can see an ocean of buildings sprawled out before you. Above, you can see the storm rolling about and breaking upon an invisible dome that holds it at bay. There is clear geomantic power resonating at the heart of the city. Drops of blood and scraps of clothes litter the otherwise pristine road in that direction, beckoning you to follow.

While walking through the city:

The only sound that exists in the desolate city is the crunching of snow as you walk. The air, however, is filled with the smell of lavender and sandalwood. Each building you pass seems to center on an altar to an ancient god, and you occasionally find an implement of some ritual prayer lying in the street, having rested there for countless years. Despite this eerie emptiness, the city feels strangely welcoming.

Upon seeing the Colossus Sun Temple:

A large temple made of gold and stone adorns the city as its crown jewel. A graven image of the Unconquered Sun stands as a colossus. His four arms reach back and balance the archway to the massive temple on his shoulders. Twin stairways lead up his sides to the doorway. The statue's face has worn away and the detail in the temple's design has faded with time, but it has retained its full luster over the ages.

Upon approaching the central temple:

The trail of blood and struggle leads you to the center of the city. The mausoleum that rests there stands out for its simplicity. An inscription in Old Realm reads, "Here lies the Inspiration of Law, Granite Archetype, Father of Righteousness. Let none disturb his rest." The door is ajar. The smells of blood and flesh escape from within.

Storyteller Goals

Encourage a lengthy investigation of the city. Provide a sense of connection to the ancient city so the characters can form their own resolutions about how to act as the remainder of the story unfolds.

A VIEW OF THE PAST

You might wish to give a past-life vision to a Zenith in the circle, allowing him to remember his time as Granite Archetype, the Inspiration of Law. Alternatively, if no Zenith is in the circle, you could give another character a vision as Granite Archetype's advisor of financial, sorcerous or even military matters.

Granite Archetype ruled a small nation (small by First Age standards) in the North of Creation. His people were known for being inflexibly righteous. He abided no crime and inspired that same fervor in his subjects. He was aided in his efforts by the Contagion of Law, a crown of orichalcum ornamented over the brow with a perfect diamond, which had a green jade inlay at its edges.

The Inspirer died in the beginning of the Usurpation, his steadfastness inspiring several other Solars to stand their ground despite being severely outnumbered. In fact, an entire fang of enemy Dragon-Blooded turned to fight on the side of their former rulers. They were slaughtered along with the Solars and immediately passed to Lethe, but not a single one regretted the decision.

Well before his death, Granite Archetype had the City of Altars built at the base of the North's largest mountain. Yet, the City of Altars is actually a misnomer; it is really a vast and sprawling temple to hundreds of gods. The highlight of this construction was the Colossus Sun Temple, a grandiose temple resting on the shoulders of a massive statue of the Unconquered Sun. The city was designed as an eternal monument of prayer to the gods of the North. After his death, the few remaining Dragon-Blooded who knew of it laid Granite Archetype to rest there, but could not bring themselves to destroy the altars that surrounded him. Instead, they brought down a landslide and covered the city in snow from the mountain, presumably sealing it away forever. Yet they could not so easily seal away the city's Underworld reflection, where the dead kept up the reverence and rituals they had practiced so assiduously in life.

Provide details to help the characters relate: Among the deities worshiped are gods of harvest, scavenging, peace, law, order, stone, life and wind, as well as many others. Allow characters to find a censer in the snow or a ritual scepter by an altar. These are all grave goods, left behind by the ghosts of mortal priests who were buried within the city but who have since passed to Lethe, leaving these relics behind as they faded away. You can even offer the characters grave goods of talismans that will serve them in the upcoming scenes.

Character Goals

Explore the city and discover why it interested Iridescent Nightmare.

Actions

Recognizing the Prayer Funnel

In Creation, the City of Altars serves as one giant altar, functionally funneling prayer to Heaven. Evidence of this design is noticeable in the Underworld as well, in the structures and Essence lines that negotiate the flow of spiritual energy derived from the city's many temples and shrines. The Underworld city does not funnel Essence to Yu-Shan, however, and it is not clear where any derived Essence would go if the city were still populated by pious ghosts.

Dice Pool: (Perception + Craft: Magitech + Essence) or (Perception + Occult + Thaumaturgy: Geomancy + Essence), difficulty 5

Action: Reflexive. (The roll occurs over several minutes as the character walks through the city, and it is not necessary for the players to declare an action.)

Hindrances: A player cannot attempt the roll if her character is not trained in Craft: Magitech or Thaumaturgy: Geomancy.

Help: The character is actively using a method to directly perceive Essence (-2 difficulty).

Useful Charms: All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight allows the character to see Essence. The geomantic ritual Essence Sense has a similar effect.

Roll Results

Botch: The contorted Essence of the city interacts poorly with the character, giving her a severe headache. She takes a -2 internal penalty to all rolls for the remainder of the scene and in the next scene.

Failure: The character cannot determine the purpose of the city.

Success: The character realizes that the entire city is a funnel of prayer. It is designed to amplify prayers and send them toward Yu-Shan. The character is also aware that the Essence can't get to Yu-Shan because the city is in the Underworld.

Noticing the Lack of Residences

In Creation, the City of Altars only ever housed its servant priests, who lived on cots in the temples. The design of the Underworld city is similar. There are no residential districts, trade centers or bureaucratic buildings. Some temples might appear as parks or other attractions at first, but these missing buildings are noticeable to those attentive to such details.

Dice Pool: (Perception + Bureaucracy) or (Perception + Craft: Earth), difficulty 3

Action: Reflexive. (The roll occurs over several minutes as the character walks through the city, and it is not necessary for the players to declare an action.)

Hindrances: The character has a Motivation related to gathering wealth and treasure (-1 external penalty).

Help: The character's First Age incarnation helped design the city (+2 dice).

Useful Charms: Excellencies are useful to add dice or successes to the character's roll.

Roll Results

Botch: The character passes an altar she recognizes and receives a sudden flashback to a past life in which she pursued dealings with that god. She remembers this only as a fleeting dream, and the distraction causes a -2 internal penalty to all Perception, Intelligence and Wits-based rolls for the remainder of the scene.

Failure: The character does not take special note of the strange architecture and assumes it reflects the design of an average First Age city.

Success: The character notices the lack of residences and government buildings. She can rightfully assume the design is not typical for First Age cities, and could come to any conclusion she wishes based on that fact.



Recognizing the Colossus Sun Temple

The Colossus Sun Temple was the grandest of the temples in the City of Altars, and it became a symbol of the city. Characters who recognize its Underworld reflection might remember the legends associated with the City of Altars.

Dice Pool: (Intelligence + Lore), difficulty 4–6

Action: Reflexive. (The roll occurs upon characters approaching the Colossus Sun Temple, and it is not necessary for the players to declare an action.)

Hindrances: None

Help: The character has the Past Lives Merit (add the bonus dice from Past Lives—**Scroll of Heroes**, p. 61). The character has inherited the Exaltation of Granite Archetype (+Essence rating in bonus dice).

Roll Results

Botch: Seeing such an inspiring temple reflected in such a dull and dreary state stuns the character. She loses one channel of her highest Virtue. She cannot attempt again.

Failure: The character cannot place the grandiose temple in stories of old. She cannot attempt again.

Success: With four successes, the character recognizes the shape and grandeur of the Colossus Sun Temple, and remembers that it was a relatively famous temple in the First Age built by a Solar known for being very righteous. With six successes, the character realizes that Granite Archetype built the Colossus Sun Temple as the greatest among an entire city of temples. She is also aware that it was said to be lost shortly after the Usurpation.

Consequences

Having explored to their satisfaction, the characters enter the tomb of Granite Archetype. Move to “Righteous Descent.”

Righteous Descent

MENTAL ••

PHYSICAL ••••

SOCIAL –

Overview

The characters enter the mausoleum to find it has been terribly desecrated. The circle must pass three traps to reach the bottom, but Iridescent Nightmare has used his victims to disable two of them.

The first trap is a group of four animate statues that attack trespassers. Iridescent Nightmare has sealed them against the wall by piling the flesh of his victims too high for them to move. Next, the circle encounters a locked door that attacks those who try to force it open. Iridescent Nightmare disabled it by forcing his victims to absorb its blows while chiseling a hole through the door. Finally, the circle reaches the final trap: the Sentinel, a white jade warrior.

Description

When entering the mausoleum:

The stench of death is overwhelming as you enter the granite hall. The corpses of a hundred soldiers, mercenaries, mothers and children have been viciously crammed into every crevice in the room. They form four large piles, two against each wall. At the far end of the room is the only relief from the rot: a small altar to the Unconquered Sun with unlit incense, and a stairway leading deeper into the crypt.

The first time a character passes the altar without praying:

As your foot reaches the stairs, the grinding of stone on stone can be heard behind you. The four mounds of flesh pulsate and stretch until the noise simply stops. They shrink back into place as though nothing had happened. The rumbling shook loose an object that rolls to a stop at your feet. It is the head of a young woman frozen in her last moments, her eyes staring up at you vacantly.

When entering the second room:

Your entrance to the small chamber is heralded by the crunch of broken chisels, knives and hammers under your boots. The entire floor is covered in these relics of desperation. The back wall is a slab door sporting the hanging remains of an ornamental lock in the shape of a lion's head, but there is a jagged hole through the door's center large enough for one person to squeeze through at a time. Several emaciated or charred corpses are here, casually flicked against the walls. A few of them lack fingers, their hands ground to the bone.

When entering the Sentinel's room:

You squeeze your way into a long corridor, dimly lit by a trail of glowing Essence along the walls. The trail leads to an ornamental archway over a closed door. A warrior sits calmly before you, seeming to meditate, hazily unaware of the gallons of blood and shreds of flesh splattered in a circle around him. The blood stains the walls, the floor and even his milky white skin. As you enter, he rises gracefully from his position, twirling his halberd into a ready position. In a flash, he is upon you.

Storyteller Goals

Be careful to describe this area as fully as you can. Rooms very much like them will be visited again later when the characters find the true tomb of Granite Archetype in Creation. The first two rooms should be used to provide hints at the trials the circle will face later; the latter is the characters' chance to learn what tactics will be needed when they face the Sentinel again.

Character Goals

Defeat the trials and make it to the heart of the Underworld mausoleum.

Actions

Solving the Puzzles

The trials of the mausoleum are capable of being solved, but Iridescent Nightmare had neither the capability nor the patience to do so. Instead, his plan was to cram mortal after mortal into any space available to disrupt the manse's trials from functioning, though he failed to figure out how to get past the Sentinel before the circle stopped him. This effectively makes the first two trials obsolete, as most characters will merely take in the carnage while walking as far into the manse as possible before a trial stops them. There is nothing, however, that actually prevents the circle from spending hours undoing the mess Nightmare has made and challenging the first trap. (The second has been destroyed beyond repair.) For a solution to it, skip ahead briefly to "Arms of the Sun." The first trap is outlined there in full.

Investigate the Flesh Mounds

Dice Pool: (Intelligence + Investigation), difficulty 2

Action: Dramatic. The characters dig through the piles of bodies to discover what is underneath.

Hindrances: The character has a Compassion rating of 3 or higher (-1 internal penalty).

Help: Some of the cadavers have fallen due to Iridescent Nightmare's passing the altar without praying (+1 success).

Useful Charms: Use of an Investigation Excellency will almost guarantee success. Crafty Observation Method allows the character to complete the investigation in only a few moments.

Roll Results

Botch: The character reaches in firmly, but grabs a surprisingly sharp piece of stone, taking one level of lethal damage. As a bittersweet consolation, this gives one bonus success to all other characters.

Failure: The character firmly rips down several bodies, but fails to discover anything significant. He finds either more flesh or a portion of the mausoleum's granite wall.

Success: The character manages to clear away a small patch that uncovers one of the four weapons the statues bear: a lance, a horn, a shield or a laurel branch. The statues still remain thoroughly covered in muck, but about half of the weapon is visible.

Recognizing the Weapons

The characters concentrate on the weapons they have unearthed, thinking about the significance. The roll should be given only to characters whose players ask if they recognize the symbols in some fashion.

Dice Pool: (Intelligence + Lore), difficulty 2

Action: Dramatic

Hindrances: The character is loyal to the Immaculate Order (-1 external penalty). Fewer than two of the statues are uncovered (the roll cannot be attempted).

Help: The circle has cleaned away three or more of the statues (-1 difficulty).

Useful Charms: Any Lore Excellency will almost guarantee success.

Roll Results

Botch: The character realizes that the statues have something to do with the holiness of the city, but believes the statues to be somewhat blasphemous, perhaps crafted in irony.

Failure: The character is confused by the odd accouterments that the statues hold, failing to recognize any kind of correlation between them.

Success: The character realizes that each statue holds an accouterment typically held in the arm of the Unconquered Sun.

Removing the Bodies

The characters might decide to remove the bodies and cleanse the place. This will take several hours, or several minutes if a Zenith uses his caste ability (costing him at least three dozen motes). Yet, doing so frees the trapped statues and allows the trap to activate—reference “Arms of the Sun” (p. 38) for more details. Note that even in the Underworld, the Arms of the Sun statues are a part of the manse (not grave goods), and do not suffer any additional weaknesses.

Combat with the Sentinel

Combating the Sentinel is difficult, not only for its sheer physical strength, but also because it calls for Join Battle the moment the first individual enters the room. A diceless, miscellaneous action is needed to squeeze through the hole, and only one person can fit at a time, so the Sentinel can isolate whoever enters first. Additionally, the door cannot be passed through by Charms such as Door Evading Technique (**Exalted**, p. 229). This gives the Sentinel an immediate advantage. It attacks quickly and devastatingly. This should be a difficult fight if the characters cannot exploit the Sentinel's weaknesses. **The character sheet for the grave good Sentinel is on p. 56.**

WHAT IS THE SENTINEL?

The Sentinel is an artifact automaton, designed to guard the nearby temple to the Unconquered Sun. When Granite Archetype died, the Sentinel was moved to the bottom of his crypt, to protect its master from grave robbers for all eternity. What the characters currently face is the grave-goods version of the Sentinel, while the true Sentinel remains dormant in Creation. This provides a few advantages to the circle. As a grave good, the Sentinel suffers aggravated damage from Holy attacks, against which it has no soak. In addition, any Charm such as Solar Flare Methodology (**Dreams of the First Age: Book Two—Lords of Creation**, p. 60) that invokes true sunlight (more than a Solar anima) instantly destroys the Sentinel (and any other grave good in the vicinity). Finally, it is susceptible to the Zenith caste ability.

Consequences

After exploring the mausoleum and defeating the Sentinel, the circle opens the grand door at the end of the Sentinel's chamber. Move to “Relic of Kings.”

Relic of Kings

Actions

MENTAL ••••

PHYSICAL –

SOCIAL ••••

Overview

The circle enters an ornate room holding a black replica of Granite Archetype's coffin. Several grave goods are arrayed in display around the room. The characters might wish to examine these artifacts, including the Contagion of Hate (the grave-goods version of the Contagion of Law).

The characters can take and attune any items they desire. If any character touches the Contagion of Hate, however, it discharges a blast of pent-up energy. This is an activation of its power, possibly inflicting a member of the circle with a contagious negative Intimacy toward his compatriots.

Description

Despite the chill that pervades the rest of the tomb, every surface in this, the heart of the mausoleum, is warm to the touch. A black coffin lies across the center of the room, a small plume of smoke and the sweet scent of incense burning softly in its center. Attached to the lid is a grand daiklave of milky orichalcum. Other grave good artifacts are arranged decoratively hanging on the wall. The centerpiece is a magnificent crown of orichalcum. Its three points radiate a somber force, but its metal is pallid, its gemstone midnight black.

Storyteller Goals

Try to hint to the characters that there is still a larger mystery going on. Ideally, the characters will realize on their own that the true artifacts exist in Creation, just waiting for someone to take them. (If they don't, Shakan or Iridescent Nightmare can explain it later.) Look to instill a sense of lingering adventure when describing the scene and the items.

Character Goals

Examine the grave goods of Granite Archetype and make use of the information.

Recognize the Grave Goods

The characters attempt to determine the nature of the strange, dim artifacts. They contemplate the differences between these artifacts and their own to determine why these artifacts are unusual.

Dice Pool: (Intelligence + Occult), difficulty 2 or 4

Action: Dramatic

Hindrances: A character raised as a Realm dynast or in similar culture (-1 external penalty).

Help: A character who has significant experience with the dead or funeral rites (+2 successes).

Useful Charms: The most effective Charm would be an Occult Excellency to gain extra dice or extra successes.

Roll Results

Botch: The character mistakenly believes the grave goods are soul-steel artifacts.

Failure: The character does not know what the grave goods are, and is aware that he does not know what is wrong with these artifacts.

Success: A character whose player succeeds at a difficulty 2 roll realizes that grave goods are Underworld reflections of items buried



with the deceased to help them in the afterlife, and that these are probably such items. He does not, however, realize what this entails. A character who succeeds at a difficulty 4 roll also knows that these artifacts are dimmer echoes of artifacts that either currently exist or once did within Creation. He understands that their powers might have become warped by their new nature, and that they will be destroyed by Creation's sun.

Examine the Artifacts

The characters begin analyzing the artifacts to discover what they are capable of. Doing so requires handling them firmly as the characters examine them. There are grave-goods versions of a grand daiklave, god-kicking boots, a band of faith, orichalcum hearthstone bracers, an orichalcum reinforced breastplate and the Contagion of Law. Each item requires a separate roll as an individual action. **For a fully detailed description of these artifacts, see the cards on pp. 47-50.**

Dice Pool: (Intelligence + Lore), difficulty 2–8

Action: Dramatic

Hindrances: A character who fails to realize these items are grave goods can only confuse an artifact for its Creation-born relative. The first character who touches the Contagion of Hate suffers an attack as listed under “Resist Infection.”

Help: The character inherited Granite Archetype's Exaltation (+Essence rating dice). The character commits an artifact (+2 successes to identifying it). The character consulted Iridescent Nightmare's notes in “The Stagnant Den” (+2 dice).

Useful Charms: All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight allows a character to instantly realize that all the grave goods are artifacts of some kind. The player may additionally roll (Intelligence + Occult) at a difficulty of 2 to determine each item's Artifact rating.

Roll Results

Botch: The character fails to identify any characteristics of the item other than the obvious (such as the fact that the grand daiklave is a weapon) and is too frustrated to make further attempts. The character cannot attempt again at all (instead of the usual cumulative external -1 penalty when re-attempting a roll).

Failure: The character is incapable of identifying any characteristics of the item other than the obvious.

Success: Succeeding at a difficulty of 2 allows the character to know the general characteristics of an item. He knows if it has more powers than are standard and can identify its general purpose.

Succeeding at a difficulty of 5 (3 for the band of faith and hearthstone bracers) allows him to know vague information about every power the item has. He may understand, for instance, that Stoic Voice can aid him in social and physical combat against creatures of the Wyld. If studying Zealotry of Gold, he will realize that in addition to being armor, it reinforces the tenacity of his troops.

Succeeding at a difficulty of 6 (4 for the band of faith and hearthstone bracers) means the character has additionally heard of the legends of the original artifact, whose grave-goods version he is examining, prior to its being buried. For unique items, he knows the name its original holds in Creation. In addition, he fully understands the capabilities of the grave goods item. He knows exactly how viciously Stoic Voice sears the flesh of its victims or how many motes are needed to activate the Contagion of Hate. Read the grave good's full description for the character.

Finally, succeeding at a difficulty of 8 (5 for the band of faith and hearthstone bracers; 6 for the god-kicking boots) indicates the character is knowledgeable beyond all expectations. Not only has the character heard a scholarly reference to the grave good artifact by its new name, but he knows exactly what the grave good artifacts can do, and even how the originals functioned in Creation. Read both the Creation and Underworld versions of the artifact to the player, being certain to note the differences.

Resist Infection

The Contagion of Hate's manifestation in the Underworld captured and warped within itself some of Granite Archetype's righteous fury at being betrayed and murdered. The artifact unleashes that anger when it is first touched by a living being.

Dice Pool: None. The character resists with his Dodge MDV against a difficulty of 6.

Action: Reflexive

Hindrances: The initial infection is an unexpected social attack, reducing the character's Dodge MDV to 0 before applying any Charms.

Help: None

Useful Charms: Temptation-Resisting Stance allows a character to add his Temperance score to his MDV against the attack. Elusive

Dream Defense perfectly defends against the attack. If the character fails to defend himself, Spirit-Maintaining Maneuver will allow him to shake away the effect at a reduced Willpower cost. If already active, Immunity to Everything Technique perfectly protects the character.

Results

Botch: It is impossible to botch.

Failure: The character may immediately spend four Willpower points. If he does not, he is infected with a contagious negative Intimacy toward his traveling companions (not necessarily limited to those in his circle). He may lose this Intimacy normally, but until he does,



anyone who physically touches him becomes exposed to the contagious Intimacy and must resist the infection in the same manner, with the exception that it is no longer considered an unexpected attack. It is entirely possible for the characters to continually re-infect each other in this fashion. If the contagious Intimacy travels beyond the circle itself, it is important to note that every infected individual forms a negative Intimacy toward his own companions. This will override any positive Intimacy he has toward them already.

Success: The character remains uninfected. His Intimacies do not change, and the Contagion of Hate's attack is expended.

Consequences

Armed with knowledge and possibly with new treasures, the characters begin their trip back to Gethamane. The return trek will be relatively uneventful. The mountain can be seen from the City of Altars, and the opening to the caves is easy to find now that the characters know the way and the storm has ceased.

What happens next depends on the characters' actions. The Silent Inquisitor of Wayward Souls is waiting for the characters to return from their fight with Iridescent Nightmare. When they return to Iridescent Nightmare's shadowland haven and reemerge from the tunnels in Gethamane, the guards will alert the Silent Inquisitor of their success. The characters may opt to return to the Silent Inquisitor (who is still undercover as Merek Loshan) to report on the mission and receive payment. In that case, move to "Report." If they instead leave the city and travel to the location in Creation of Granite Archetype's tomb on their own, the Silent Inquisitor will track them down through liberal use of Stealth and Investigation Charms, allowing them to lead him to the treasure. In that case, move to "Treasure Hunters."



Report

MENTAL ...

PHYSICAL –

SOCIAL ...

Overview

The characters report to Merek Loshan to inform him of their defeat of Iridescent Nightmare. The Silent Inquisitor, posing as Loshan, wants a very thorough report—thorough enough to allow him to find the real City of Altars in Creation. He presses for every detail he can get. He might even offer to reward the circle for additional information. Once he is satisfied, the Silent Inquisitor sends the circle on its way and seeks out the Contagion of Law on his own.

Description

When you are brought into Loshan's office, he laughs loudly. "I didn't believe it until I saw it!" he says with a grin. Sitting with his feet on his desk, he waves his fingers at one of his men, who promptly offers each of you a tankard of a fermented gray liquid with moss floating on top. He takes several large swigs from his own monogrammed tankard, and with a satisfied smile asks, "So what did you find?"

Storyteller Goals

The Silent Inquisitor is trying to get as much information as possible without seeming like he is digging. He knows the characters have likely found clues to the Contagion of Law's whereabouts during their excursion. "Yeah... wait, what?" is a good way to revisit events to get more specific details. If the circle mentions the map, ask to see it, or claim it is property of the Guard.

Also, try to hint that something sinister is going on beneath the surface, but don't be blatant about it. Be just a little too pushy once or twice, or let the Silent Inquisitor's excitement shine through for a moment when he sees Iridescent Nightmare's map. When the story comes to a climax, you may have players saying, "I knew we shouldn't have trusted him!"

Character Goals

Report to Merek Loshan and arrange to receive payment. They might also wish to renegotiate their pay based on the hazards of the journey.

Actions

Renegotiating

This is a standard social combat. Loshan's opening offer is the agreed-upon terms from before. He acts less patient this time around, genuinely annoyed that the circle is trying to change the deal. He needs the information, though, so he'll reluctantly acquiesce to the circle as long as he can make the show convincing. He can't watch the characters spend motes—since he hadn't prepared for their unexpected return by smoking his bright morning—but he still tries to predict it based on their previous meeting. He focuses on portraying Loshan as pissed off and tries to end the scene quickly, while not giving away that it's rushed.

The Silent Inquisitor particularly wants to get his hands on the map and notes found in Iridescent Nightmare's shadowland haven (see "The Stagnant Den"). He had assumed that they were there somewhere since Nightmare had originally stolen most of them from him. The Silent Inquisitor is willing to accept a higher price for them (not that he intends to pay it), as he claims that Gethamane could probably make use of them. In reality, the map will help him find the true City of Altars and the Contagion of Law.

Recalling the Location

If the characters are not willing to hand over the notes—specifically the map—or if they refuse to mention them, the deathknight asks about the city. He has an excuse to do so only if they include the city in their report, of course. He claims he wants to send scouts to search for it so it can be properly excavated.

Dice Pool: (Intelligence + Survival), difficulty 4

Action: Dramatic

Help: None

Hindrance: None

Useful Charms: As always, any Excellency Charm is exceedingly useful. Trackless Region Navigation, aided by a stunt, can allow a character to instantly succeed.

Roll Results

Botch: The character, attempting to convey the location, comes off as completely moronic. Not only does he fail to give the location properly, but he also looks like such an idiot that Loshan is at a loss for words.



Loshan takes back the fermented fungus (which tasted bad anyway), and also docks the character's pay. The latter can be fixed through a successful social combat, but the former will not be returned.

Failure: The character either can't recall the location or can't convey it properly.

Success: The character manages to convey the direction of the city in quantitative terms. He gives an estimated distance and direction, allowing the Silent Inquisitor to find it on his own, even without the map or notes.

Consequences

Once he is satisfied, the Silent Inquisitor sets up the characters' payment and sends them on their way. Or, at least he claims to set up their pay. He gives the Solars just enough access to the Dole to keep them satisfied until he can get the Contagion of Law and escape. He has gotten what he wants and no longer needs the identity of Merek Loshan, though he will keep the identity if the circle simply leaves or otherwise makes it particularly easy to do so.

The Silent Inquisitor then quickly leaves to seek out the City of Altars. If the characters decide they wish to go to the City of Altars as well, they will beat Silent Inquisitor there, so move to "Treasure Hunters."

If the circle spends further time in Gethamane or attempts to leave the city with the intention of going elsewhere, move to "A Chance for Redemption," which lets them know the job is not yet done. Note that although "A Chance for Redemption" assumes that the Silent Inquisitor has already traveled to the City of Altars on his own, he is forced to follow them if the characters did not give him the information he needs to find it.



A Chance for Redemption

MENTAL –

PHYSICAL ••

SOCIAL ••

Overview

In the evening after their meeting with Merek Loshan, the characters are approached by Iridescent Nightmare (or, more likely, his ghost). “Are you fools?” he asks, “or did you intentionally doom my city?” He tells the characters the story of Granite Archetype (see “The City of Altars”) and claims that he has been sacrificing individuals for the greater good. He explains that the Contagion of Law can create a contagious ideal, and that he was working to find it before the Silent Inquisitor of Wayward Souls—a deathknight in the service of someone called the Shining One—could acquire it. He hypothesizes that the Silent Inquisitor must have infiltrated the Guard and sent the circle to deal with him (Nightmare). Worse, the Silent Inquisitor likely has already left to retrieve the Contagion of Law. Nightmare tells the circle that the only option now is to chase the Silent Inquisitor down and slay him, a task far beyond his scope, but perhaps not beyond the capabilities of the circle.

Although it is likely Iridescent Nightmare exists now as a ghost, it is possible that the circle killed him permanently. Even without Nightmare, this scene can still occur. Shakan, the Head Intelligencer to Mistress Katrin, has several spies among the Guard, and he has been watching the situation unfold for some time. He noticed that Merek Loshan had begun to act strangely, but once he figured out what was occurring, he knew that he did not have the might to stand up to a powerful Exalt. He allowed Iridescent Nightmare to continue distracting the deathknight while he tried to formulate a more reasonable plan. Now that the circle has arrived, he finds himself forced to action. He is more than willing to align himself with the circle if it will keep Gethamane safe and put an end to this madness.

If Nightmare did survive, however, Shakan’s agents notice Nightmare just prior to Shakan revealing himself, so he remains in the dark regarding what unfolds.

Description

With a chorus of hushed gasps, the crowd parts as a cloaked figure steps forward, seeming to float gracefully across the ground. The man pushes

back his hood to reveal a familiar face—it is Iridescent Nightmare, a pale reflection of his mortal self. His bearing is weaker than it was before, but he still wears an indignant expression.

Storyteller Goals

The characters have either missed or not pieced together some important information earlier, so they need a little help. Allow Iridescent Nightmare (or Shakan) to spell everything out and push the circle toward the climax of the story.

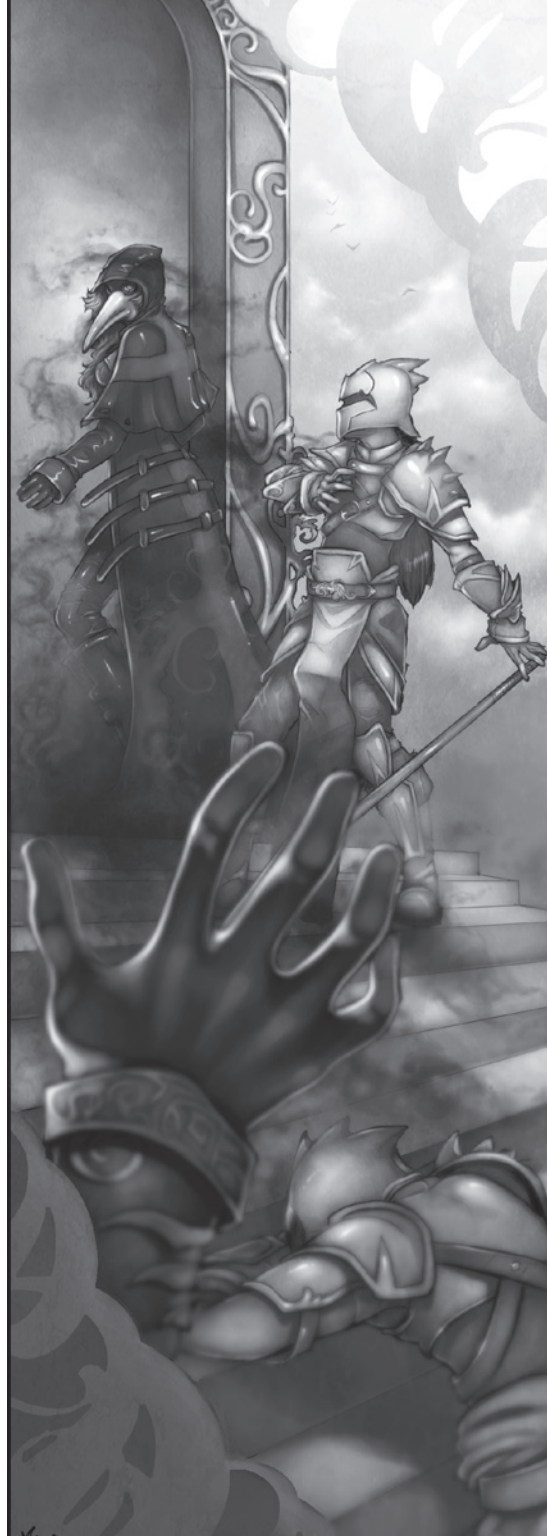
Character Goals

Determine what Iridescent Nightmare wants. Kill him again if he agitates the circle.

Actions

Dealing with Iridescent Nightmare or Shakan

Both Iridescent Nightmare and Shakan are capable of explaining the majority of what has been going on around Gethamane. Assuming the circle does not attack Iridescent Nightmare immediately, he explains all of his involvement and theorizes about the Silent Inquisitor having infiltrated the Guard in some way. Shakan acts similarly; however, he can identify that Merek Loshan is the one most likely compromised.



For the most part, this scene can be roleplayed without rolling any dice. Both Iridescent Nightmare and Shakan are a little indignant—they feel the Solars messed things up. Although Shakan had not been able to do much, things were better with even a hundred Gethamane citizens dying than with the Silent Inquisitor indoctrinating everyone in Gethamane into a suicide cult. Iridescent Nightmare feels as though his plan was working just fine until the Solars decided to play righteous exterminators.

Of the two, Shakan is more respectful—the characters never killed *him*. Shakan also realizes the difference in power between himself and the Exalts and is able to control himself, whereas Iridescent Nightmare allows his anger to get the better of him if the circle verbally or physically antagonizes him. Both are willing to accompany the circle to the City of Altars, but insist that the circle do most of the work. Shakan is willing to loan the characters horses if they prefer to ride.

As a side note, if Iridescent Nightmare was allowed to live, he is still alive here, and will likely survive as a mortal through the remainder of the story.

Keeping the Dead Dead

The characters might decide to destroy Iridescent Nightmare again. In that case, run combat as normal. Choose a few basic Arcanos Charms for Iridescent Nightmare to have, but he should be a pushover. After all, the circle has taken his weapon and armor, and at best, he could have equipped himself with mortal accouterments. He should have Pyre Smoke Form to let him become immaterial and flee, but it is a simple action to activate it and it lasts only a few actions. If the circle does not let him escape (through Charms such as Spirit-Detecting Glance, **Exalted**, p. 221) within two or three actions, he should reappear physically or activate the Charm again. While immaterial he can't attack the circle, but he can be attacked with Spirit-Cutting Attack (**Exalted**, p. 221) or any other effect that allows attacks against the immaterial.

Even if he is killed, however, he could become a returning antagonist, as he will re-form unless he is killed permanently through the use of Ghost-Eating Technique (**Exalted**, p. 221). If he is destroyed, you might need to return to this scene a few hours later using Shakan, who tracks the circle down when he realizes he must reveal himself to put the circle on the right track.

Consequences

The characters leave for the City of Altars, this time aiming to discover the true city, buried somewhere deep under the snow. Iridescent Nightmare can be convinced to strike out with them. Shakan is willing to bring a small cadre of superlative fighters. Any accompaniment is ultimately irrelevant, however, as the characters will enter the mausoleum alone. Move to “Treasure Hunters.”



Treasure Hunters

MENTAL ...

PHYSICAL ...

SOCIAL ..

Overview

The characters begin their trek to the City of Altars. They head out the North Gate and tread a path along the mountain. It is not as perilous as the underways, but the mountainside is not without danger. The scene includes a few vignettes that can occur as the characters travel.

Description

The air is frigid, but it feels crisp compared to the stagnancy of the Underworld. The biting wind breaks its fangs upon you. The snow tries to freeze you, but it is simply refreshing. The stars silently sing of your glory. The end of this journey is nearing.

Storyteller Goals

Give the characters a sense of their own superiority and pump them up before the final confrontation. Use the vignettes to your advantage. Use as many as you need to highlight the power of the characters, but don't let the pace drop. If you want to keep the pressure on, though, the vignettes can be used as consequences to failed rolls. Forcing your characters to suffer through the vignettes when they already feel like they are losing ground will add extra angst to the scene.

Character Goals

Plot a course to the true City of Altars and get there quickly.

Actions

Find the City

Dice Pool: (Intelligence + Survival), difficulty 4

Action: Dramatic. The characters must extrapolate from their knowledge of the Underworld city's location to discover where the true city lies in Creation. Only the character leading the group needs to make the roll.

Hindrances: The character is tracking at night (-2 internal penalty).

Help: The character has a way to see into the Underworld (+1 success).

Useful Charms: Trackless Region Navigation allows the character to automatically succeed at the roll. If the characters are following the Silent Inquisitor, Unshakeable Bloodhound Technique can be used for the same effect.

Roll Results

Botch: The character accidentally causes an avalanche—see the “Avalanche” vignette. Additionally, it pushes and disorients the characters. They take a -2 internal penalty on their next Survival roll, and must complete at least one more vignette before being permitted to try again.

Failure: The characters fail to find their way, but do not significantly impede their advance. They may try again without any penalties after completing at least one vignette. If they fail several times, the Storyteller may rule that the Silent Inquisitor finds the city first, even if he is following the circle. Perhaps he not only finds the city, but has time to acquire the Contagion of Law and flee. This outcome leaves the scope of this SAS and could become a major series. The characters might be able to track him down before he returns to the Cult of the Shining One, or they could be forced to challenge the Deathlord head on and wrest the Contagion of Law away from him.

Success: The characters successfully find a route to the secret location of the City of Altars.

Vignettes

These challenges are designed to be mildly intimidating, and are a good opportunity to allow characters to recover motes and temporary Willpower points via stunts. If Iridescent Nightmare or Shakan accompanies the circle, assume they both survive, though they might become injured and any men traveling with Shakan might fall. As a general rule, if a character has earned a name, he should survive. Killing the characters' new allies will only make them feel less successful. These mini-scenes do not need to occur in any particular order.

Avalanche

The characters pull a loose branch or make a loud noise that causes a massive avalanche. It attacks with six successes to hit, but it cannot be parried and can be dodged only if the character can move 20 or more yards in a single tick (such as with Monkey Leap Technique). Charms such as Seven Shadow Evasion and Heavenly Guardian Technique perfectly defend against it, though any use of such Charms with the Valor flaw of invulnerability fails. A successful hit deals 10 dice

of lethal, piercing damage, and the character becomes buried in the snow. It requires a (Strength + Athletics) roll, difficulty 3 to dig out of the snow as a minute-long dramatic action, but there is no penalty for retrying on a failure. Characters who have already escaped may aid their allies at a -1 external penalty. Failure to escape the snow leaves the character subject to one unsoakable die of bashing damage each action as pressure and cold conspire to finish him off.

Beastmen

A dozen wild wolfmen (**Exalted**, p. 282) appear over a ridge and descend upon the circle. Their goal is to kill the circle, eat their flesh and take anything useful. Their leader is exceptionally large from additional mutations; add two dots to each of his Physical Attributes and four -2 health levels. The barbarians will scatter and flee if eight of them or their leader is defeated.

Hungry Ghosts

The characters approach a patch of disturbed ground. The sky is blackened and the nearby trees are bare. They are able to discern that it is a shadowland and choose not to enter it. They can skirt around its border, but five hungry ghosts (**Exalted**, p. 317) emerge from the shadowland and attack. This incident is not without benefit: The circle can use the Underworld geography currently visible in the shadowland as a landmark, adding +1 success to any further Survival rolls.



Ravine

The circle comes to a large ravine that did not exist in the Underworld. The chasm stretches 12 yards across. Any character with a (Strength + Athletics) total of six or more can leap across. Characters on horseback must make a Ride roll (using an appropriate Attribute) and score two or more successes to spur the steed across. You should also allow creative means of crossing, such as knocking over trees. Characters who fall into the ravine suffer 10 lethal, piercing levels of damage. Climbing back out requires a (Dexterity + Athletics) roll, difficulty 2.

Wind Herder

The characters are impeded by severe winds, cutting their movement in half and imposing a -1 external penalty on all physical rolls. The source is a 13-foot-tall bear with white fur, blowing icy breath and snapping its jaws at the wind. A successful (Intelligence + Occult) roll, difficulty 3, identifies the creature as an air elemental, specifically a huraka (**Exalted**, p. 304).

The elemental claims the wind has misbehaved and he is moving it back into a valley through which it is supposed to be running. He can be negotiated with, and is willing to accept prayer for his Wind Master in exchange for allowing the wandering wind to continue for a few hours until the characters have found their destination. If the characters agree, the huraka aids them, adding one die to all physical rolls for the remainder of the scene. If they do not strike a deal of any kind, they can continue to struggle with the penalties. If the characters strike a bargain and do not keep their word, it could make an enemy of the Wind Master in subsequent stories, including being cursed by the wind, actively receiving damage or dice penalties when in open air.

Consequences

The characters arrive at the true City of Altars. Move to “Beneath the Snow.”

Beneath the Snow

MENTAL ...

PHYSICAL

SOCIAL ..

Overview

The characters' search reveals the location of the City of Altars. Depending on whether or not they reported to Merek Loshan, the Silent Inquisitor has either beaten them here or is following just out of sight.

If the circle is leading the Silent Inquisitor, the city is covered in snow from an ancient avalanche. The characters must use whatever they can find to clear away the snow and rock before they can enter Granite Archetype's tomb.

If the Silent Inquisitor reached the city first, he has had time to enlist some help in entering. Five mortwights and a cadre of zombies helped him dig down to the central tomb. As the characters arrive, they find the mortwights have dispatched the zombies. The fiends then attack the circle.

Description

If the circle has arrived first:

Finally you arrive at your destination. Instead of a glorious array of temples, you find only mounds of ice and snow, which crunch beneath your feet with each step. An auspicious wind blows down from the mountain, shifting a mound of snow before you. A small portion of a golden temple glitters from a newly made hole in the snow.

If the Silent Inquisitor has arrived first:

As you reach your destination, you find it desecrated. Ice and rock have been torn away, and the City of Altars is visible. The door to Granite Archetype's tomb has been thrown open. The once-pristine temple city is covered in the writhing remnants of dozens of cadavers, dismembered and scattered around the ravine. Five lanky shadow-like figures sit sucking marrow from the bones of the corpses. Seeing the circle, they rise, clawed hands and fanged smiles glittering in the sunlight.

Storyteller Goals

The characters know that the end of their adventure lies inside Granite Archetype's tomb, so use this as another opportunity to psych them up. This can also be a chance for them to regain motes and Willpower points through the use of stunts, refreshing them for the last leg of their adventure.

Character Goals

Enter Granite Archetype's tomb.

Actions

Unearth the City

The characters find the City of Altars buried beneath snow and stone. They must dig a path any way they can.

Dice Pool: (Strength + Athletics), difficulty 1. The combined successes of the circle must reach 25.

Action: Dramatic

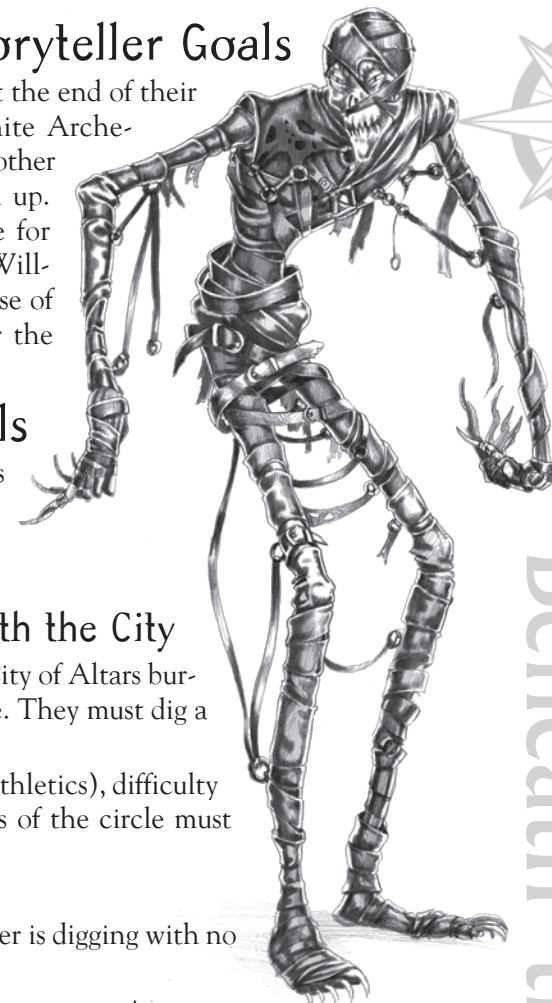
Hindrances: The character is digging with no tools (-1 internal penalty).

Help: Characters who use an appropriate stunt, Charm or spell may substitute any other applicable roll.

Useful Charms: Increasing Strength Exercise increases the character's Strength score for the scene.

Roll Results

Botch: The character removes a chunk of stone. Moments later, rumbling echoes around the circle, and the removed snow tumbles back onto the characters in an avalanche. The snow attacks with eight successes (cannot be parried) and deals 10 dice of lethal damage. It also cancels any successes garnered by the rest of the group.





Failure: The character's efforts are not significant enough to aid the circle in removing the snow. If the circle's total does not reach 25, the ice caves back in. There is enough warning to get out of the way without risking harm, but the characters must start over.

Success: The characters improvise successfully, removing enough snow to make a path to Granite Archetype's tomb.

Combating the Mortwights

This is a standard combat. The mortwights will not stop fighting until they are all defeated or they slake their thirst with the blood of the circle. If Iridescent Nightmare has accompanied the circle, he will fight to the best of his ability. If Shakan and his men are present, the men encircle their leader and fight defensively.

Mortwights are far more vicious than they are intelligent. They will fight aggressively, not tactically, and they might turn on each other over their victims if coaxed to do so. Additionally, they taxed themselves slaughtering the zombies, so none starts with more than 15 motes.

Consequences

The characters open the mausoleum and enter. If Shakan or Iridescent Nightmare accompanies the circle, he waits outside. Shakan wishes to return to the city and report to Mistress Katrin, while Iridescent Nightmare feels he is better suited keeping watch than entering a direct confrontation with the Silent Inquisitor. Move to "Arms of the Sun."

Arms of the Sun

MENTAL ••

PHYSICAL •••

SOCIAL ••

Overview

The characters begin their descent into the crypt. This time, the altar room has four statues embedded in the wall. Each holds one of the four accouterments commonly depicted in the hands of the Unconquered Sun: a laurel branch, a horn, a shield and a lance. If any character sets foot on the stairs to the next room before lighting incense at the altar and saying a prayer to the Unconquered Sun, the statues come to life and attack the transgressors.

Description

Upon entering:

The entrance chamber is almost eerily spotless. Four golden statues of a powerful male figure stand where there had only been mortal pulp in the Underworld's City of Altars. Each holds a different tool: a laurel branch, a horn, a spear and a shield. At the far end of the room sits the same quiet altar before the stairs down, unaware of the hell its Underworld shadow has seen.

When the statues activate:

With an ominous rumble, the statues come to life. They slowly step out of their alcoves, small pieces of the wall crumbling down their back and dusting the floor. They turn to face you slowly and deliberately. They lack any hint of compassion or fear.

Storyteller Goals

Play up the similarities between the current tomb and the Underworld echo the characters visited earlier, so as to enhance the characters' victory when they finally defeat the Silent Inquisitor.

Regardless of whether the characters decide to beat their way through the manse or solve the puzzles, draw it out a little, but don't let the sense of urgency drop. This, too, will give a bigger payoff during the finale.

Character Goals

Best the trials of Granite Archetype's tomb and make it to the bottom room.

Actions

Recognizing the Weapons

Dice Pool: (Intelligence + Lore), difficulty 1

Action: Reflexive. The characters notice the weapons in the hands of each statue and attempt to recall their significance (if they haven't already done so in a previous scene).

Hindrances: The character is loyal to the Immaculate Order (-1 external penalty).

Help: Anyone who made the roll to recognize the weapons in "Righteous Descent" automatically succeeds.

Useful Charms: Excellencies are helpful, but no Charms should be necessary.

Roll Results

Botch: The character mistakenly believes the statues signify several gods significant to the city. This likely causes him to offer an incorrect prayer, if he stops to pray at all.

Failure: The character is confused by the odd smattering of accouterments that the statues hold, failing to recognize any kind of correlation between them.

Success: The character realizes that each statue holds an object typically held in one arm of the Unconquered Sun.

Offering Prayer

Granite Archetype refused to allow unworthy prayers to reach the Unconquered Sun's coffers, and this altar will reinforce that behavior. Prayers that are unworthy are not tolerated by the manse's defenses.

Dice Pool: (Charisma + Performance), difficulty 4

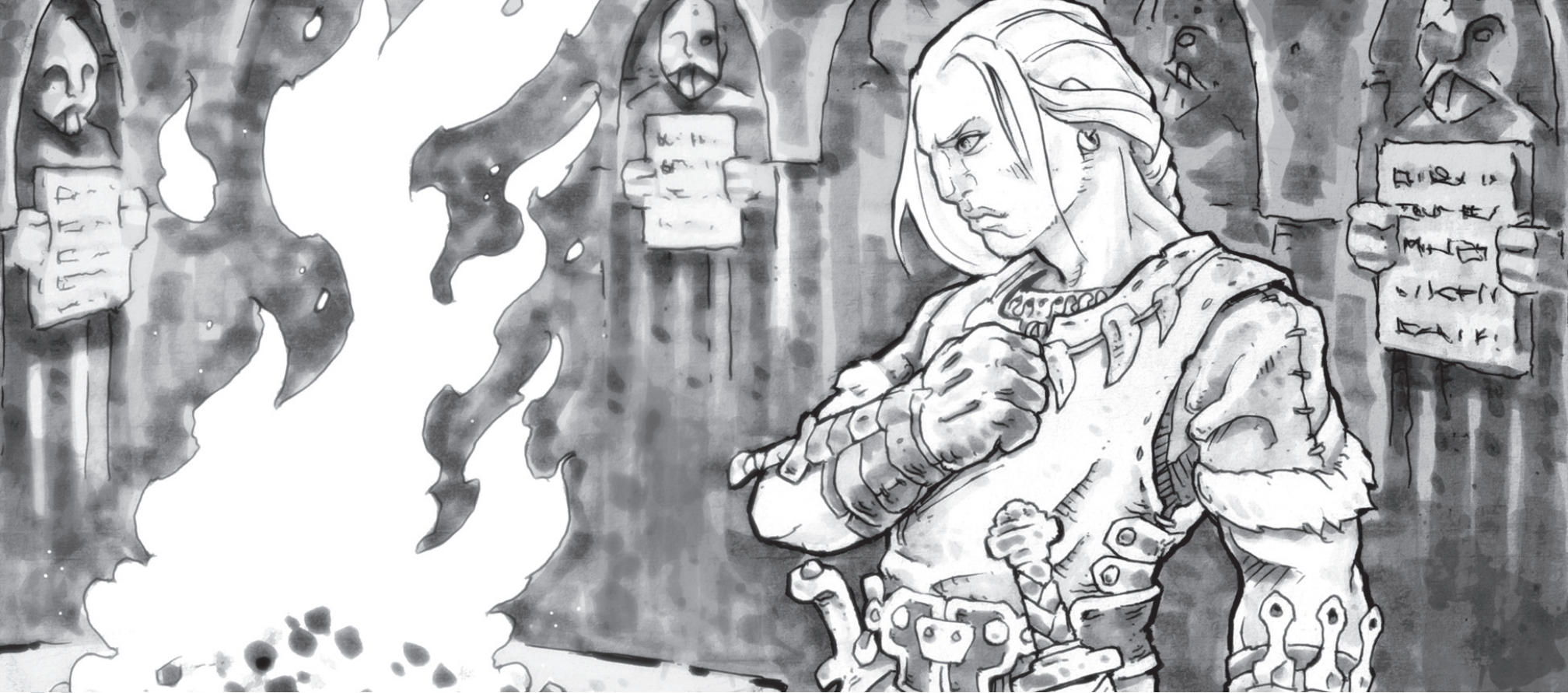
Action: Dramatic. The characters individually pray before the altar.

Hindrances: The character's culture does not traditionally pray to spirits (-2 internal penalty).

Help: None

Useful Charms: A Performance Excellency adds bonus dice or successes.

Roll Results



Botch: The prayer comes off as blasphemous. The Arms of the Sun do not wait for the character to step beyond the threshold; they awaken and attack the heretic immediately. Furthermore, they forgo their normal tactics and prioritize destroying the infidel.

Failure: The character's prayer is insufficient to pass. He may try again, though it is unlikely he realizes his prayer was a failure.

Success: The character's words are accepted by the manse as worthy praise to the Unconquered Sun. He is allowed to pass without repercussions.

Combat

The four stone statues come to life if any character attempts to move down to the next room without first offering proper prayer. The statues attack whatever target is closest, and will follow characters down into the next room, though they will not pursue any character who flees

the mausoleum. If the entire circle flees, the statues shut the doors to the temple-tomb and return to their dormancy. If two or more statues have the same intruder within attack range, they will always try to bring down one foe before moving on to the others.

If the characters flee the Arms of the Sun, the Arms recover any lost health levels at a rate of one per hour while resting in their alcoves. Destroyed statues cannot recover.

Consequences

The characters are ready to move farther into the temple. The Silent Inquisitor must offer prayer to pass if he arrived first or if the circle did not destroy the statues for him. Doing so costs him a point of Willpower and earns him a point of Resonance. If the characters destroy the Arms of the Sun, however, he walks casually through the inert trap. In either case, move to "The Locked Door."

The Locked Door

MENTAL ...

PHYSICAL ...

SOCIAL –

Overview

The characters enter the small room. Here, the door is closed and whole, so they must either break it down or find a way around it.

Description

Upon entering:

The small chamber seems large without corpses cluttering the floor. The sturdy door is little more than a stone slab, this time unmarred, solemnly separating you from your goal. An ornate orichalcum lock in the shape of a lion's head is the only marking of any distinction. The locking mechanism remains pristine despite the passage of time.

If the trap activates:

The lion's mouth opens in a slow yawn as a click can be heard and the door seems to give way. Suddenly, a flash of light explodes from its mouth. Heat overwhelms you. Afterward, the mouth calmly closes and the door remains tightly sealed.

Storyteller Goals

This is actually an opportunity to help illuminate Granite Archetype's character. Let the circle discover an almost humorous side to the ancient Zenith. This scene should be quick, as the characters press forward in their charge. Taking too long here can dissolve some of the drama. It should also be aggravating, though—just enough to heighten the rewarding sensation at the end.

Character Goals

Defeat the next trial and continue.

Actions

Opening the Door

Dice Pool: (Intelligence + Investigation), difficulty 4 (for characters who examine Granite Archetype's personality) or (Intelligence + Lore), difficulty 5 (for characters who think of it as a riddle)

Action: Dramatic. The characters contemplate the secret to the trap.

Hindrances: The door is magically locked and cannot be picked by mundane means or by magical means. Attempting to pick the lock results in the door's attack (see "Roll Results").

Help: None

Useful Charms: For this particular circumstance, Evidence-Discerning Method yields two bonus successes to either roll as the character creates a psychological profile of Granite Archetype. If the character uses Lock-Opening Touch (**Exalted**, p. 229) to unlock the door or Door-Evading Technique (**Exalted**, p. 229) to bypass the door, the trap's geomancy diffuses the Charm and counterattacks. Keep in mind that the character has already used a Charm and cannot apply one to defense.

Roll Results

Botch: The character touches the door or lock in some way that the trap considers threatening. It responds with a blast of Essence out of its mouth. This is an Accuracy 8, Damage 8L attack, and it completely negates the character's Dodge DV.

Failure: The character fails to solve the puzzle and does not know how to unlock the door.

Success: The character pieces together the trick to the door: Simply knocking will result in being invited. After the character knocks, the door slides to the side and lets the circle pass.

Breaking the Door

If the characters become annoyed with the puzzle, they have the option of smashing the damn thing. The door has a soak of 12L/18B. (For more information on attacking inanimate targets, see **Exalted**, p. 153.) Every time the door is attacked, the lock activates and unleashes another radiant blast, but it can do so only once per action. The door has 40 health levels before it is damaged, but once it has reached this point, the Essence is disrupted enough that it can no longer retaliate. Forty further health levels still remain before there is enough room for characters to slide through.

Alternatively, any character who decides to attack the lock finds things significantly easier. Though it has a higher soak of 16L and is immune to bashing damage, it takes only 15 health levels of damage

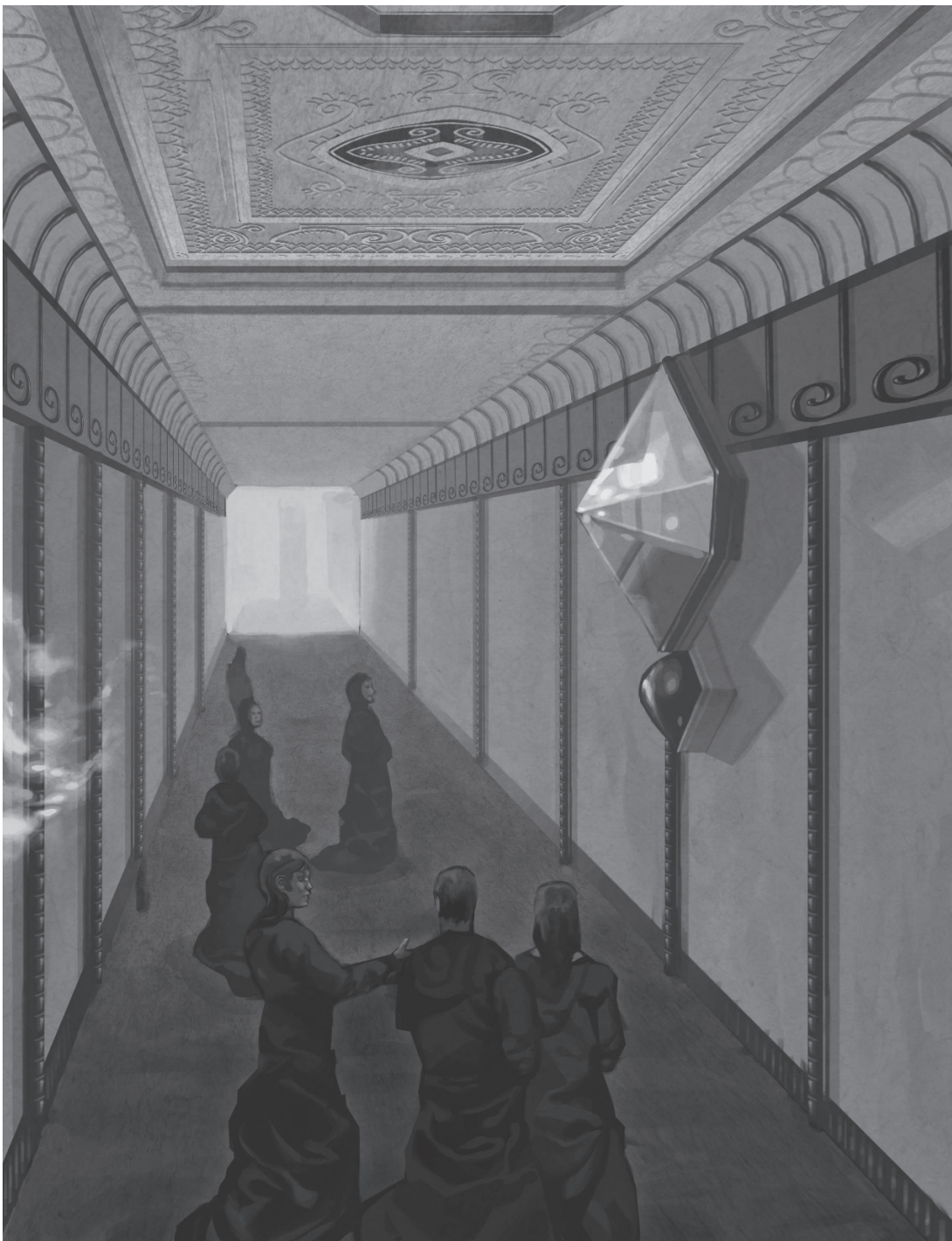
before it is damaged and can no longer counterattack. A total of 30 health levels of damage will destroy it.

The characters still need to move the slab door. This requires a combined (Strength + Athletics) rating of 11 between anyone helping move it.

Consequences

The characters move into the room with the Sentinel and prepare for combat with it. Move to “The Sentinel.”

Regardless of whether the Silent Inquisitor is following or leading, he discovers the method of knocking. He suffers no harm from this trap.





The Sentinel

MENTAL –

PHYSICAL ●●●●●

SOCIAL –

Overview

The characters emerge into the Sentinel's chamber. The Sentinel asks them politely to leave, but if they insist on entering, he challenges the circle to provide one opponent for a one-on-one duel. The characters must decide whether or not to honor the Sentinel's request and confront him.

Description

In the center of the pristine room sits a familiar white jade automaton. The warrior slowly stands and raises his halberd. His lips part and a calm voice states clearly, "By order of my master, none may pass. Please depart."

Storyteller Goals

Give the characters a fight. Allow them to stress over the final battle that is about to come. Defeating the Silent Inquisitor will be a greater accomplishment knowing that they have already exhausted themselves against the Sentinel. At the same time, show them a bit of Granite Archetype's personality through the Sentinel's automated response system.

Character Goals

Defeat the Sentinel and move forward.

Actions

Negotiating with the Sentinel

Although the grave-goods version of the Sentinel had decayed in such a way that it would not speak, **the true Sentinel** can speak. It does not house an animating intelligence, however. The Sentinel uses a complex program of mindless automated responses. This means that the characters cannot actually engage in social combat against the Sentinel. No matter how well the players roll, the characters cannot change the Sentinel's responses without reprogramming him.

The Sentinel will not let the characters pass, but he responds to any such requests by offering an honorable duel. If he wins, he will not

kill his opponent, but he asks the trespassers to leave of their own volition. If he is defeated, there will be nobody to prevent the circle's progress. It is up to the characters whether or not they accept this duel, but the Sentinel will not spare any who fall if it they turn it down.

Combating the Sentinel

If the circle accepts the Sentinel's challenge, the Sentinel will not make any fatal attacks. He will always opt to maim on his final blow, severing a tendon on the character's sword hand or otherwise keeping her from being a threat. If the circle does not accept the duel, it has the added benefit of every character being able to enter the room at once. There is, however, no easy way out. The Sentinel they face now is not a grave good, so Holy Charms and sunlight have no extra effect on him.

Consequences

The characters are ready to move to the final room. If they followed the Silent Inquisitor, they know he is awaiting them. If not, they expect to find the final treasure beyond the next door. When they are ready, move to "The Contagion of Law."



The Contagion of Law

MENTAL ••••

PHYSICAL •••••

SOCIAL ••

Overview

This is the final showdown with the Silent Inquisitor of Wayward Souls. It can happen one of two ways.

If the characters came to the tomb without any prodding, they are suddenly ambushed by the Abyssal. He attacks whichever member of the circle he views least likely able to defend herself, attempting to pick off the weakest before the true battle begins. He thanks the characters for their help in locating the Contagion of Law and challenges them to a fight to the death, fully intending to use further dirty tactics.

If the circle has come to the tomb chasing the Silent Inquisitor, however, they find Merek Loshan attuning the Contagion of Law. He reveals his true identity and reanimates the dead flesh of Granite Archetype. Combat ensues.

In either case, once their enemies are defeated and dying soliloquies have been had, the characters have access to the artifacts of both the Silent Inquisitor and Granite Archetype. Their mission is complete.

Description

If the circle chased the Silent Inquisitor:

Sitting amidst the possessions of Granite Archetype is the familiar form of Merek Loshan, surrounded by shining orichalcum. The Contagion of Law already adorns his brow and it seems you have interrupted his meditation. "This is unfortunate," he sighs, standing and crushing a small charcoal skull in his hand.

The coffin beside him begins to shake violently, and Loshan's face melts away to reveal that of an eerily beautiful man. His skin is snow white, shot through with veins of sapphire. His lips and eyes are frozen crystals. "I am the Silent Inquisitor of Wayward Souls. I suppose I must quiet you heretics in the name of the Shining One." With a resounding thud, the lid of the coffin falls to the ground. Granite Archetype—his dead flesh still clinging to bone—rises to face you.

If the Silent Inquisitor initiates a successfully devastating sneak attack:

You feel a slight breeze on your neck. You barely manage to catch the light flickering off a small needle flying silently through the air. As it moves away from you, you see it weep a blood tear, which falls to the ground with a miniscule splash. You realize too late that you cannot scream—your throat is filled with blood—and the only sound you make is your knees hitting the ground. Everyone turns in time to see your body crumple to a heap.

Behind you stands Merek Loshan, his smile gone. The visage tears itself away to reveal that of a white-skinned deathknight. "I am the Silent Inquisitor of Wayward Souls," he says. His words continue, but you have faded too far to hear them.

This counts as a stunt worth two dice to the Silent Inquisitor's sneak attack, but he succeeds only if he reduces a character to Incapacitated with it. (He may split his action, though, taking multiple attacks to do so.)

When the Silent Inquisitor is defeated:

As the Silent Inquisitor falls back from the final blow, he seems surprised that his body no longer accepts his commands. After a brief moment, his struggling stops, and he merely looks upon the heroes who have defeated him. His face shows no anger, no sadness, no regret. He closes his eyes, arranges his lips into a smile... and dies.

Storyteller Goals

Make the characters earn their victory. The Silent Inquisitor is the most difficult foe they face during this story. Do not pull punches. While the Silent Inquisitor will not bother to finish off any already-beaten foes until after the fight, he will focus on eliminating targets one at a time to the best of his ability. Characters can become seriously injured or die. Use this threat to increase the drama in these final moments of the story.

Character Goals

Defeat the Silent Inquisitor and prevent the Contagion of Law from falling into the hands of murderous psychos.

Actions

Combat

The Silent Inquisitor begins the fight having already spent eight motes and one Willpower point, which represents either the cost of Survival Charms he used to track the circle or the Stealth Charms he

used to bypass the Sentinel. This is in addition to any other appropriate expenditures on his part, which may be determined by which of the two combat scenarios occurs.

If the circle has arrived first, the Silent Inquisitor takes his time prior to entering the final tomb to use any Stealth Charms he would like, and a few less obvious combat Charms. He then attacks, attempting to eliminate whichever members of the circle he perceives as the weakest. As he enters sight, he briefly thanks the circle for helping him locate the Contagion of Law while Join Battle is rolled. If the characters argue with him, you can opt to draw out the conversation. In that case, he is descriptive about the circle's impending demise. The Silent Inquisitor is an expert in causing both emotional and physical torment, and he wants the characters to fully grasp that all life is a form of pain before he gives them the privilege of death.

Alternatively, if the characters chased the Silent Inquisitor to the tomb, he awakens the zombie of Granite Archetype and faces their full circle. The zombie almost always attacks the closest enemy, possibly attempting to grapple opponents who seem to rely entirely on their weapons for combat (especially ranged combatants). There are exceptions to this rule. First, the animated corpse remains sentient enough to prevent itself from foolishly attacking a foe who has badly injured it. Instead, it focuses on protecting itself or attacks a weaker target. Secondly, the zombie instinctively will not attack a Zenith while any other foe stands on the field. Whether this is due to fear or some remaining bit of honor is unclear.

The Silent Inquisitor fights aggressively, using Charms (or Storyteller-created Combos) to remove enemies from the combat as quickly as possible. Remember to stunt both his attacks and dodges, and to reward him appropriately with motes and temporary Willpower points.

As he finishes his attacks, he will likely be running low on Willpower, though clever uses of Charms can allow him some mote recovery. Using your judgment, consider whether or not using a simple Charm is safe. If he remains confident that it is not a misstep, he uses Infinite Dodge Mastery (**Exalted**, p. 185) so he can increase his defenses without relying on his ability to do so perfectly—which would cost him a significant amount of temporary Willpower points. Note any motes he has remaining that he could use with Dodge Essence Flow (**Exalted**, p. 187) when making that decision. Alternatively, for a more aggressive stance, Infinite Thrown Mastery (**Exalted**, p. 185) would make his attacks more dangerous, but cause him to rely on a smaller defense.

The Silent Inquisitor remains defensive while recharging motes from Charms and using stunts to refill his Willpower pool. Additionally, when the circle does manage to injure him, he gains the benefits of Oblivion's Jowl Postulation ([see p. 9](#)) to recharge even more Willpower. Through this process, he goes through phases of aggression, followed by fighting defensively as he attempts to recover his energy.

Though he holds a walkaway that allows him to negate three levels of damage after they are applied, he waits before using it until it is absolutely necessary, aiming to land himself at his -4 wound penalty to gain the maximum benefit of Oblivion's Jowl Postulation. He does not use this to flee, however—he will fight until he or his enemies meet the glorious silence of Oblivion. He does not pull his attacks to intentionally maim opponents or otherwise spare them, but he will not bother attacking any opponents who can no longer threaten him (at least while viable enemies remain). It is simply unwise to strike an incapacitated or severely crippled opponent while a dangerous enemy still stands.

The Silent Inquisitor is definitely a difficult opponent, but the characters must remember that while he is likely to have more motes to fuel his Charms than any of them have individually, together they can overpower him, as long as they are careful not to move *into* his attacks. They should never be afraid to use stunts. Simply describing how the character moves her sword between the Silent Inquisitor's needle and her body is potentially worth two motes.

Identifying the Artifacts

The characters begin analyzing the artifacts to discover what they do. Doing so requires handling them firmly as the characters examine them. Among the panoply is a grand daiklave, a pair of god-kicking boots, a band of faith, a pair of orichalcum hearthstone bracers, a pair of soulsteel hearthstone bracers, an orichalcum reinforced breastplate, a soulsteel breastplate, a walkaway, a set of throwing needles and the Contagion of Law. There is also a small charcoal skull if the Silent Inquisitor did not raise the zombie of Granite Archetype. Each item requires a separate roll as an individual action. **For full details, see the Storyteller cards on pp. 47-50.**

Dice Pool: (Intelligence + Lore), difficulty 2–6

Action: Dramatic

Hindrances: None



Help: The character inherited Granite Archetype's Exaltation (+Essence bonus dice, usable only on his former possessions). The character attunes an item (+2 bonus successes). The character consulted Iridescent Nightmare's notes in "The Stagnant Den" (+2 bonus dice to identifying the Contagion of Law).

Useful Charms: Excellencies are most useful here. They can help the Exalt garner more successes or allow a reroll without additional time and higher difficulty. Infinite Lore Mastery will reduce the mote cost of Excellencies for the scene.

Roll Results

Botch: The character fails to identify any characteristics of the item other than the obvious (such as the fact that the daiklave is a weapon) and is too frustrated to make further attempts. The character cannot attempt again at all (instead of the usual cumulative -1 external penalty when re-attempting a roll).

Failure: The character is incapable of identifying any characteristics of the item other than the obvious.

Success: Succeeding at a difficulty of 2 allows the character to know the general characteristics of an item. He knows if it has more powers than are standard and can identify its general purpose.

Succeeding at a difficulty of 5 (3 for the band of faith and hearthstone bracers) allows him to know of every power the item has. He may understand, for instance, that Righteous Bellow can aid him in social and physical combat against creatures of darkness. If he is studying Unstoppable Ascent, he will realize that in addition to being armor, it reinforces the tenacity of his troops.

Succeeding at a difficulty of 6 (4 for the band of faith and hearthstone bracers) means the character has additionally heard of the legends of the artifact he is examining, prior to its being buried. For unique items, he knows its name. In addition, he fully understands the capabilities of the item. He knows exactly how Whispers of Oblivion summons its components or how many motes are needed to activate the Contagion of Law. Read the artifact's full description for the character.

Consequences

With the Silent Inquisitor defeated, the characters are free to take any items from Granite Archetype's tomb. They might wish to take a moment to rest, though. They have averted a catastrophe capable of sinking the entirety of the North into despair.



Aftermath

The characters have stopped the machinations of the Silent Inquisitor of Wayward Souls and taken the Contagion of Law for themselves. This does not, however, mean that everything will wrap up tidily. These are just a few possibilities of hooks to start the next story, should you decide to continue.

The Bishop of the Chalcedony Thurible

This Deathlord will notice rather quickly that the Silent Inquisitor has fallen. He is no longer the type to indulge in vengeance, but he does take note of the characters. He wonders how willing they will be to accept the sweet release of Oblivion. He will send agents after the characters to destroy everything they hold dear until the characters come to the independent realization that only Oblivion can release them from their pain. Additionally, despite the fact that he bears no grudge over the loss of the Silent Inquisitor, the Shining One was interested in using the Contagion of Law to spread his various death cults across Creation, and he will work its recovery into his plans.

Iridescent Nightmare

If the circle hasn't permanently killed Iridescent Nightmare, he slips quietly away. He makes plans to return, but he knows he cannot directly confront the circle. As far as he is concerned, he rediscovered the Contagion of Law, and it rightfully belongs to him. He'll follow the circle's adventures as best as he can, and when he has the option, he'll make an attempt to get the Contagion of Law for himself. He doesn't particularly care who happens to get hurt in the process.

Shakan

Regardless of whether or not Shakan made an appearance in your game, he has noticed the circle's actions. With spies all over the city, it would be hard for him not to. And because he knows, Mistress Katrin does as well. Fortunately, though Shakan is wary of the circle, he will remember the debt Gethamane owes. He is even honorable enough to repay it, should the circle need a favor, though not quite so honorable as to risk his life or the city's safety in so doing. If he did make his presence known, he pays the characters for their aid by honoring their deal with the Silent Inquisitor, though he does ask that the Contagion of Law be given to Mistress Katrin so it can be

kept safely within the halls of Gethamane. If he did not appear, he simply continues watching, waiting and planning.

The Guard

Merek Loshan's body is never discovered. This mystery creates a power vacuum between the two highest-ranking members of the Guard, Gavne Wheelwright and Mindros Yami. Wheelwright is a pillar of justice, but has become somewhat distracted by the death of his wife, taking his fervor to a new extreme. Yami secretly supports the few actions the Realm takes in Gethamane and is a staunch adherent to the Immaculate Philosophy. The conflict comes to a tenuous resolution when an adopted outsider, Golden Stag, is suddenly appointed to the position of Captain. This choice unsettles both of the officers, whose ambition gets the better of them (though Yami hides it particularly well). A quiet rift spreads among the Guard that threatens to destroy it, possibly upsetting the balance between the powers of the city or even allowing a swarm of creatures to escape from the underways.

Scavengers and Gods

Rumors of the rediscovered City of Altars spread across the North. Scavengers looking to make a quick profit begin searching for the city to continue the excavation. A nearby spirit court sends its own agents, wanting to use the city's many temples to increase its own power. Several dormant gods awaken to the first prayers they have heard in an era and use their own influence to spread worship of themselves throughout the North, using the City of Altars as a holy site.

All this turmoil causes an upset of balance among the spiritual powers of the North. Even the three gods of Gethamane become involved, as a temple to one of them is uncovered in the City of Altars. With the sudden influx of prayer, this one god becomes drastically more powerful than the other two, disrupting every aspect of Gethamanian life. Caverns crumble, the Gardens wither and breathable air could even stop flowing into the city.

The Wyld Hunt

Word of Solar Anathema travels quickly, even from the city under the mountain. The Immaculate Order will, at the very least, redouble all efforts to secure Gethamane as a tributary, though a full Wyld Hunt could be dispatched to eradicate the scum if the Isle has the resources to spare. The Guild favors any involvement the Isle wishes to have with


Gethamane. The city is still too far out to be taxed in any significant fashion, but a Realm presence will pay for itself in the trade it brings. Conversely, most other powers of Gethamane are less than interested in the Isle's presence, but are aware that an open war would severely strain the already limited resources the city has. Of course, the evils of the underways are indifferent to who they slaughter. You may even allow the players to create Dragon-Blooded characters and play the characters the Realm first sends to examine the underways.


Yurgen Kaneko

The Bull of the North is actively trying to conquer the North and bring it under his sway. If he hears of the characters' accomplishments, he might send a messenger to recruit them into his army. In addition, if he were to learn of the Contagion of Law, he might wish to use it to garner a force measurable in nations. This could even result in a major campaign against the Blessed Isle with the circle at the head.

Experience

This story is difficult, and the rewards should be commensurate. An easy way to determine experience points is to award characters one experience point for every scene they participate in. Additionally, if a character has done something particularly cool, award an extra point. Finally, give a five-point reward for completion of the story. This should amount to roughly 20 experience points in total.

	Black Jade Dire Lance (Artifact ••)						
	This massive spear is forged of black jade. Its sturdy construction allows it to be used to make mounted charges like a lance or be wielded as a long spear in melee. If used as a lance, the dire lance may be used single-handed during a mounted charge. If used as a spear, the dire lance requires two hands to wield. This dire lance has a single hearthstone setting at the tip of the handle. A Dragon-Blood who attunes this weapon additionally reduces its Speed rating by one and adds one to Damage.						
Spd.	Acc.	Damage	Def.	Rate	Attune	Tags	
5	+2	+8L/12L	+2	2	5	2, L, R	

	Perfect Reinforced Breastplate		
	A breastplate with attached shoulder guards, this armor also includes a skirt that protects the character's crotch and upper thighs, a pair of greaves to protect the lower legs and a pair of long bracers to protect the character's forearms. The reinforced breastplate offers excellent protection to the areas it covers, but this protection is balanced by the fact that significant portions of the character are totally unarmored. This item has been forged by a master craftsman.		
Soak	Mobility	Fatigue	
+8L/7B	0	0	

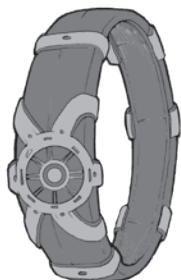
	Stoic Voice, Orichalcum Grand Daiklave (Artifact ••••)						
	This is the grave-goods version of Righteous Bellow, Granite Archetype's noble and righteous grand daiklave. Its creation in the Underworld warps the original's desire for law into a desire for order, and there is no greater order than the division between life and death. Even so, Stoic Voice remains the ultimate authority in keeping order, capable of pushing back the forces of the Wyld with ease. Stoic Voice deals aggravated damage to raksha and creatures native to the Wyld. When it is in its wielder's hand, Stoic Voice also allows its wielder to use Enemy-Castigating Solar Judgment (if he knows it) as a non-Charm action against raksha and creatures native to the Wyld. When a Solar Exalt attunes the grand daiklave, the Exalt gains an additional +1 to Accuracy, Defense and Rate. Two hearthstone settings lie in the hilt.						
Spd.	Acc.	Damage	Def.	Rate	Attune	Tags	
5	+2	+12L/4	+2	3	8	2, O, P, R	



Grave Goods Orichalcum God-Kicking Boots (Artifact ••)

Heavy boots shod with plates of orichalcum rather than iron or steel, the god-kicking boots are always worn as a pair. They do not have hearthstone settings. When a Solar Exalt attunes the boots, the Exalt gains an additional +1 to Accuracy, Defense and Rate.

Spd.	Acc.	Damage	Def.	Rate	Attune	Tags
5	+1	+8B	-1	2	6	M,P



Grave Goods Band of Faith (Artifact •)

It's difficult to say where the single mote of Underworld Essence stored within this ring came from. The mote is accessible and fully usable by anyone who wears the ring, regardless of whether or not the bearer could normally use Essence. Once spent, the Essence in the ring recharges after an hour spent outdoors beneath the sky of the Underworld. Only one band can benefit a character at any time.



Grave Goods Orichalcum Hearthstone Bracers (Artifact ••)

A common grave good, hearthstone bracers provide powerful defensive bonuses to the Exalts who wear them. These bracers come as a pair, one of which has a single hearthstone setting and the other of which is imbued with magical power. These bracers work only for an Exalt of the appropriate type.

Hearthstone bracers require a commitment of four motes of Essence to activate them—two motes for each bracer. A bracer *must* be worn with its mate and will not work otherwise. Regardless of construction, hearthstone bracers proved a three-die bonus to dodge attempts made by an attuned user.

These bracers are ornately wrought in homage to the Unconquered Sun, causing the Solar Exalt who wears them to strike with the surety and power of the Unconquered Sun. All of the character's attacks have their damage increased by two dice while he is wearing the bracers.



Zealotry of Gold, Orichalcum Reinforced Breastplate (Artifact •••)

This is the grave-goods version of Unstoppable Ascent, Granite Archetype's grand and unmistakable armor. This armor fortifies not only the warrior wearing it, but the will of his entire unit. The entire unit fights with the vicious savagery of zealots who no longer understand human emotion. The fighters will stop at nothing to slay every one of their foes, crush their bones and desecrate their flesh. Their anger will drive them to fight to the very last man in a losing fight. A unit led by the bearer of this armor cannot fail Valor rolls, and therefore cannot be routed, as long as it is an invading force. A single hearthstone setting rests over the solar plexus. When a Solar wears the armor, add two to both the armor's lethal and bashing soak, and add one to the armor's lethal and bashing Hardness.

Soak	Hardness	Mobility	Fatigue	Attune
+10L/+9B	8L/8B	-1	0	4



The Contagion of Hate (Artifact ••••)

This is the grave-goods version of the Contagion of Law, Granite Archetype's symbol of temporal sovereignty and divine authority. The Contagion of Hate is an orichalcum crown engraved with the skyline of a First Age city. Just above the bearer's forehead rests a piece of glowing charcoal, the edges of which are laced with green jade. Anyone wearing the crown who has placed in it a commitment of six motes appears as the ultimate ghastly force, increasing his Appearance by one. In addition, he can activate the crown's true ability.

By spending 10 motes and a temporary Willpower point and touching a single person, the Exalt can inflict a plague of hatred upon a nation. The initial victim is subject to a contagious negative Intimacy, treated as a Virulence 6 disease. The character's Dodge MDV is used to resist, however, rather than a typical Resistance roll. In addition, a character may spend four Willpower points immediately upon contact to avoid contracting the Intimacy. If the contagious Intimacy directly contradicts a previously existing Intimacy, the older Intimacy is completely overridden.

An affected individual is considered infected until he loses the Intimacy, which can be removed through social combat as a normal Intimacy. Since the "infection" is not actually a disease, Medicine Charms that target diseases are useless. As long as a character possesses the contagious Intimacy, he can spread it through touch. As a result, the disease remains in social circulation, as "cured" individuals re-infect each other easily.



Righteous Bellow, Orichalcum Grand Daiklave (Artifact ••••)

This grand daiklave once spread the order of law across Creation. Granite Archetype used it to fight against any creatures of darkness that threatened the sanctity of Solar law and order, both physically and socially. All attacks made by Righteous Bellow are Holy. Additionally, Righteous Bellow allows its wielder to use Enemy-Castigating Solar Judgment (if he knows it) as a non-Charm action. When a Solar Exalt attunes Righteous Bellow, the Exalt gains an additional +1 Accuracy, Defense, and Rate. The hilt has two hearthstone settings.

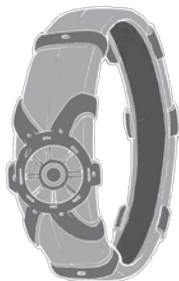
Spd.	Acc.	Damage	Def.	Rate	Attune	Tags
5	+2	+12L/4	+2	3	8	2, O, P, R



Orichalcum God-Kicking Boots (Artifact ••)

Heavy boots shod with plates of orichalcum rather than iron or steel, the god-kicking boots are always worn as a pair. They do not have hearthstone settings. When a Solar Exalt attunes them, the Exalt gains an additional +1 to Accuracy, Defense and Rate.

Spd.	Acc.	Damage	Def.	Rate	Attune	Tags
5	+1	+8B	-1	2	6	M, P



Band of Faith

The band of faith is a ring forged of gold with a thin vein of purer orichalcum running through it, and contains a single mote of Essence that can be wielded by anyone who wears the ring. Of small benefit to any Exalt, God-Blood or Dragon King, this mote enabled mortals to activate and operate some of the nearly accessible tools and minor wonders of the First Age without training.

Finding such a ring in the Age of Sorrows is not difficult. More than one Solar was buried with a panoply of faithful servants, devoted to him and his god.

Only one band of faith can benefit an individual at a time. Once the mote within is used, the band recharges after a full hour in sunlight.



Unstoppable Ascent, Orichalcum Reinforced Breastplate (Artifact •••)

This armor fortifies not only the warrior wearing it, but the will of his unit. The entire unit fights with vigor, motivated by the conviction of its leader. The fighters will stop at nothing to defeat their enemies, even if they must fight to the last man in a losing battle. A unit led by the bearer of this armor cannot fail Valor checks, and therefore cannot be routed. A single hearthstone setting rests over the solar plexus. When a Solar wears the armor, add two to both the armor's lethal and bashing soak, and add one to the armor's lethal and bashing Hardness.

Soak	Hardness	Mobility	Fatigue	Attune
+10L/+9B	8L/8B	-1	0	4



Soulsteel Breastplate

This simple armor provides basic protection against attacks, and can still be concealed under a heavy jacket or cloak. It is designed for ease of movement. Occasionally, a pained face can be seen letting out a low moan in the surface of the soulsteel that enhances the breastplate. An Abyssal Exalt wearing this armor adds an additional +2 to lethal and bashing soak and an additional +1 to lethal and bashing Hardness.

Soak	Hardness	Mobility	Fatigue	Attune
+6L/+4B	2L/2B	0	0	2



Walkaway (Artifact •)

This walkaway used to be the tip to an icewalker's spear, but when thrown at a priest of the Shining One, it turned its course and shattered against the stone. The spear tip became infused with the power to keep its bearer safe. Once per story, the walkaway can be used to negate a single, life-threatening damage roll up to three damage successes. All of the damage successes must come from the same roll.

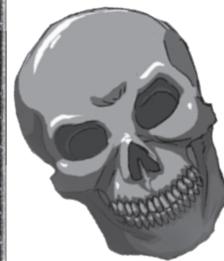


Soulsteel Hearthstone Bracers (Artifact ••)

A common artifact, hearthstone bracers provide powerful defensive bonuses to the Exalts who wear them. These bracers come as a pair, one of which has a single hearthstone setting and the other of which is imbued with magical power. These bracers work only for an Exalt of the appropriate type.

Hearthstone bracers require a commitment of four motes of Essence to activate them—two motes for each bracer. A bracer *must* be worn with its mate and will not work unless worn as a pair. Regardless of construction, hearthstone bracers proved a three-die bonus to dodge attempts made by an attuned user.

These bracers are decorated with weeping faces and shrieking souls. Soulsteel bracers bring the forces of entropy to bear on their target, decreasing her lethal and bashing soak by two against the Abyssal's attacks. This effect cannot reduce a target's soak below 0.



The Final Mission, a charcoal skull (Artifact ••)

This small skull carved from a block of charcoal and soaked for three nights in the blood of children is a single-use artifact that, when crushed, raises a single target corpse within a yard of the user. The cadaver retains its Attributes and Abilities from life. It is completely loyal to whoever raised it, until either it is destroyed or a year and a day passes. At that point, the corpse turns to dust and can never be raised again.



Whispers of Oblivion, a set of a dozen Soulsteel Needles (Artifact •••)

This set of needles is a versatile weapon designed for an assassin. For one mote each, the Exalt may reflexively recall any needles she does not currently have with her. The needles will fly back to her hand on their own accord, but if the path is obstructed, they will travel through Elsewhere. In addition, the Exalt may reflexively link any needles she currently possesses into a whip that can be used with Melee or Martial Arts for a cost of two motes. Essence jumps between the needles, filling any gaps to create the four-foot long whip. These motes are committed until the character returns the Whispers of Oblivion to its form as needles. As a whip, it deals a base lethal damage equivalent to the number of needles used to create it, but it gains no benefits for being made of soulsteel. Changing the needles back is also a reflexive action. When Whispers of Oblivion is attuned to an Abyssal Exalt, Thrown attacks made with its needles thirst for the blood of their victim, adding two to Accuracy and Damage.

Needles

Spd.	Acc.	Damage	Rate	Range	Attune	Tags
4	+1	+3L	3	20	4	P

Whip

Spd.	Acc.	Damage	Def.	Rate	Tags
4	+1	varies	0	2	C, D, R, M

The Contagion of Law (Artifact •••••)



The Contagion of Law is an orichalcum crown engraved with the skyline of a First Age city. Just above the bearer's forehead rests a single diamond, the edges of which are laced with green jade. Anyone wearing the crown who has placed in it a commitment of six motes gains an aura of ultimate authority, increasing his Appearance rating by one. In addition, he can activate the crown's true ability.

By spending 10 motes and a temporary Willpower point and touching a single person, the Exalt can inflict a plague of belief upon a nation. The initial victim is subject to a contagious Intimacy, treated as a Virulence 6 disease. The character's Dodge MDV resists the disease, rather than a typical Resistance roll. In addition, a character may spend four Willpower points immediately upon contact to avoid contracting the Intimacy. If the contagious Intimacy directly contradicts a previously existing Intimacy, the older Intimacy is completely overridden.

An affected individual is considered infected until he loses the Intimacy, which can be removed through social combat as a normal Intimacy. Since the "contagion" is not a true disease, Medicine Charms that target diseases are useless against it. As long as a character possesses the contagious Intimacy, he can spread it through touch. The disease easily remains in social circulation, as "cured" individuals can re-infect each other. The crown takes its name from the Zenith Caste Solar, Granite Archetype, who used it in the First Age to instill a great reverence for the law in his people.

SCENE: Unusual Welcome



MENTAL • PHYSICAL — SOCIAL ••

HINDRANCES

HELP

OTHER

An Odd Aroma: The character is addicted to bright morning (2 bonus dice).

Negotiating a Price: The Silent Inquisitor is distracted by keeping his motives secret (-2 internal penalty). He feigns failure based on target's Essence (1-3 motes, he yields slightly; 4-6 motes, he hesitantly accepts; 7+ motes, he instantly accepts). Spends Willpower to resist unnatural mental influence, but accepts offer in order to maintain his disguise.

Negotiating a Price: Any Excellency Charm for Bureaucracy, Performance, Presence or Socialize, any Investigation Excellency, Irresistible Salesman Spirit

STs Give the characters enough exposition to launch them into the story. Additionally, try to hint that Merek might know a little more than he's telling them.

PCs Work out a deal with Merek Loshan that is beneficial to the circle.

SCENE: The Stagnant Den



MENTAL — PHYSICAL ••• SOCIAL •

HINDRANCES

HELP

OTHER

Noticing the Shadowland: The player cannot attempt the roll if her character cannot see Essence flows.

Searching the Room: The character has Compassion 3 or greater and is disgusted by the bodies lining the walls (-1 external penalty).

Searching the Room: The character is already aware of the shadowland's presence (2 bonus dice).

Searching the Room: Any Investigation Excellency could be useful in discovering the false wall that hides the secret door.

STs The battle needs to be cinematic, but Iridescent Nightmare is simply no match for a circle of Solar Exalts

PCs Face the enemy of Gethamane and search his haven.

SCENE: Passage to the Damned



MENTAL •• PHYSICAL •• SOCIAL •

HINDRANCES

HELP

OTHER

Navigating the Trail: There is no natural light, and caverns often lack identifying characteristics (-2 external penalty).

Navigating the Trail: The guards have some clues gathered by previous teams (+2 bonus successes).

Navigating the Trail: Hardship-Surviving Mendicant Spirit, Unshakeable Bloodhound Technique

STs Allow the characters to interact with the guards so they have some human element to feel responsible for defending. Also, emphasize suspense.

PCs Defeat any monsters and make it to Iridescent Nightmare's lair.

SCENE: Going Up



MENTAL •••• PHYSICAL ••••• SOCIAL —

HINDRANCES

HELP

OTHER

Bearing the Storm: Because this is an environmental hazard, Charms that perfectly dodge or parry attacks are inapplicable.

Navigating the Trail: The storm is erasing all evidence of the trail (-2 external penalty).

Bearing the Storm: A Twilight's anima ability can protect her from damage, even if the player botches the roll.

Navigating the Trail: Only one individual needs to roll. The members of the circle can trade off who is leading.

Bearing the Storm: Infinite Resistance Mastery, Element-Resisting Prana.

Navigating the Trail: Infinite Survival Mastery, Hardship-Surviving Mendicant Spirit, Trackless Region Navigation.

STs In the tunnels, you might want to use a slow reveal. Once outside, the action can play out as a mad dash through a deadly storm or as a stoic endeavor against the erosion of the tempest, but it should feel stressful.

PCs Surviving the storm, investigating the trail and finding a way to return to Creation.

SCENE: The City of Altars



MENTAL ●●●●

PHYSICAL —

SOCIAL —

HINDRANCES

Recognizing the Prayer Funnel: A player cannot attempt the roll if her character is not trained in Craft: Magitech or Thaumaturgy: Geomancy.

Noticing the Lack of Residences: The character has a Motivation related to gathering wealth and treasure (-1 external penalty).

HELP

Recognizing the Prayer Funnel: The character is actively using a method to directly perceive Essence (-2 difficulty).

Noticing the Lack of Residences: The character's First Age incarnation helped design the city (+2 dice).

Recognizing the Colossus Sun Temple: The character has the Past Lives Merit (add the bonus dice from Past Lives). The character has inherited the Exaltation of Granite Archetype (+Essence rating in bonus dice).

OTHER

Recognizing the Prayer Funnel: All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight, the geomantic ritual Essence Sense.

Noticing the Lack of Residences: Excellencies.

STs

Encourage a lengthy investigation of the city.

PCs

Explore the city and discover why it interested Iridescent Nightmare.

SCENE: Relic of Kings



MENTAL ●●●●

PHYSICAL —

SOCIAL ●●●●

HINDRANCES

Recognize the Grave Goods: A character raised as a Realm dynast or in similar culture (-1 external penalty).

Examine the Artifacts: A character who doesn't realize these items are grave goods can only confuse an artifact for its Creation-born relative. The first character who touches the Contagion of Hate suffers an attack.

Resist Infection: The initial infection is an unexpected social attack, reducing the character's Dodge MDV to 0 before applying any Charms.

HELP

Recognize the Grave Goods: A character who has significant experience with the dead or funeral rites (+2 successes).

Examine the Artifacts: The character inherited Granite Archetype's Exaltation (+Essence rating dice). The character commits an artifact (+2 successes to identifying it). The character consulted Iridescent Nightmare's notes in "The Stagnant Den" (+2 dice).

OTHER

Recognize the Grave Goods: Occult Excellency

Examine the Artifacts: All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight

Resist Infection: Temptation-Resisting Stance, Elusive Dream Defense, Spirit-Maintaining Maneuver, Immunity to Everything Technique

STs

Try to hint to the characters that there is still a larger mystery going on.

PCs

Examine the grave goods of Granite Archetype and make use of the information.

SCENE: Righteous Descent



MENTAL ●●

PHYSICAL ●●●●

SOCIAL —

HINDRANCES

Investigate the Flesh Mounds: The character has a Compassion rating of 3 or higher (-1 internal penalty).

Recognizing the Weapons: The character is loyal to the Immaculate Order (-1 external penalty). Fewer than two of the statues are uncovered (the roll cannot be attempted).

HELP

Investigate the Flesh Mounds: Some of the cadavers have fallen due to Iridescent Nightmare's passing the altar without praying (+1 success).

Recognizing the Weapons: The circle has cleaned away three or more of the statues (-1 difficulty).

OTHER

Investigate the Flesh Mounds: Investigation Excellency, Crafty Observation Method

Recognizing the Weapons: Any Lore Excellency

STs

Be careful to describe this area as fully as you can. Rooms very similar to these will be visited later when the characters find the true tomb of Granite Archetype in Creation.

PCs

Defeat the trials and make it to the bottom of the mausoleum.

SCENE: Report



MENTAL ●●●

PHYSICAL —

SOCIAL ●●●

HINDRANCES

None

HELP

None

OTHER

Excellency Charms, Trackless Region Navigation

STs

The Silent Inquisitor is trying to get as much information as possible without seeming like he is digging. Also, try to hint that something sinister is going on beneath the surface.

PCs

Report to Merek Loshan and arrange to receive payment. Potentially, renegotiate pay based on the hazards of the journey.

SCENE: A Chance for Redemption



MENTAL — PHYSICAL ●● SOCIAL ●●

HINDRANCES

None

HELP

None

OTHER

None

STs

Allow Iridescent Nightmare (or Shakan) to spell everything out and push the circle toward the climax of the story.

PCs

Determine what Iridescent Nightmare wants. Kill him again if he becomes an unbearable nuisance.

SCENE: Beneath the Snow



MENTAL — PHYSICAL ●●● SOCIAL —

HINDRANCES

The character is digging with no tools (-1 internal penalty).

HELP

Characters who use an appropriate stunt, Charm or spell may substitute any other applicable roll.

OTHER

Increasing Strength Exercise

STs

The characters know that the end of their adventure lies inside Granite Archetype's tomb, so use this as another opportunity to psych them up.

PCs

Enter Granite Archetype's tomb.

SCENE: Treasure Hunters



MENTAL ●●● PHYSICAL ●●● SOCIAL ●●●

HINDRANCES

Find the City: The character is tracking at night (-2 internal penalty).

HELP

Find the City: The character has a way to see into the Underworld (+1 success).

OTHER

Find the City: Trackless Region Navigation, Unshakeable Bloodhound Technique

Vignettes: Avalanche, Beastmen, Hungry Ghosts, Ravine, Wind Herder

STs

Give the characters a sense of their own superiority and pump them up before the final confrontation.

PCs

Plot a course to the true City of Altars and get there quickly.

SCENE: Into the Tomb



MENTAL ●● PHYSICAL ●●● SOCIAL ●●

HINDRANCES

Recognizing the Weapons: The character is loyal to the Immaculate Order (-1 external penalty).

Offering Prayer: The character's culture does not traditionally pray to spirits (-2 internal penalty).

HELP

Recognizing the Weapons: Anyone who made the roll to recognize the weapons in "Righteous Descent" automatically succeeds.

OTHER

Recognizing the Weapons: Excellencies

Offering Prayer: Performance Excellency

STs

Play up the similarities between the current tomb and the Underworld echo the characters visited earlier. Draw it out a little, but don't let the sense of urgency drop.

PCs

Best the trials of Granite Archetype's tomb and make it to the bottom room.

SCENE: The Locked Door



MENTAL ●●● PHYSICAL ●●● SOCIAL —

HINDRANCES

The door is magically locked and cannot be picked by mundane means or by magical means. Attempting to pick the lock results in the door's attack.

HELP

None

OTHER

Evidence-Discerning Method, Lock-Opening Touch or Door-Evading Technique are *not* useful in this scene.

STs

Let the circle discover an almost humorous side to the ancient Zenith.

PCs

Defeat the next trial and continue.

SCENE: The Contagion of Law



MENTAL ●●●● PHYSICAL ●●●●● SOCIAL ●●

HINDRANCES

None

HELP

The character inherited Granite Archetype's Exaltation (+Essence bonus dice, usable only on his former possessions). The character attunes an item (+2 bonus successes). The character consulted Iridescent Nightmare's notes in "The Stagnant Den" (+2 bonus dice to identifying the Contagion of Law).

OTHER

Excellencies, Infinite Lore Mastery

STs

Make the characters earn their victory.

PCs

Defeat the Silent Inquisitor and keep the Contagion of Law from falling into the hands of murderous psychos.

SCENE: The Sentinel



MENTAL — PHYSICAL ●●●●● SOCIAL —

HINDRANCES

None

HELP

None

OTHER

None

STs

Give the characters a fight. Allow them to stress over the final battle that is about to come.

PCs

Defeat the Sentinel and move forward.

Mortwight

Attributes: Strength 7, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5; Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 1; Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 3, Temperance 1, Valor 4

Abilities: Athletics 4, Awareness 3, Craft (Moliation) 2, Dodge 4, Integrity 2, Martial Arts 4, Occult 1, Performance 1 (Ghastly Displays +3), Presence 3 (Torture +2), Stealth 2, Survival 1 (Training Hungry Ghosts +3), War 3

Backgrounds: Followers 2

Arcanos Charms:

Common Arcanos Charms: Moon's Cold Glow, Ox-Body Technique, Scent of Sweet Blood

Savage Ghost-Tamer Arts: Call the Ravening Hound, Command the Hungry Devil, Diversion of the Savage Hunger, Tame the Wicked Appetite, Taste the Demon Wind

Terror-Spreading Art: Black Breath of the Abyss, Corpse-Fed Radiance

Join Battle: 7

Attacks:

Bite: Speed 5, Accuracy 9, Damage 8L, Parry DV —, Rate 2

Claw: Speed 5, Accuracy 10, Damage 7L, Parry DV 6, Rate 3

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 9, Damage 7B, Parry DV —, Rate 1

Soak: 3L/5B

Corpus Levels: -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Dodge DV: 6 **Willpower:** 7

Essence: 2 **Essence Pool:** 59

The Arms of the Sun

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 7, Charisma 0, Manipulation 0, Appearance 3, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

Abilities: Archery 4, Melee 4, War 2, Resistance 4, Awareness 3, Dodge 2

Weapons

Lance: Speed 5, Accuracy 10, Damage 13L, Parry DV 5, Rate 2, Tags R

Shield: Speed 5, Accuracy 9, Damage 7B, Parry DV 7, Rate 1, Tags P

Horn: Speed 5, Accuracy 10, Damage 6L, Range 10, Rate 1

The horn cannot be blocked, only dodged.

Laurel: Speed 5, Accuracy 12, Damage 6B, Parry DV 5, Rate 3

Notes: Any character struck by the laurel increases his mobility penalty by one for the rest of the scene. This effect is stackable.

Any time two or more statues attack the same target on the same tick, they gain two dice to their attack's Accuracy for every other statue attacking the target that tick.

Willpower: 5

Soak: 12L/16B (stone armor, 9L/9B)

Health Levels: -0x9/-4/Broken

Dodge DV: 4

Virtues: Compassion 0, Conviction 5, Temperance 5, Valor Cannot Fail

Essence: 2

The Sentinel (Grave Good)

Attributes: Strength 7, Dexterity 5, Stamina 12, Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 4, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Abilities: Melee 5 (+3 Guarding the Tomb), War 2, Resistance 4, Athletics 4, Awareness 4, Dodge 3, Linguistics 1 (Native: Old Realm, Skytongue)

Charms: Second Melee Excellency (2m/success), Ebon Lightning Prana (3m, 1 WP)

Weapons

Halberd: Speed 6, Accuracy 13, Damage 14L/2, Parry DV 11, Rate 2, Tags 2,O,R

Willpower: 9

Soak: 0A/20L/24B (metallic form 14L/12B, natural)

The Sentinel takes aggravated damage from Holy attacks.

Health Levels: -0x3/-1x6/-2x6/-4x3/Broken

The Sentinel halves all lethal and bashing damage after damage is rolled, rounded down. This can reduce damage inflicted by an attack to 0 levels.

Dodge DV: 6

The Sentinel adds its Essence to its Parry DV (already factored in).

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 4, Temperance 2, Valor Cannot Fail

Essence: 4

Personal Essence: 40

The Sentinel (Creation)

Attributes: Strength 7, Dexterity 5, Stamina 12, Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 4, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Abilities: Melee 5 (+3 Guarding the Tomb), War 2, Resistance 4, Athletics 4, Awareness 4, Dodge 3, Linguistics 1 (Native: Old Realm, Skytongue)

Charms: Second Melee Excellency (2m/success), Blazing Solar Bolt (3m, 1 WP)

Weapons

Halberd: Speed 6, Accuracy 13, Damage 14L/2, Parry DV 11, Rate 2, Tags 2,O,R

Blazing Solar Bolt: Speed 4, Accuracy 17, Damage 16L, Range 40, Rate 1

Willpower: 9

Soak: 0A/20L/24B (metallic form 14L/12B, natural)

Health Levels: -0x3/-1x6/-2x6/-4x3/Broken

The Sentinel halves all lethal and bashing damage after damage is rolled, rounded down. This can reduce damage inflicted by an attack to 0 levels.

Dodge DV: 6

The Sentinel adds its Essence to its Parry DV (already factored in).

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 4, Temperance 2, Valor Cannot Fail

Essence: 4

Personal Essence: 40



THE SILENT INQUISITOR OF THE WAYWARD SOULS

WEAPONS

NAME	Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Parry DV	Range	Rate	Tags
Whispers of Oblivion							
(Needle)	4	15	8L	—	20	3	P
(Whip)	4	11	varies	8	—	2	C, D, R
Crypt Bolt Attack	5	14	11L/A	—	50	2	—
Radiant							
Holocaust Flare	5	16	11L/A	—	50	Infinite	—
Punch	5	9	3B	10	—	3	N
Kick	5	8	6B	6	—	2	N
Clinch	6	8	3B	—	—	1	C, N, P

ARMOR

Soulsteel Breastplate Soak: 8L/6B, 3L/3B Hardness, -0 mobility, 0 fatigue

NOTES

The Silent Inquisitor is a relentless opponent and a vicious murderer. He holds several artifacts (The Final Mission, Soulsteel Breastplate and Hearthstone Bracers, Whispers of Oblivion, and Walkaway). He also has a few hearthstones, some Underworld and some within Creation, that you may feel free to define. Shortly after the Silent Inquisitor's death, his Deathlord master will alter the geomancy of the manses just enough to destroy the hearthstones and allow new ones to form. He has the Backing and Followers Backgrounds at 5 dots in his Merek Loshan guise.



NAME: The Silent Inquisitor
of Wayward Souls
CONCEPT: Infiltrator and Assassin

CASTE: Day
ANIMA: A smiling shadow

STRENGTH ●●●●○ CHARISMA ●●●○○ PERCEPTION ●●●●○
DEXTERITY ●●●●● MANIPULATION ●●●●○ INTELLIGENCE ●●●●○
STAMINA ●●●●○ APPEARANCE ●●●○○ WITS ●●●●○

ABILITIES

☐ Martial Arts ●●●○○ ☐ Integrity ●●●●● ☐ Linguistics ●●○○○
☒ Thrown ●●●●● ☐ Performance ●●●○○ ☐ (Native: Skytongue, High
☐ (Crypt Bolt +1, Needles +2) ☐ (Dramatic Reading +1, ☐ Realm, Old Realm)
☐ War ●●○○○ ☐ Impersonation +2) ☐ Ride ●●○○○
☒ Athletics ●●●●● ☒ Presence ●●●●○ ☐ Socialize ●●●●○
☒ Awareness ●●●●● ☐ Resistance ●●●○○ ☐ Craft: Air ●○○○○
☒ Dodge ●●●●● ☐ Survival ●●●●● ☐ Investigation ●●●●●
☒ Larceny ●●●●● ☐ (Labyrinth +2) ☐ Lore ●●●○○
☐ (Infiltration +3) ☐ Bureaucracy ●●○○○ ☐ Medicine ●○○○○
☒ Stealth ●●●●● ☐ ○○○○○ ☐ Occult ●●●○○

BACKGROUNDS

Avatar ●●●○○
Backing (Cult of the ☒ Shining One)
Contacts ●●●○○
Influence (as Merek) ●○○○○
Liege ●●○○○
Manse ●●●○○
Resources (as Merek) ●●●○○
Resources ●●○○○
Underworld Manse ●●○○○
Underworld Manse ●●●●●

ANIMA

Spend 1 extra mote to conceal
Peripheral mote use. Double cost for
Obvious charms. 10m to shroud self
in ghostly concealment for scene.

LIMIT BREAK

○○○○○○○○○○○○○○

VIRTUE FLAW

WEAPONS

Speed / Accuracy / Damage / Defense / Rate

WILLPOWER

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

DODGE DV

7

SOAK

B 9 L 9 A 8

HEALTH

-0 □ □ □ □ □
-1 □ □ □ □ □
-2 □ □ □ □ □
-3 □ □ □ □ □
-4 □
INCAPACITATED □

VIRTUES

COMPASSION ●○○○ TEMPERANCE ●●○○○
□□□□ □□□□
CONVICTION ●●●● VALOR ●●●○○
□□□□ □□□□

ESSENCE

● ● ● ● ● ○ ○
PERSONAL 21 |
PERIPHERAL 49 |
COMMITTED 10
ESSENCE POOL

EXPERIENCE



NAME	COST	NAME	COST
First Martial Arts Excellency	1m/die	Morbid Fascination Style	5m
First Thrown Excellency	1m/die	Inescapable Massacre Technique	5m, 1WP
Ravening Mouth of Thrown	3m	First Presence Excellency	1m/die
Infinite Thrown Mastery	2m+, 1WP	Presence Essence Flow	—
Thrown Essence Flow	—	Poisoning the Will	10m, 1WP
Aid of Ill Wind	3m	Broken Heart Triumph	5m, WP
Five Birds, One Stone	2m/attack	Lurking Malice Insinuation	—
Improvised Assassin's Trick	1m	Dread Lord's Demeanor	7m
Crypt Bolt Attack	4m	Killing Words Technique	1WP
Radiant Holocaust Flare	5m, 1WP	Soul-Flaying Gaze	3m
Wicked Darts of Suffering	1m+	Sanity-Eroding Diatribe	5m, 1WP
(Destruction, Infection)		Second Resistance Excellency	2m/success
Burrowing Bone Maggot	2m	Ox-Body Technique x 3	—
Eyes Like Daggers Glance	—	Injury-Absorbing Discipline	10m
Hungry Missile Technique	1m	Second Survival Excellency	2m/success
Lightning Clutch of the Raptor	4m	Infinite Survival Mastery	2+
Second Integrity Excellency	2m/success	Survival Essence Flow	—
Integrity Essence Flow	—	Dark Paths Found	7m
Undying Stagnation Defense	5m, 1WP	Infallible Barghest Mien	8m, 1WP
Blood Before Surrender	1HL/WP	Ghost Leaves No Trail	5m
Heart of Darkness	6m	Maelstrom-Weathering Indifference	10m
Lesser Horrors Scorned	5m	Spirit-Sensing Meditation	3m
Freedom in Slavery Understanding	1aHL, 1+WP	Corpus-Rending Blow	1m
Oblivion's Jowl Postulation*	—	First Athletics Excellency	1m/die
First Performance Excellency	1m/die	Athletics Essence Flow	—

*New Charm: See sidebar on page 9 for details.

[illegible]

NOTES



IRIDESCENT NIGHTMARE

NECROMANCY SPELLS

NAME	COST	NAME	COST
Bone Puppet Dance	16m/1WP	Flesh Sloughing Wave	16m/1WP
Field of Fell Dreams	16m/1WP	Hungry Creeping Shadow	15m/1WP

ARMOR

Perfect Reinforced Breastplate Soak: 8L/7B, -0 mobility, 0 fatigue

NOTES



NAME: Iridescent Nightmare

HERITAGE: Ghost-Blood

CONCEPT: Hateful Avenger

MOTIVATION: To be worshiped as the god he is.

STRENGTH ●●●●○ CHARISMA ●●●●○ PERCEPTION ●●●●○
DEXTERITY ●●●●○ MANIPULATION ●●●●○ INTELLIGENCE ●●●●○
STAMINA ●●●●○ APPEARANCE ●●●●○ WITS ●●●●○

ABILITIES

☐ Martial Arts ●●●●○ ☐ Lore ●●○○○ ☐ Linguistics ●●○○○
☐ Melee (Spear +1) ●●●●○ ☐ Medicine ●○○○○ ☐ (Native: Skytongue,
☐ Thrown ●●○○○ ☐ Occult ●●●●○ ☐ Guild Cant, Old Realm)
☐ War (Gateway +1) ●●○○○ ☐ Athletics ●●○○○ ☐ Ride ●●○○○
☐ Integrity ●●●●○ ☐ Awareness ●○○○○ ☐ Socialize ●○○○○
☐ Presence ●○○○○ ☐ Dodge ●●○○○ ☐ ○○○○○
☐ Resistance ●●●●○ ☐ Stealth ●●○○○ ☐ ○○○○○
☐ Survival ●●●●○ ☐ (Underways +2) ☐ ○○○○○
☐ (Underways +2) ☐ Bureaucracy ●●●○○ ☐ ○○○○○
☐ Investigation ●●●●○ ☐ (Guild +2) ☐ ○○○○○



BACKGROUNDS

Artifact ●●○○○
(Black Jade Dire Lance)
Resources ●●○○○
(Murders)
○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○

ANIMA

LIMIT BREAK

○○○○○○○○○○○○

VIRTUE FLAW

WEAPONS

	Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Defense	Rate	Tags
Punch:	5	8	1B	9	3	2,L,R
Kick:	5	7	4B	5	2	N
Clinch:	6	7	1B	-	1	N
Dire Lance	4	11	12L/16L	11	2	C,N,P

WILLPOWER

●●●●●●●●○○
□□□□□□□□

DODGE DV

SOAK

B_10 L_9 A_8

HEALTH

-0 □□□□□
-1 □□□□□
-2 □□□□□
-3 ■■■■■
-4 □
INCAPACITATED □

VIRTUES

COMPASSION ●○○○
□□□□
CONVICTION ●●●●○
□□□□
TEMPERANCE ●●●●○
□□□□
VALOR ●●●●○
□□□□

ESSENCE

●●●○○○
PERSONAL _____
PERIPHERAL _____
COMMITTED 5
ESSENCE POOL 40

EXPERIENCE
