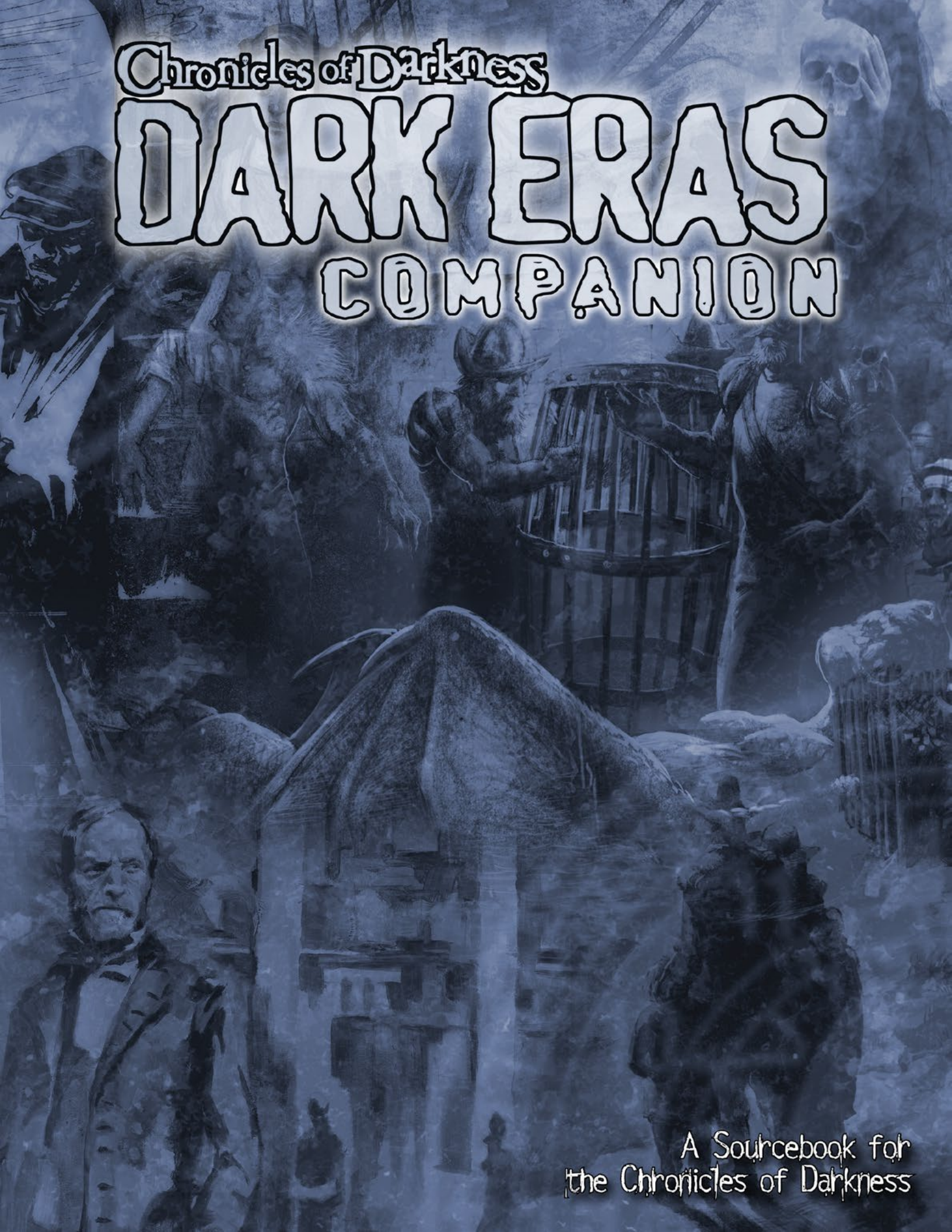
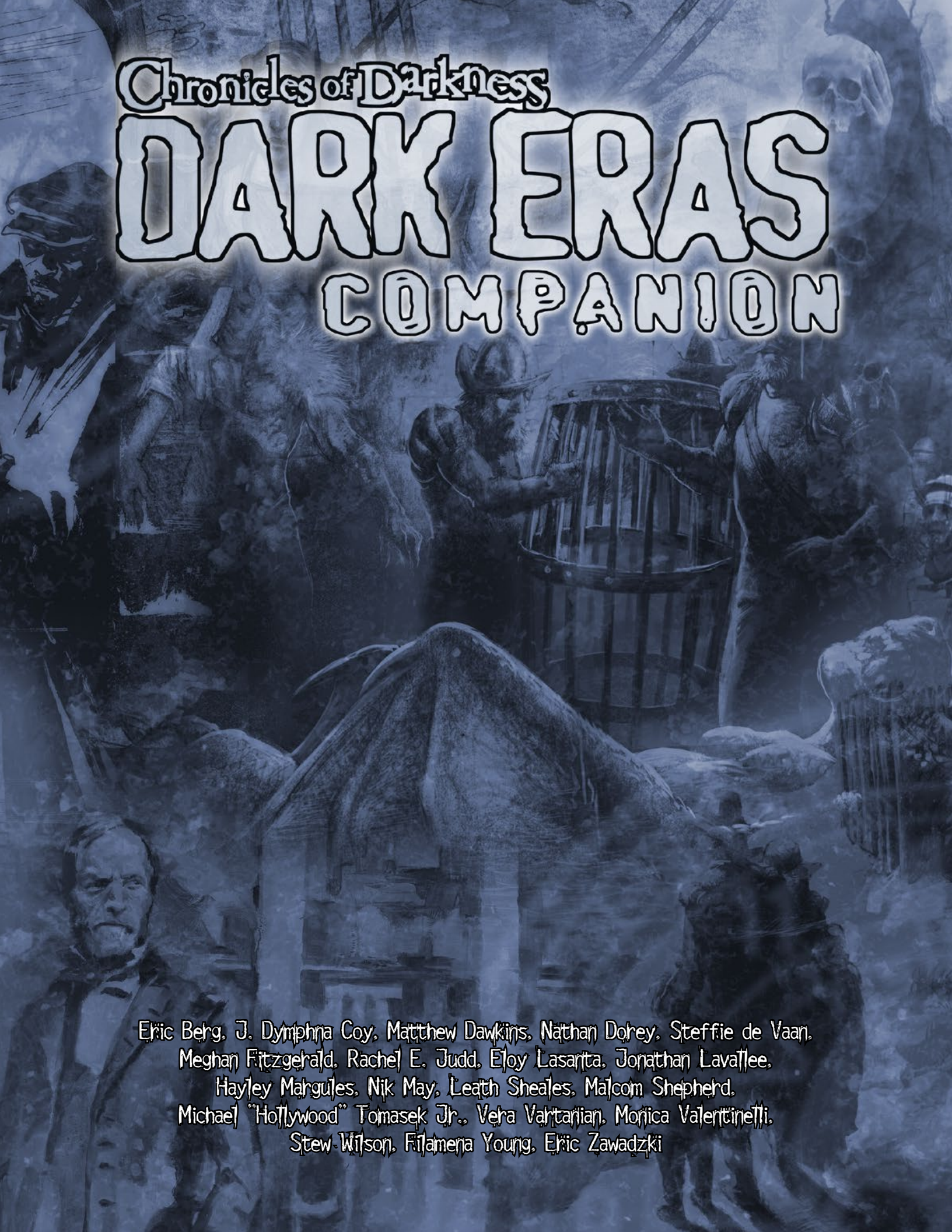
Chronicles of Darkness

DARK ERAS COMPANION



A Sourcebook for the Chronicles of Darkness



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Introduction

Welcome to the **Dark Eras Companion**. Much like its sister text, **Dark Eras**, this book examines a number of historical eras from the perspective of one (or more) of the Chronicles of Darkness games. The Introduction to **Dark Eras** discusses some of the mechanical concerns for running historical games, different Skills, Merits, and so forth, but in this book, we're going to get straight to the point, as it were.

What's In This Book?

The eras that you'll find in this book, in chronological order beginning with the oldest, are as follows:

- **Mummy: The Curse** — *The Fall of Isireion* (69 BCE–30 BCE): One of the most storied figures of the ancient world, Cleopatra Philopator would be the last Egyptian ruler of Egypt for nearly 2,000 years. Under the Ptolemies, the blossoming power of the cults rises to the fore, pitting the Deathless against not merely the Lifeless, but also against the living. Come, fall into a tale of failed divine ascension, superlative political skill, sorcery, and deathless ambition.

- **Werewolf: The Forsaken** — *Forsaken by Rome* (9 CE to 12CE): When Rome set out to conquer Magna Germania, the last real challenge to their power in central Europe, they assumed their historic military might would easily triumph. They were wrong. Despite the ancient treaty between Pure and Forsaken, Rome's might is toppled by betrayal and corruption; will you work to salvage the Augustan Empire from collapse, or will you join with the Wolf-Blooded of the German forests and fight to live free?

- **Vampire: The Requiem/Promethean: The Created** — *The Soulless and the Dead* (1346-1353): A disease the likes of which no one has ever imagined ravages Europe, killing millions. The undead starve for want of blood, and the Created pine for want of human contact.

- **Mage: The Awakening/Mummy: The Curse** — *Princes of the Conquered Land* (1501-1568): Heir to Great Zimbabwe, the Mutapa Empire has long endured the tension between the Awakened Royal Mediums and the Arisen craft societies, but both now face the loss of everything they've built. The Portuguese have arrived, and Mutapa is about to fall.

- **Promethean: The Created** — *When the Horseman Rode* (1618-1648): For the people living in the fractured remains of the Holy Roman Empire, it really did seem like the harbingers of the Apocalypse rode from the four corners of the Earth. What can the Created do but follow their Pilgrimage through a world torn apart by Famine, Conquest, War, and Death?

- **Geist: The Sin-Eaters** — *Foreboding Lands* (1585-1590): Sir Walter Raleigh's vision of an English settlement brings new mysteries to Sin-Eaters as they encounter not only their counterparts among the Native people in the New World, but also the strange immortal beings that control the dead. As the Anglo-Spanish War rages across land and sea, what horrors must the Bound confront?

- **Promethean: The Created** — *The Year Without a Summer* (1816): The eruption of Mount Tambora spawned global climate changes, food shortages across Europe, and other strangeness. It also indirectly led to a summer getaway in Switzerland, which, in turn, led to the rise of a new Lineage of Created.

- **Beast: The Primordial** — *The Fearful Lesson* (1863-1865): The American Civil War is winding down. The Emancipation Proclamation becomes law, and the slaves are (nominally) free. The post-war South is wrecked, ungoverned, and violent, and the Children of the Dark Mother are there in the wreckage, teaching their savage lessons.

- **Second Sight** – *Lifting the Veil* (1885-1890): What happens to the division between Twilight and the physical world when suddenly the western world sets out to "pierce the veil" between the worlds en masse? The rise of spiritualism in the late Victorian era challenges the natural order of things, bringing spirits and ghosts out of the realm of religious belief and into the world of science.

- **Demon: The Descent** — *The Master's Tools* (1917): The Tsar is dead. Russia is in a state of revolution. The future is bleak and punctuated by a bloody dictatorship. Is this what the God-Machine intended all along? The Unchained are unclear, but they know one thing for certain: They are also unsafe.





Her jaw snaps and groans like breaking green branches. There's a face in her mouth. It disappears when she swallows. She spits and it smells of raw meat and ancient dust. Nefersobk rolls the blue, withered corpse off the slab. Its head is gone.

She ate it.

"Send it down the river," she says. "His worshippers will find it." *And I will find them, and him again. And again and again and again.* But for now she's as close to sated as she'll ever be. The hole in her soul never goes away completely, but feasting makes it feel smaller: something to step over and ignore, for a time.

Besides, she plans to eat again, soon.

Her servants cart the "deathless" one's body away as she reels, clutching the mortuary slab. Sekhem's stronger than hashish or unmixed wine, but it doesn't confuse her. It makes her brilliant, like a child seeing constellations in the stars for the first time. Out of nothing but sky, the gods dance. She's the smartest woman in the world again.

Mortals dance, too, in Alexandria tonight: Laborers stagger drunk and full through the narrow streets, sometimes stalked by thieves, and sometimes stalking each other with wine-soaked aggression, ready to fight. Whenever people drink and kill they refresh the earth, too, opening each other with small knives and letting Shezmu's red vintage drip out.

In red-roofed mansions, courtyards glow with fires where the well-to-do celebrate less enthusiastically, with plentiful food, watery wine, and nervous chatter. Today, Mark Antony made himself Osiris to Cleopatra's Isis. Nefersobk lives in such a house but mostly alone, and in the dark. Her fires have died and she can see all the Fate-arrayed stars above. She sent her servants home, well-paid and discreet, and she has no slaves to stoke the flames at night. She passes her outer walls for the streets.

Divine titles aren't blasphemous, as long as you can keep them. It has always been right for gods to rule the Black Land, and for men and women of power to be their *bau*-presences in this world. Unfortunately, even the gods obey political realities. The wealthy know this. Cleopatra's father bought his way back to the throne with Roman money, so her divine ascension was never foreordained, but a business transaction. They called him the Flutist, the Bastard, the Debtor. She hears a loud, rich neighbor say the names tonight as she walks past his house (but he stays away from her dark, cursed house). She avoids firelight as she goes. People here have two basic responses to a woman walking alone at night and they both enrage her. She doesn't want to kill anyone right now.

The Bastard debased coins to pay back Rome, so aristocrats hoard old and foreign money. Everybody knows it. That's why thieves a cut above Alexandria's street muggers will climb their walls tonight, with longer, sharper knives. Some of them are Nefersobk's agents. They are not necessarily aware of the fact. The chain of influence, through bored scribes, bribed tax collectors, and hawkeyed nomads, is too complex to fully describe to anyone stupider than her — or even to her, when she hasn't eaten enough to manifest her full brilliance — but in the end a list of names and houses reached a certain village at the edge of the desert, and its redheaded, mad natives saw an opportunity to get rich and perform certain rites for the glory of Sutek, who they call a forefather.

These Parangelía Seth are witches. Nefersobk is smart enough to keep her distance. She turns down a crooked alley. Tonight will be the first time she's ever met them. The Arisen are not as intelligent. When Sybaris *twitched*, a great snake nailed to the world by Fate's fallen stars, they came back. They woke up buried brethren and they're all so *excited* by what they read out of the Sickness, of Azar's return, of Cleopatra as Esit, the god-king's vessel of rebirth. She notes that *of course*, Esit is nothing but a womb with a crown to the Deathless, who have always been unimaginative users of men and particularly, women.

She understands why: To enslave others, one must believe in his heart that every person has a natural owner. As the Arisen own they long to be owned, to be ruled again, and not merely influenced by cryptic Judges. They can't imagine that the Black Land left them behind, gave its fertility to new owners: mortals, sorcerers who learned from old scrolls and omens in this magic-soaked land.

ARE YOU NOT OWNED AS WELL? The voice is not hers, but echoes from the hole in her soul, from the ever-hungry jaws under all worlds. And her mind chants: *Not by choice.*

Never by choice.



The Fall of Isireion

(69 BCE–30 BCE)

"He is a god, and knows
What is most right: mine honour was not yielded,
But conquer'd merely."

– William Shakespeare,
Antony and Cleopatra
(Act 3, Scene XIII)

This era is about the fall of a mighty civilization: a tale the Arisen know well. Yet saying that a civilization "falls" is simplistic. Civilizations evolve under new rulers, infecting them with their values. The Deathless believe that certain eternal truths remain, indestructible, through every culture that builds cities. Their gods created these truths. They engineered the infection of Empire, so every empire owes them a tithe in Sekhem. The Arisen exist to collect it.

But this is Egypt, the direct successor of Irem: a paradox in the world of the Deathless. It inherited much of Irem's culture but turned away from the Judges of Duat, relegating them to minor functionaries beneath the gods. Egypt is where the Deathless first returned and their only true home, but the First Turn triggered a war and called up mobs of Shuankhsen, inspiring the Great Diaspora. Few Arisen remain in the land of the Nile.

But in the blink of an immortal eye, Egypt was conquered (or as popular opinion had it, liberated) by Alexander the Great, and inherited by his reputed half-brother, Ptolemy, called Soter, whose names mean "warlike savior." Alexander the Great died in Babylon but was entombed in Egypt as a sleeping god: Zeus-Ammon.

A sleeping god and his rumored brother, the warlike savior.

Sorcerers surrounded the Ptolemaic court and battled for control of Alexander's coffin, but destroyed each other. People whispered that gods-in-flesh had returned to rule like true pharaohs. Signs appeared in the land and sky. Scarabs swarmed; comets burned. Oracles babbled verses about Azar reborn. Arisen crept from foreign lands and secret tombs to weave these clues into a prophecy, and the prophecy into action. Using theories born of half-remembered myths they hope to raise Azar from Duat so that he'll end their duties, and grant the supreme reward: A'aru, the heaven in the stars.

They were all betrayed.

So, then, this is the story of a failed divine ascension, a woman of superlative political skill, of sorcery, and of Deathless ambition.

Theme: Ambition and Collapse

They say Alexander was Zeus-Ammon. For every accusation of hubris there's a shadow of belief, because Egyptians are used to god-kings. Ptolemy Soter stole Alexander's body to become his successor in Egypt. His family became the new royal house, but often ignores the land's ancient traditions. They remain Greek. Cleopatra (Actually Cleopatra VII, called Philopator) honors her people's culture instead and calls herself Isis: Esit reborn. But the Ptolemaic line is old, debt-ridden, and on the cusp of a fall. Roman armies and suitors court Cleopatra. She looks for a way to preserve Egypt, through men who want to rule the world and perhaps become living gods.

On the streets of Alexandria, renewed religious fervor reflects the rulers' divine posturing. Through the devout, the old gods rage against their nation's decline. Prophets ply the dusty streets and export Egyptian religion to Rome, but in the end all that will be left is the shouting and the shell of the faith, as events

Vaster Than the Library of Alexandria

One advantage of running a chronicle in this period is the sheer amount of information available. This ranges from articles on particular topics to primary sources such as Dio, Cicero, and Horace. Consequently, we've gone a bit lighter on mundane information from the period, since library and Internet sources are so comprehensive and easy to find for the rest. Use them aggressively.

destroy its substance and bring people under the heel of yet another empire.

Mood: Nostalgia Betrayed

In the last age of pre-Roman Egypt, centuries collide and compress. The country's heavy with history. Remnants of Persian, Greek, Asian, and native influences shape forgotten temples and busy markets alike, under Cleopatra as *Nea Isis*, Esit returned. Civil conflicts, rampant poverty, and famines turn people toward the old tombs. Men and women loot them to thwart starvation. Everywhere you look the ancients rise from the sand, in statues and grave goods newly exposed to light.

Behind it all, returned Arisen lay Sybaris across the land and rekindle their cults. They believe the backward-looking, pious people prepare themselves for resurrected gods and perhaps a Nameless Empire come again, under reborn Azar. Their culture's a sweet taste of the oldest ways of all. The Deathless don't realize that this very nostalgia carries the seeds of betrayal, for they're not the only ones to sense the mythic potential of the time. Sorcerers who inherited the slightest whispers of Iremite magic see great danger in this era, because cruel things inhabit Duat, and could scour the world like an obsidian sandstorm. No, better to let mortals rule the age, and let the gods sleep like Alexander in his gilded coffin, or Caesar in a wounded, waxen effigy.

It Could Have Gone Another Way

The timeline below mixes reputable history, tradition, and a bit of supposition. Some sources say Mark Antony survived his wound long enough to die in Cleopatra's arms. Plutarch's accounts used unreliable sources, were vulnerable to political motives, and may have been altered to tell a particular story. Nobody knows exactly how Caesarion died.

Timeline of Cleopatra's Age

Note: Regnal numbers (such as Ptolemy "XII") are used by historians, but during the period rulers were known by a regnal name (such as Cleopatra *Philopator*) and the time of their reign.

69 BCE: Birth of Cleopatra VII (the central Cleopatra of this chapter, who will be referred to without a regnal number), called Philopator. Her mother is unknown to history, but is possibly Cleopatra V Tryphaena of the royal house. Her father is Ptolemy XII, called Auletes ("flutist") as an insult. His rule is weak, challenged by the rise of Rome.

58 BCE: Ptolemy's brother loses Cyprus to Rome. Ptolemy does nothing; he owes money to the Republic, and passes the debt on to his people through heavy taxes. Aggravated by blows to their pride and purses, Egyptians revolt. Ptolemy and Cleopatra exile themselves to Rome, leaving Cleopatra V and her daughter Berenice as co-rulers. (This chapter adheres to the theory that the Cleopatra "VI" mentioned in some sources is actually Cleopatra V.) Cleopatra V briefly snatches power from Ptolemy XII, but dies a year later, possibly poisoned. There appear to have been efforts to erase records of Cleopatra V in the ancient fashion.

55 BCE: Ptolemy and Cleopatra return after three years spent as Pompey's guests. Rome supports Ptolemy's restoration to restart debt payments. Ptolemy pays Aulus Gabinius 10,000 talents to retake Egypt with Roman legions. They smash through frontier forces and seize the country, but its treasury is too poor to easily pay the debt. Ptolemy makes one of his Roman creditors the finance minister, shifting popular resentment to Rome. Ptolemy makes Cleopatra his co-regent.

51 BCE: Ptolemy dies, age 66. He makes Rome the executor of his will. Pompey oversees the process. It stipulates that Cleopatra should be co-regent with younger brother, Ptolemy XIII Theos Philopator (b. 62 BCE). They marry, but dislike each other, and Cleopatra assumes the dominant role. Only she appears on coins. Their father leaves them a more stable but deeply indebted kingdom. Cleopatra is 18 years old but Ptolemy XIII is 10, so the court eunuch Phothinus acts as the boy's regent. Eight year old Ptolemy XIV has no official role in government. It is a period of famine and plague.

49 BCE: Julius Caesar crosses the Rubicon, beginning an era of political dominance.

48 BCE: Ptolemy XII and Phothinus depose Cleopatra, sparking civil war. In the ensuing chaos, her sister Arsinoe claims the throne as well. Ptolemy and Phothinus invite Pompey to Egypt, but assassinate him to please Caesar.

47 BCE: Caesar is disgusted by Pompey's assassination and takes Alexandria. Cleopatra smuggles herself into his chambers, beginning a relationship with him. Nine months later she gives birth to their son, Caesarion. Caesar defeats



Ptolemy XIII's forces; Ptolemy himself drowns in the Nile. Caesar supports Cleopatra's ascension and political marriage to the powerless youngest brother, Ptolemy XIV. Caesar and Cleopatra banish her sister Arsinoe to Rome.

46 BCE: Open lovers, Cleopatra and Caesar visit Rome with Caesarion. The people dislike Cleopatra intensely, especially since she's had a child by Caesar before his Roman wife. Caesar raises a statue of Cleopatra as Isis in a temple to Venus Genetrix. He does not formally acknowledge Caesarion as his son.

44-43 BCE: Assassination of Julius Caesar. Ptolemy XIV dies, thought to have been poisoned by Cleopatra. She makes Caesarion co-ruler and, pressing his claim as Caesar's heir, joins the Caesarian faction. But Caesar posthumously adopts Octavian in his will and hinders these ambitions. Roman intrigue makes it impractical for Brutus and Cassius' Liberatores faction to invade Egypt. Storms and enemies prevent Cleopatra from sailing to the other Caesarians, and she returns to Egypt in 43 BCE.

41-40 BCE: Caesarian faction Triumvir Mark Antony visits Cleopatra to determine her loyalties but, enthralled, stays in Alexandria for a year. They become lovers. She convinces Mark Antony to order Arsinoe's death, and his partisans kill her on the steps of the Temple of Artemis, where she had taken sanctuary. To Romans, the killing is a blasphemous act. In 40 BCE, Cleopatra gives birth to Mark Antony's twins: Alexander Helios and Cleopatra Selene II.

36 BCE: Mark Antony returns and marries Cleopatra under Egyptian rites before leaving for Parthia. The people identify her with Isis. Unlike her recent predecessors, she speaks Egyptian, honors the full set of traditions, and has grown popular among her people. She gives birth to another of Mark Antony's children, Ptolemy Philadelphus.

34-33 BCE: The Donations of Alexandria. In 34 BCE, Mark Antony gives Rome, Parthia, and other territories to Cleopatra and her children through a grand ceremony. Cleopatra is called Queen of Kings and Isis, and Caesarion is acclaimed King of Kings, son of Julius Caesar as god and man, and manifestation of Horus. The Roman Senate refuses to recognize the grant, and Octavian sees it as a challenge to his status as Caesar's heir. This leads to the end of the Second Triumvirate in 33 BCE, and inevitable war.

32-30 BCE: Final War of the Republic. Antony and Cleopatra fight Octavian for control of Rome's conquests. The Battle of Actium (31 BCE) proves to be the decisive engagement of the war. Octavian routs Cleopatra's ships and virtually destroys Mark Antony's fleet. After a winter's pause, Octavian marches troops overland to conquer Egypt. They lay siege to Alexandria with superior numbers, and Mark Antony's troops often surrender without a fight.

On August 1, 30 BCE, Mark Antony falls on his sword. Cleopatra negotiates with Octavian to spare Caesarion, but the rival heir to Caesar refuses and describes how she will be paraded before Rome as a prisoner. This fate befalls her children by Mark Antony, who will be displayed in golden chains during Octavian's triumph. She commits suicide on August 12 by the bite of an Egyptian cobra.

Octavian has Caesarion killed — strangled, some say. This act destroys three legacies. It extinguishes the bloodline of *Julii*

Caesares. It ends the Ptolemaic Dynasty, born of Alexander's conquests and perhaps his father's blood. And finally, it slays the last Pharaoh.

After 3000 years, Egypt has truly fallen.

SETTINGS — LANDS OF THE DEATHLESS

Over 23 centuries ago, war and Shuankhsen predation sparked the Great Diaspora, scattering the Deathless across every continent, known and unknown. By the time Cleopatra is born, Arisen rule remote settlements and cults that operate in almost every kingdom. The Deathless aren't especially numerous, but have a knack for infiltrating mortal power structures with loyal agents. They're familiar with the common patterns of empires, yet several factors prevent the Deathless from just enslaving a king or revealing themselves as god-rulers.

First, the Arisen aren't the only supernatural beings with an interest in mortal government. Blood drinking demons, sorcerers, and guardian ancestors all meddle in mortal affairs. If one group pushes too hard, the others push back — and sometimes, mortals tire of the shadow play and banish everyone. Mortal persecution merely delays Arisen schemes, but they treat it seriously. Mummies have all the time in the world, but limited access to any particular stretch of it.

Second, when one of the Deathless makes a move the others follow, and when too many of them gather, Sybaris rises. Powerful Sybaris doesn't completely ruin the mortal population's potential but those under its thrall become backward-looking worshippers, not the creative mob mummies bend to art and conquest. Sacred architecture can diffuse Sybaris, but the necessary talent isn't easy to come by.

Third, the Arisen know that every empire is a shadow of the first, Nameless Empire. The Judges don't like it when the Deathless presume to a station higher than what they've been given. When a mason erects a statue to an Arisen king, the Judges flay Sekhem from its arrogant subject. The Judges tolerate a certain amount of deception when Arisen build cult doctrines, but some state religions might blaspheme the eldest gods, risking punishment.

New Framework: Buried Secrets

If you're committed to a modern-day chronicle you might be hard pressed to get the most out of this and other periods in **Dark Eras** and the **Dark Eras Companion**. Sure, you can run flashbacks, but what happens when your players' Arisen change the past so that it wouldn't lead to the present? Fortunately, **Mummy** provides a unique way to handle this via Memory, and it leads to the Buried Secrets framework: a variation of the flashback-based chronicle frameworks first introduced in **Sothis Ascends**. (You don't need **Sothis Ascends** to run Buried Secrets games, but much of its advice applies, and hey, you get more history to play through.)

A Buried Secrets game uses chapters set in the present and past, but scenes in the past are always considered to be filtered through flaws in Arisen Memory. The core rules describe the number of prior Descents a mummy can reliably remember, but to make this game work you'll tweak things while staying within the spirit of the Memory concept, to give your chronicle room to breathe. We assume that *all* Memory Trait scores short of 9 or 10 contain flaws, and that any Memory score above 0 can support recall just enough to proceed, even if in the present day the mummy has trouble remembering more than a murky dream.

Buried Secrets games bounce between past and present through plot and theme touchstones common to both periods. In the modern era, the meret senses an important relic. This triggers a scene in the past, when the relic was used by their enemy. Both tracks usually run forward in time, but Storytellers are allowed to change continuity in the past. Your Arisen remembers killing Mark Antony but the truth is you wounded him, forcing him to withdraw from a battlefield. To prevent these necessary changes from screwing over the players, each discontinuity the Storyteller identifies earns one point of Sebayt Experience for each character, plus one for the character most strongly connected to it. At the end of each flashback scene, all characters earn one additional Sebayt Experience. Thus, each flashback brings Arisen close to the truth of the past.

Arisen remembering the past might use Traits they never developed. Since flashbacks happen within Memory you may allow this, but in the case of blatant examples (that is, something people easily remember the character didn't have) the Storyteller deducts one Sebayt experience from the character's award — using anachronistic abilities represents the mummy denying her true recall.

Buried Secrets work well when combined with a Pyramid framework (see **Mummy: The Curse**, pp. 241-245), where one player portrays one of the Deathless and the rest play various supporting roles.



Therefore, Deathless keep lurking behind public thrones, and prefer cultures balanced on the sword's edge between tradition and dynamism. They harvest the benefits of innovation, but hope they will solidify into centuries-long dynasties with stone palaces large enough to conceal their tombs. Failing that, the creative chaos of collapse gives them a Descent or two to hoard the spoils of war and plant the seeds of a new regime. In Cleopatra's time, Rome and Egypt grant these treasures of birth and death, respectively.

EGYPT

By the time Cleopatra is born, Ptolemaic Egypt is a debtor kingdom. Rome annexed Cyprus and Ptolemy XII did nothing. The people revolted, and he ran away to Rome, only returning under the protection of a Roman army. The Republic's hand lies heavy, and the people resent it.

Cleopatra wins back the people by adopting Egyptian traditions. Before her, the Ptolemies usually clung to Greco-Macedonian culture. Many of them didn't even speak the native language. Even as she pursued relationships with Julius Caesar and Mark Antony, Cleopatra read and spoke Egyptian, identified with Isis and promoted a rebirth in Egyptian national pride. Her considerable personal charisma, intelligence (she reputedly speaks nine languages), and familiarity with many nations drive a period of relative autonomy, but it is just that — relative. Cleopatra can't really resist Rome, but can only turn its varied interests against one another. With Mark Antony, she might even shift the center of power to Egypt itself, but that's more than even the shambolic Republic after Caesar is willing to tolerate.

MATERIAL CULTURE

In Cleopatra's time, Egypt has not only adapted Hellenistic culture to its own needs, but absorbed Seleucid, Roman, and Celtic influences. The age of chariot-riding archers and khopesh-slinging infantry is over. The Nile is still the heart of Egyptian trade and agriculture, but is no longer so powerful an influence as to isolate the kingdom from the outside world.

Currency: Before Alexander, Egyptians reckoned the value of currency by its metal weight and content. Alexander imposed Greek coinage, but after his death the Ptolemies attempted to collect and remint coins with the objective of creating a purely internal currency. The standard coin is the *drachma*, which contains 0.12 to 0.15 ounces of silver and was considered to be worth a day's work from a skilled laborer. (The worker would usually be paid in barter instead, but in any event, a character with this income is considered to possess Resources •)

Ptolemaic currency was five to 10 percent less valuable by metal weight, but theoretically equal in value within Egypt's borders. Only merchants and nobles are usually allowed to use heavier foreign currency. Most Egyptians prefer barter, and still reckon goods in terms of their *deben* weight: a unit equal to about three ounces, or fractions thereof. One silver deben is worth about 20 drachmas.

Note that Cleopatra's father debases coinage even further to pay debts. He partly controls inflation through command of the internal economy, but still drops the value of coins to half of what they were under prior rulers. Cleopatra gradually corrects this.

For more information about Hellenistic currency, see the main **Dark Eras** book (especially the chapter titled "To the Strongest").

Military Technology: The Egyptian military follows a modified Hellenistic model with influence from the Seleucids and Romans. Elite Greek-style soldiers wear heavy bronze armor and wield spears in phalanxes, though the *sarrisas*, long spears, are less common than they used to be, and the Romans have mastered anti-phalanx tactics to such a degree that the once-feared formation is no longer a decisive battlefield ploy. Past kings encouraged professional soldiers from throughout the Hellenistic world to colonize Egypt in exchange for military service, and Celtic soldiers served Egyptians and Romans alike, leading to a wide variety of weapons, armor, and tactics. Egyptians use everything from cloth to iron chainmail supplemented with plates, and arms of bronze, iron or steel, depending on the type of weapon and status of the owner. Roman generals in Egypt supplement native forces with Roman troops and methods.

EGYPTIANS, DEATHLESS AND LIFELESS

Driven by prophecy, Arisen return to the Black Land where they were born and cursed, overcoming their fear of the Shuankhsen. They enter a kingdom undergoing a resurgence in magic and traditional culture, and are pleased to harness it in the service of their cults. This annoys the mummies who stayed behind.

Native Arisen tend to be careful, conservative, and appreciative of the long view. They've seen false religions come and go, had waves of Shuankhsen batter at their tombs, and contended with sorcerers intent on stealing Irem's magical legacy. It's always better to quietly defeat immediate enemies and outlast indirect threats, consolidate power, and prepare for the promised end of the Arisen mission, when the Judges will open the gates of A'aru. This process can't be hastened, and trying to do so is at least a cousin to blasphemy. You can't trick the gods. You can't bribe the Judges of Duat. The Tamaithians and like-minded merets do whatever they can to discourage adventurous immigrants, but aren't especially effective.

Some of the Deathless didn't stay behind by choice, but accident. They were slain in a prior age but their cults never arrived to revive them, or storms and construction buried their tombs. When Sorcerers and Deathless explorers dig them up, they must contend with confused, cruel newcomers. Arisen buried since the Second Turn cannot conceive of the changes awaiting them. They've barely cultivated their Memories, leaving them with little more than ruthless, Sekhem-driven instincts and whatever they wrote down before their last deaths.

As you might expect, Egypt's cursed with numerous Sekhem-bearing enemies. These include Amkhata tomb

guardians, people cursed by the relics they carry, prodigal sorcerers and in greater numbers than anywhere else, Shuankhsen. Many of the cannibals left Egypt, but enough remain to constitute a persistent threat. Some Shuankhsen play at being desert wanderers and tenant farmers. They're poor and filled with the pain Ammut gave them, but at least they can pretend to be free. Tempted by hunger, they almost always abuse the mortals who live with them, but a few resist to the fullest extent — until the Arisen come. Their enemy's Sekhem and old hate are too potent to ignore. When the Deathless come, the Lifeless fall from what passes for grace.



Rome

Rome shuffled toward an empire, but it's not there yet. Cleopatra's reign sees the final collapse of the Roman Republic, as the people accept dictatorial rule. If you live in Roman territory, your view of events depends on your exact position. If you're a free resident of Rome proper, you might support the populist Julius Caesar and, after he dies, throw your voice behind anyone who seems like his true successor. If you're Italian, you're warming to Rome, as the decades since the Social War have softened grudges and you've acquired citizenship. If you're a slave, you might remember the atrocities of the last Servile War, and feel your privileges shrink as Rome tries to maintain a stable pool of indentured labor. If you're wealthy, you pick your alliances carefully.

Rome's instability is, if anything, a symptom of success. After a string of conquests, the conquerors demand their due. Julius Caesar took Rome itself, grew too powerful to maintain the charade of being some sort of public servant, and was killed, to prevent him from becoming a king. After the Triumvirate prevails over the assassins' Liberatores, its members fight among themselves. Octavian becomes the true heir, adopted son of Caesar, and casts Mark Antony as a traitor under the sway of a foreign queen.

Material Culture

For centuries, Rome has been a center of innovation. It accelerates as the city grows, and its dense population responds to the peculiar needs and concentrated wealth of an urban society. Arisen witness an almost Iremite degree of ingenuity, though it has limits, for the Romans worship false gods, and cannot create relics on an industrial scale. Sometimes however, individual artisans bind power into novel devices.

Currency: Like people everywhere, Romans use barter, but money is essential in Rome itself, where carrying a pig around to do business with is impractical. The Romans were late to adopt coinage from the Greeks, and invented the *denarius* less than 200 years ago. Over time, the denarius has grown lighter. Newer denarii contain about 0.13 grams of silver — about equal to an



Egyptian drachma except during the period when Cleopatra's father debased it. Older denarii contain 0.15 grams of silver and are better regarded by foreign traders. Street merchants won't quibble about metal content unless the coin looks suspicious, but industrious moneychangers can sometimes take advantage of a coin's vintage. The basic "spare change" coin, the bronze *aes*, is 16 to a denarius (originally 10, but this changed as the denarius lightened). There are numerous intermediary values, pegged to an aes value, and gold coins worth multiple denarii, though these are rarely used by common people. Someone who earns the equivalent of a denarius a day possesses Resources •.

Roman currency is manufactured by politically-connected mint masters who often put political messages on their creations. Coins depicting Julius Caesar and Brutus circulate side by side. Partisans of a particular figure avoid coinage dedicated to their enemies, but still value its metal content.

Military Technology: This is a classic period for the Roman military, embracing Julius Caesar and his immediate successors. Roman infantry carry a *gladius* (short sword), *pilum* (iron-headed heavy javelin/spear) and oval *scutum* (shield — it will eventually evolve into a rectangular shape). Plate armor isn't commonly used; soldiers wear bronze or iron *lorica hamata*, a form of chain mail that might have been discovered through contact with the Celts. Cavalrymen carry a long, one-handed sword called a *spatha*. Rome's armies consist of professional soldiers organized into 80-strong *centurae*, six-*centurae* cohorts, and 10-cohort *legions*. Specialized forces use compound bows, ballistae, and well-designed siege weapons. Roman cavalry often cut off reinforcements while the infantry, after showering the enemy with pilae, march in rank to destroy them. By keeping ranks three or more cohorts deep and rotating in and out of the front of the battle, Roman soldiers maintain continuous pressure on their enemies, including formerly-supreme phalanx formations.

ROMANS, DEATHLESS AND LIFELESS

The gods practically made Italy for conspiracies. It's filled with rocky terrain and the possibility of isolation, but open to the sea from three directions. It was only natural that the Romans, having founded a culture on their seven hills, would look across the sea and embrace everything the world has to offer — and the rest of the world sees the potential in Rome, too. Therefore, the Arisen aren't the only ones seeking a presence in Roman territory, but the ascendant pre-Empire seems to offer enough room for anyone to better

Fallen Seleucids, Mighty Parthians

The following Hellenistic kingdoms were powers in their own right, but stand to one side of this chapter's central drama. Both rose from territories conquered by Alexander, and had Greek-speaking aristocracies.

The newly-lost Seleucid Empire was named after Seleucus, a satrap of Alexander who took Babylon in 312 BCE. The Seleucids are old enemies of Ptolemaic Egypt. At one point the empire extended from Anatolia to India. In 197 BCE, King Antiochus III ("the Great") tried to conquer Greece itself, but was pushed back by Romans and, by 188 BCE, was forced to give up everything west of the Taurus Mountains (one of which holds the Tauran Arisen's fortress). Further wars with Rome, Egypt, and the Maccabees of Judea tore away pieces of the empire until 64 BCE, when the last, weak ruler, a client of Pompey, was finally deposed for good. Nevertheless, rebellions will wrack former Seleucid territories for decades to come. In 56 BCE, Mark Antony distinguishes himself by suppressing Judean unrest but of course, this doesn't end the struggle against Rome in that region. Like the Taurans, Arisen who settled here often pursued religious or occult interests, as the empire included the old border with Ki-En-Gir, Irem's ancient rival. After the empire falls, these Deathless often strike west, taking eldritch insights with them.

The Parthian Empire will outlive Antony and Cleopatra by nearly three centuries. Currently, it's at least a hundred years old, but its rulers traditionally date their founding to 247 BCE, when the Seleucids lost control of Parthia. During Cleopatra's reign, the empire stretches from Osroene in Asia Minor to the Hindu Kush. It claims much of this territory at the expense of the Seleucids, but also seizes Ptolemaic possessions, making it no friend to Cleopatra's house. The Parthian Empire tests Roman resolve in the East, attacking Judea and other territories. In 53 BCE, the Parthians crush Crassus' army; his fellow Triumvir Julius Caesar means to avenge the loss, but after his assassination the task falls to Mark Antony, who in 40 BCE begins a seven-year campaign. He retakes Jerusalem in 37 BCE, but when he strikes for the empire itself, the enemy sends a quarter of his hundred thousand men to the grave. Afterward, he uses Cleopatra's money to buy the troops he needs to seize Armenia and claims a token victory. This lets him claim a conquest in Asia, justifies the Donations of Alexandria and officially ends his strained alliance with Octavian. Through most of its history, the Parthian Empire holds the Silk Road and deals with Chinese emissaries. This makes it a common dwelling place for Arisen determined to travel beyond the known world, and a source of highly unusual relics.

their lot. Romans have always amused themselves with foreign religions, so Arisen cults flower here.

Nevertheless, there's a limit, and it starts at the steps of older Roman temples, where citizens perform rituals that regardless of what they believe, affirming an ancient ethnic identity. The Deathless sense power here, and do not disturb Vestals and Augers lightly. They say Rome's ancestors guard the old religion: a legion of ghosts and blood-drinking dead that the Deathless would prefer to avoid. Of all the Deathless, the Crimson Pharaoh knows Rome's old powers the best, and seems to have come to an accommodation with them. Nobody knows what he's done to mollify Roman ghosts and devils, but it seems to prevent him from presenting himself as anything but a son of Egypt. He refuses to disguise himself as a Roman, implying that there would be dire consequences. His cult connects rich and poor Romans, who can be recognized by numerous small scars, acquired during bloodletting rites.

Lifeless are relatively uncommon, but Shuankhsen sometimes hide in agricultural estates and the crowded apartment blocks called *insulae*. They fought beside Spartacus, but the temptation to betray and eat their allies claimed them at last and, ashamed, they now keep Roman slaves at a distance. They don't want to prey on the very people they sympathize with the most. The Arisen know that their enemies often stir up trouble among slaves and foreigners, but think it's nothing but lowly strategy.

The Age of Isis

A prophecy whispers in the winds of Sybaris. Involuntary oracles of fear awaken, babbling what they see in sweat-soaked dreams: calculated sex, bloody birth, gold, gods, and empires undreamt of since Alexander cried out in his own death fever, in Babylon.

They call Arisen home, to the Black Land: Egypt.

Not all answer the call. Some Deathless remember the First Turn, the terrible war and the Shuankhsen that still swarm through the old heart of the Nameless Empire. Egypt is a dangerous place for them. But the prophecies tempt them because they predict that Azar will come again, reborn from Esit's womb, and found a new empire. This will signal the end of their service, and a time of rewards. The cruel Judges might return the indefinable human spark they stole at the moment of the Decree. They will be artisans again—perhaps even princes of artisans, inheritors of the Shan'iatu.

The prophecy's details change from one account to the next, but they convince Arisen when they tell a secret story, known to Deathless alone. Mortals call Azar Esit's husband, and Heru the Falcon his son, but the Iremite religion says Azar—now called Osiris by the omnipresent Greek-speaking peoples, as Esit is called Isis—was husband *and* son. When Azar walked among the Shan'iatu, Esit received his substance and gave birth to him in death, so that he would rule Duat. Therefore, the prophecy is not a blasphemous pastiche but a message from true gods, and the Fate that rules them.

The first Sybaritic prophecies manifest over a century and a half before Cleopatra, but grow clearer and more common as her birth approaches. Drawn by what they'll call the Prophecies of Isis, Arisen creep into Egypt once again, joining the few who never left.

Manifestations of the Prophecy

The Prophecy of Isis can appear in any community deeply affected by Sybaris. People have strange dreams and nature twists into portentous symbols, such as the following:

- A Platonist philosopher goes mad in the midst of a lecture. After describing the ideal government of the *Republic*, he posits an anti-ideal "Nameless," state ruled by a god-king. He tears out his eyes and points them toward Alexandria.
- A female baboon digs up a grave and eats a human corpse. Days later it gives birth to something hairless, stillborn, and green with a torn caul partly covering its head like a crown.
- In the estates surrounding an ancient tomb, enslaved women are freed by their masters. They build these women shrines and shower them with gifts, begging to be emasculated "like the god to come."
- A damaged mask of the *sha*, the square-eared beast of Set, comes to life and tells its owner to prepare for the reunion of Esit and Azar.

These are starting points; the Storyteller should expand them. Note also that in this case, Sybaris can manifest in sort of subtle, physical ways recognized by fortune tellers. Furthermore, the prophecy is potent enough that sometimes, blatant manifestations may take place. It may inexplicably awaken dormant Arisen or bring about a rain of snakes that whisper distorted Iremite hymns. This indicates that the prophecy isn't just a side effect of Arisen presence. Furthermore, the presence of sorcerers tends to make these manifestations stronger, and they sometimes appear spontaneously during or shortly after a magical rite. **(See p. 27 for more on sorcery.)** Ultimately, treat this as a license to add ominous phenomena that are more than strange dreams, but probably less than Azar himself appearing and dumping plot information.

The Word of the Goddess

The "Cult of Isis" is among the first to collect these prophecies and study them deeply. Two long-buried Sesha-Hebsu and their scrolls piece together the myth of Azar's descent to the throne of Duat. They record their collected knowledge in a new set of scrolls, which they entrust to the sorcerers of the Reborn Osiris and their Loyalist successors. Seventeen inspired copyists produce a relic out of the prophecies, and give their lives to this masterwork: one per scroll. This creates the Isireion Prophecies relic **(see p. 37)**. Ordinary copies also exist, and after the Parangelia Seth discover one in 47 BCE, its contents spread far and wide among Deathless, sorcerers, and cults.

In the first eight scrolls, Set slays Azar, but Esit recovers his immortal essence. The language of myth alludes to sexual and



cannibalistic connotations. She grows pregnant from Azar and with him: a god who would be reborn. But the Judges of Duat cannot allow even Azar to upset the balance of life and death. Therefore, Esit offers herself to Set to be slain while bearing Azar. She descends to Duat and gives birth to Azar there. He becomes the King of Death.

(This closely resembles the orthodox Iremite legend, but some in the Lost Guild remember it differently, as chronicled in the **Book of the Deceived.**)

The last nine scrolls deal with what is to come: a vision of the *Mentaar*, or Ascent, as immanent in Cleopatra's reign, and accomplished when she, as Isis, gives birth to Azar again. He will climb the Ladder of Set manifested on Earth and end the Arisen cycle.

THE CULT OF ISIS

There's no single Cult of Isis. In Hellenistic Egypt, native cults worship beside young sects that identify her with Demeter, Aphrodite and the Arabian al-Uzzá. As far as the Arisen are concerned, none of these are the true religion of Esit. Nevertheless, in 176 BCE one meret claims the title unwillingly. Caused by Sybaris and untamed sorcery, an earthquake rouses Arisen who were buried deep, in tombs sealed since the Second Turn. Two of their Sesha-Hebsu survive Shuankhsen assault with the assistance of Grecian Arisen, who discover them by interpreting Sybaritic omens. Together, they decipher certain omens with the help of texts recovered from the Scribes' tombs. This ad hoc meret never settles on any name, much less the Cult of Isis, and stands apart from Arisen affairs to avoid Shuankhsen predation. Instead, they work through the Reborn Osiris, then the Loyalists of the Ptolemaic Dynasty.

The omens continue, drawing more Arisen back to the Black Land. The original "Cult of Isis" retreats. When the Reborn Osiris creates the lion-Amkhata called the Maahes Abomination in 140 BCE, other Arisen hunt them but don't capture them all. A mummy called the "Mistress" eventually revives a mortal following in the Loyalists.

After that, Isis becomes a useful goddess for many Arisen to support. Egypt's cults employ more sorcerers than ever, using their spells to solve problems and their knowledge to better understand the Prophecies of Isis. Egypt experiences a rebirth of magical knowledge unseen since the Age of Irem. Sybaris roils, the Deathless seek Azar's rebirth, and they all grow ambitious and a bit foolhardy. When Cleopatra ascends to the throne, Sybaris-driven visions put her face to Isis. This might be hallucinatory fancy built on the fact that she identifies with Isis within the state religion, but it fits other visions. Arisen and sorcerers attempt to shape her life into a magical rite with details of their choosing, but their clashing visions of Azar's return—or whether he even should return—lead to rivalries.

A PRIVATE RELIGIOUS WAR

Despite the fact that such powerful interests surround Cleopatra, they don't readily reveal themselves to her court. Only the Parangelia Seth want to kill her outright, and the other sects are willing to put aside their differences to prevent it. Otherwise, her ritual significance makes her sacrosanct. The Arisen aren't sure what Sybaris would do to the revelation of the prophecy, and are afraid that if one of them openly interfered with her life, it would spark a cycle of escalation that might lead to her accidental death or some spiritual deformity that would twist events away from their desires. The Deathless and their cults mostly work indirectly, shaping political necessity so that she *must* act in certain ways.

Cleopatra doesn't cooperate. The Loyalists expected her to do her duty by her brother-husband and produce Azar reborn in their son. The Taurans planned to introduce her to a priest trained from birth to play the role of Osiris Entombed, father of Osiris Reborn. (The Loyalists kill him in 41 BCE, but they have less mature replacements waiting in the wings.) Instead, she runs off with Caesar. They all underestimate Cleopatra's ambition and political creativity and from that point, are forced to play it by ear. When subtle manipulation fails, the Arisen turn to brute force at last. Still, the various factions counteract each other without drawing too much attention. In the end, the Final War of the Republic gives them all the chance to unleash their mightiest powers and settle simmering grudges without attracting too much attention. Even then, some factions still protect Cleopatra from supernatural forces. The Loyalists of the Ptolemaic Dynasty take the lead, but if history follows its known course, fail, as the Crimson Pharaoh and his followers switch sides and the Parangelia Seth fight for Octavian.

A CERTAIN BLINDNESS

One flaw most of the Arisen and mortals who try to influence Cleopatra suffer is sexism. In this, the Deathless cling to their Iremite heritage. The Nameless Empire was a male-dominated society; even the Shan'iatu assumed male roles. In Iremite theology, Esit was a wise woman who was deified by the act of "giving birth" to Azar in his aspect of king of Duat—an act that involved her sacrifice. This is a more passive position than she holds in later Egyptian mythology. Where historical Egyptian women possessed property rights and other ways to assert themselves, the Nameless Empire was an ad hoc tyranny, governed by such laws as the Shan'iatu found convenient to administer their rule. Even when Memory fails them, many Deathless — particularly male mummies — possess a reflexive attitude that regards even women as powerful as Cleopatra as vessels for some greater deed. Thus, when Cleopatra truly acts of her own accord, it might throw some mummies off guard.

This flaw extends to mortals immersed in Deathless cults, cosmopolitan Hellenistic culture and its ingrained sexism, and to Romans, who belong to a patriarchal society. Egyptians who cleave to traditional culture are often still sexist, but are more comfortable with women wielding political and economic power. Naturally, women tend to be less blinded by these biases than men, but they aren't necessarily immune to them either. If you want to use a system for severe cases, consider Biased Thinking, as per the sidebar.

Contending Factions

The following factions wish to bend the prophecy to their own designs, or snuff it out completely. Each entry comes with a destiny: what the faction will eventually do if chronicle events don't change things.

Blood of the Crimson Pharaoh

By the time of Cleopatra the Adelfoí Aímatos have been driven from Egypt. The blood sorcerers originally came from the Greek island of Karpathos to study in the reputed birthplace of magic. They quickly involved themselves in Arisen affairs, pledging allegiance to patrons who'd barely made it off the boat or out of their tombs. They became known for the arts of assassination and battle sorcery, ending wars with a drop of general's blood and a strange calamity. After they were accused of poisoning Ptolemaic nobles, they fled to Rome and entered the service of the Crimson Pharaoh, a mummy connected to the highest levels of Republic society and its supernatural subcultures.

The Adelfoí Aímatos now belong to the Crimson Pharaoh's cult. Before the magicians took refuge with them Egypt didn't particularly concern them. They worshipped Egypt's gods from the other side of the sea. Their master cared more about Rome's ascendancy than his homeland. As reported by the Adelfoí Aímatos, the Prophecy of Isis presents a tempting possibility: Egypt and Rome might be fused into one power, with the reborn Azar as its head. The Crimson Pharaoh now believes he could rule under Azar as one of the new Shan'iatu, viceroy of Rome. He backs Caesar's dictatorship and believes that Azar exists within Caesarion, the offspring of empires ancient and new.

The sorcerers follow the Pharaoh's footsteps closely, believing he presents a route to immortality focused on the spread of life, in favor of their blood bathing habits.

Destiny: In 36 BCE the Crimson Pharaoh overcomes his fear of the Shuankhsen and rival Arisen, accompanying the Adelfoí Aímatos to Egypt. They travel with Mark Antony's forces. During the Donations of Alexandria in 34 BCE, he directs a grand ritual to "bring forth the god" within Caesarion, with the help of blood reconstituted from Alexander the Great's corpse. The Loyalists of the Ptolemaic Dynasty and their Mistress stop them at Ptolemy's tomb. Both Arisen support Mark Antony, however, and after disposing of their sorcerers' corpses, leave in peace. But as the war with Rome escalates, the Crimson Pharaoh washes his hands of it, opting for a purely Roman path to power. His cult leaves Mark Antony to twist in the wind and fall before Octavian's army. Perhaps the asp that slew Cleopatra was an Adelfoí Aímatos way to tie up loose ends...and perhaps it wasn't.

The Loyalists of the Ptolemaic Dynasty

This troublesome cult of sorcerers interferes with matters to do with the prophecies so often that every faction believes that to prevail, they must trick, ally with, or destroy them. Like scarabs, they're persistent, numerous and surprisingly hard to kill. When they were the Reborn Osiris and the tools of the "Cult of Isis," the sect believed itself privileged enough to research the most dangerous necromancy. They made the Maahes Abomination and were buried alive as punishment. Arisen condemned their ruling meret, the "Cult of Isis," to exile.

Revived (perhaps literally, in some cases) by their anonymous Mistress, they took a new name, protected themselves by declaring loyalty to the state, and chose to interpret the prophecy conservatively, believing that Cleopatra would give birth to Azar through the "pure blood" of her and her brother-husband's descent from Philip of Macedon and its connection to Alexander, as Zeus-Ammon.

Destiny: The Loyalists lose Ptolemy XIII to war with Rome, and his younger brother to a suspicious death—perhaps at the hands of Cleopatra, who never wanted to share rule. They resent Caesar for defeating Cleopatra's elder brother, and sow rumors that Caesarion isn't his son. But with nowhere else to turn they accept Mark Antony as a replacement. If he wasn't suitable, wouldn't the signs of prophecy grind to a halt? In 41 BCE they kill the Tauran "Osiris" and acclaim Mark Antony as Osiris' "seed." The cult magically sanctifies the royal wedding in 36 BCE. Antony and

New Flaw: Biased Thinking

Your character possesses one or more biases that unconsciously affect his thinking, subtly twisting how he interprets information. He is never aware of the full extent of his bias, and may even believe he's a model of balanced understanding where it's concerned. For example, he may consciously believe people of all nations are equally moral and capable, but unconsciously associates one nationality with violence and unknowingly twists the evidence to portray them as dangerous people. Your character's bias might be based on a positive stereotype as well. The Storyteller passes on information tainted by this bias whenever she wishes, without making you aware of it.

Choose one or more biases by name (such as a gender, religion, etc. and an associated stereotype) to define this disadvantage. Talk to other players about picking this Trait and don't portray it in a way that would genuinely upset them.

Biased Thinking (Mental Flaw): Whenever your character acts on biased reasoning to his significant disadvantage (such as wasting critical time or getting himself hurt), he earns an additional point of experience at the end of the story.



The Deathless treat magicians like the spoils of some reconquest — errant vassals to return to useful service. So they sponsored numerous sorcerer cults without thinking that these rogue priests and broken philosophers might continue with their own projects, and exploit as they are exploited. Fortunately, sorcerers write everything down. Through other complex connections (a murderer passes them to a merchant, a merchant passes them to a beggar), papyri make their way to Nefersobk. She knows all the cults and the Arisen they serve, who would each call forth Azar in some aspect they especially prefer.

They're busy tonight. As Alexandria feasts to celebrate Mark Antony and Cleopatra's supposed conquest of the known world, which she has been informed was really some fragment of Asia, the Parthians having objected to being conquered, partisans battle within the palace precincts. She imagines the drama, swinging between haggling and murder, between the Crimson Pharaoh and his blood magicians, the Loyalists and their Mistress, and the Taurans remnant. The intrigue distracted them so much that by her estimates, some of them left Deathless masters still, unhallowed, and barely guarded. As she enters an estate much like her own, she notes the two disemboweled men tucked behind each side of the outer wall: proof of the conjecture.

Now the courtyard, with more corpses and scattered coins. Caesar and Pompey lie side by side in silver, upon a mummy's chest: three scowling, still immortals. Nefersobk chuckles. In their haste his cult packed him in with the money, since the chest was the best defended, most hidden thing in the mansion.

"Why does he not rise and attack?" asks the leader. She knows he's about to introduce himself — Mithridates — but she raises a hand to silence him. He closes his mouth.

"I timed the slaying so that his priests would be too busy to perform the proper rites." She does not speak of the mummy's four jars, recently broken beneath her rod and heel. "We have hours. Watch closely. You've done well tonight. As promised, I'll show you how to feast as I do."

Nefersobk bends before her enemy's corpse, the Lighthouse of Alexandria a floating orange flame behind her like a false planet in the sky, throwing destiny askew.

That pleases her.

Cleopatra's son Ptolemy Philadelphus is supposedly made "Osiris Unborn" by the ritual. He becomes the Loyalists' candidate. They concentrate on protecting him and figuring out how to bring forth the god within, while neglecting matters related to the war with Octavian. The Parangelía Seth turns out to be stronger than they anticipate and, for all intents and purposes, destroys the cult, but they never find Ptolemy Philadelphus. But if he became the god reborn, everyone would know about it by now, wouldn't they?

Parangelía Seth and the Shuankhsen

The Parangelía Seth worship a distrusted god and have been cast from Arisen service. Everyone else correctly suspects that they oppose the prophecy, but underestimate how well-placed they are to not only thwart it, but transform the Deathless from masters to prey. They always knew that their religion made them outsiders and natural adversaries, but it wasn't until 47 BCE that they specifically focused on thwarting the Isis prophecies. They spread copies of the prophecies through occult and Arisen circles in the hope of finding allies, but if anything it generates a frenzy to control the prophecy and some sort of reward from the reborn Azar.

They're not the Deathless' only enemies, however. More Shuankhsen dwell in Egypt than anywhere else. Their numbers are fewer than in the past, but many of Irem's former slaves wander the desert or rule obscure villages, and virtually all of them eat Arisen flesh and Sekhem whenever they can. Some of them have also ripped prophecy from mortals' Sybaris visions and expect Egypt to fill with Deathless prey, but the Arisen prove to be stronger than anticipated, especially with sorcerers by their side. Nefersobk (see **Mummy: The Curse**, pp. 198-200), genius among Shuankhsen, organizes an alliance with the Parangelía Seth, and by sharing her insights, helps the cult become hunters of immortals.

Destiny: After reading the prophecies for themselves and allying with the Shuankhsen, the Parangelía Seth wage war against the other factions. A few Parangelía even go to Rome to reinforce local suspicions that Cleopatra plans to conquer them and seize the rest of the known world. Mark Antony essentially promises this in 34 BCE, lubricating the path to war. Parangelía sorcerers and Shuankhsen aid Octavian's forces. The sorcerer-Lifeless alliance teaches the Parangelía certain secrets that, in future years, they will use to found the Loyalists of the Final Dynasty, the forerunners of Last Dynasty Incorporated. Nefersobk eats Sekhem from the Mistress of the Loyalists of the Ptolemaic Dynasty and adds her to her regular roster of prey, to devour across many incarnations.

Tamaithians

To say the Arisen from Tamaithis are conservative is an understatement. These Deathless never left Egypt and long ago agreed to awaken infrequently, with the help of a small, disciplined cult. They've fended off Deathless, Lifeless, and mortals in support of their mission: to mind the old heart of the Nameless Empire and harvest its vessels. The meret isn't more active by choice. Tauran sorcerers disturbed their hidden tomb complex. The Tamaithians killed the intruders after they refused to bend the knee.

The Taurans' Syrian masters followed their catspaws, forcing the Tamaithians to reveal themselves. Despite a battlefield victory in 219 BCE, the enemy sneaks back. Whenever the Taurans appear, the Deathless followers of Ta-Retinhu follow. They can't risk open warfare again. One side would perish, and Shuankhsen would hunt the other. The Tamaithians are skeptics who believe that the Judges will shape Fate as they will, and the Arisen can't do a damn thing about it, so any Sybaris-crazed prophet who says otherwise is deluded. Therefore, they're concentrating on their traditional mission: to acquire as many Iremite relics as possible. The prophecy is a distraction.

Destiny: Tamaithians deal with their Syrian rivals through traditional means, employing Sesha-Hebsu mediators in an attempt to win without bloodshed. As they've continually dwelled within the Nameless Empire, they usually win any mediated dispute through a superior claim to territory. Unfortunately, they don't win in the informal political sphere, where Arisen from many merets employ Tauran sorcerers and, with their help, raid ancient burial grounds, ignoring Closed Book judgments when it suits them. Tamaithians quietly help the Mistress of the Loyalists of the Ptolemaic Dynasty, allowing her cult to rise from the wreckage of the Reborn Osiris faster than they otherwise would have. With the death of the Tauran "Osiris" in 41 BCE, the Tamaithians' enemies finally fall. The meret abandons their alliance with the Loyalists and during the war with Rome, raids cults and merets for their relics, then vanishes to a new secret tomb.

Tauran Arisen

The Taurans' Arisen patrons follow the Judge Ta-Retinhu, the Fiery Foot and Brazen Bull who rules and condemns the violent. Each member of the meret made their decree before Ta-Retinhu, and long ago joined forces to study his mysteries. In Syria, they discovered the ancestors of the Taurans reshaping mountains with violent rites, and made them the nucleus of their cult. Eventually, the Deathless decided that they couldn't learn more about Fiery Foot without returning to Egypt. They sent Tauran magicians to perform reconnaissance. The sorcerers disguised themselves as Seleucid soldiers and tested Egypt's borders. They allowed themselves to be taken prisoner, escaped, and used a ritual to follow concentrated Sekhem to the vessel-rich tombs of the Tamaithians.

The Tamaithians killed the sorcerers and drove off the Arisen who followed. The Tauran Deathless switched to an indirect approach, releasing their sorcerers to serve other Egyptian Arisen. Through these magicians they learned about the prophecies of Isis. They visited Egypt one or two at a time, making token attempts to seize vessels and territory from the Tamaithians to hide their chief goal: to graft a Tauran messiah to the prophecy. They've raised multiple candidates to serve as the Tauran "Osiris," and plan to marry him to Cleopatra as Isis. In 66 BCE, one candidate turned 100 years old but maintained his youth and strength. It is rumored his soul has moved between shells. The rest of the cult leaves Mount Taurus to oversee the fulfillment of the prophecy, which they believe will spark an age of violence that renews Egypt, preparing it for Azar's return.

Destiny: Two events blindside the Tauran Deathless. First, the Loyalists of the Ptolemaic Dynasty assassinate "Osiris" in 41 BCE. The other candidates have yet to prove themselves. The original satisfied several prophetic qualifications. He was immune to Sybaris but able to channel it into prophecy, ageless but neither Lifeless nor Deathless, and an unusually talented sorcerer. (He was also a sadistic body thief, but the Taurans didn't think this was a problem.) The meret abandons its sorcerers, who go underground and hide the other Osiris candidates. Second, the Taurans underestimate how quickly the Final War of the Republic resolves itself. They expect to navigate the violent unrest they love to put a replacement Osiris by Cleopatra's side, but Mark Antony and Cleopatra stick together even as their forces collapse. Parangelía Seth and Shuankhsen operatives hunt the remaining "Osirises" and the meret returns to Mount Taurus. Only their Arisen know if any candidates survived.

The Arisen Guilds

Ever since the Diaspora, the Shuankhsen presence along the Nile has been immense. It's rare for the guilds to see eye to eye on what's to be done with the "despoiled" Egypt, and mummies disagree on who is to blame for its current state. Deathless alternate between blaming themselves for abandoning their homeland, the Shuankhsen for not readily moving, the Ptolemies for their withered sovereignty, and the Romans for their pernicious influence. The commonly unifying factor in play is the Cult of Isis prophecy, recently discovered after centuries lost, and the potential Fall of Isireion could spell an end to any hope of Arisen freedom.

Maa-Kep

The Hall of the Scorpion Dawn spies failure everywhere from its seat in Egypt. The only guild to possess a static base of operations in Cleopatra's realm; the Maa-Kep act as servile as ever to other guilds, but affect dispositions of entitlement and outrage when it comes to the matter of Egypt and Irem. The laborer hermit Sefet-Qam maintains to any who would take his counsel that Egypt is the successor of the Nameless Empire, and it should therefore be treated as the kingdom of the Judges. Mummies should be fighting tooth and nail to rid



its presence of Shuankhsen, Amkhata, and other malevolent entities. His words fall on deaf ears, resulting in his retreating further from Deathless politicking.

Maa-Kep aware of the Cult of Isis' prophecies have mixed views of such portents. A faction of the guild in Alexandria appoints its cultists as protectors of the Ptolemies and their retinue, for surely if Cleopatra is Esit made manifest, she would desire Arisen protection even if she has not voiced it. Other Maa-Kep—one meret from within them named simply as the Truly Faithful—maintain that to see the prophecy reach its purported conclusion would be an affront to Azar and the Judges. They exist to serve; not to work towards freedom. The gods would surely will it so, if such an aim was desired.

The Maa-Kep schism in Egypt is a quiet one, and is fought with whispered threats and cult intrigues more often than Utterances. The Bearers of the Engraved feel it's important to the other Deathless that they appear unified, even when this is far from the case. For this reason, Maa-Kep make a lot of noise about Egypt being the ancestral homeland, to distract other mummies from the guild's concealed conflict.

The engravers find much success using Adelfoí Aímatos for ritual assassinations, with the sorcerers represented on either side of the Maa-Kep engagement. As the Roman presence in Egypt increases however, the Adelfoí Aímatos largely disappear from Maa-Kep cults, infuriating the engravers awake enough to notice.

Mesen-Nebu

The Alchemists show a massive interest in the workings of the Ptolemaic dynasty, the burgeoning Roman Empire, and the portended outcome of the Esit prophecies. All speak to change, and the Mesen-Nebu are fascinated by little more than Dedwen flowing through the streets of Alexandria as the world changes before their eyes.

Some Born of Gold are content to stand back and allow whatever change is due to happen, happen, similar to the Tef-Aabhi. Their interference could at best create a new channel of change, and at worst stop it entirely due to their lacking knowledge of the powers at play. Even hubristic Mesen-Nebu concede that they stay awake for too little time to fully grasp the expansive reach of Rome, and how it changes with each passing decade. This attitude puts such Alchemists at odds with those trying to spin things to their own advantage. Natural Dedwen is a rare thing, and should be allowed to grow at its own rate.

Mesen-Nebu do possess a curiosity making them involved in key events of Cleopatra's reign. Few rest permanently in Egypt, with the guild preference for tombs beneath Rome and the Parthian Empire. This brings them to support the invaders of Egypt through their cults, and in many cases desire the removal of Cleopatra as pharaoh. Her death would generate a new era for the land the Maa-Kep state was once Irem, and to the Mesen-Nebu philosophy, this would present new opportunities.

The Cult of Isis' prophesized rebirth of Azar and freedom for mummies would be the perfect expression of Dedwen, making some Mesen-Nebu fervently pursue the perceived enemies of the pharaoh and her children. The Alchemists of the Parthian Empire gather together with talk of seizing Cleopatra's children, should she fall. Plans exist for them to smuggle the young Ptolemies far eastwards, and away from Roman aggression. Mummies from the guild have tentatively approached the Loyalists of the Ptolemaic Dynasty's mistress, to see how able the sorcerer cult may be in performing this task. To date, she's yet to command her cult either way.

Sesha-Hebsu

In a rare show of ferocity, the Scribes stand at the vanguard against Shuankhsen activities in Cleopatran Egypt. The guildmasters proclaim the Lifeless presence as a crime against the Diasporic Code, with their existence blotting truths written upon the Scroll of Ages. For as long as the Shuankhsen grow in strength within Egypt, the Scroll cannot advance and great works will continue to be destroyed instead of finished.

At their heart, the Closed Books question the reason for the Diaspora, and it's this frustration driving them to violence. The laws of the Nameless Empire are truly important to the guild, but can only be facilitated from the seat of Irem. This being the case, the guild struggles with the fact that the Deathless either chose to exodus far from Irem, or were placed in distant locations due to the will of the Judges. Either way, imposing law and discovering the truth of the Nameless Empire are near-impossibilities, and Sesha-Hebsu hate being told they cannot know something.

The reign of Cleopatra signals an end to things, leaving the Scribes unhappy indeed. To the guild, the Ptolemies may be decrepit and corrupt, but they represent stability and loyalty to the old ways. The arrival of Romans and the buzzing activity of Shuankhsen spell doom for Iremite treasures hidden in Egypt, which is why the Sesha-Hebsu feel they must now act. The Closed Books order their cults to wake them at the sign of Lifeless existence, training their cultists to recognize the signs of the Shuankhsen and Amkhata. The Sesha-Hebsu rely heavily on intellectual cultists, and so recruit heavily from sorcerer stock.

The Fall of Isireion considerably troubles the Sesha-Hebsu. Few of their number buy in to the idea of a prophesized deific rebirth, as it's not spelled out on the Scroll of Ages, but the Cult of Isis' activities in attempting to preserve the Ptolemaic sovereignty are activities the Scribes appreciate. The Ptolemies may not truly be Egyptian, but they affect the culture and dignity of the ancient pharaohs. Those who respect tradition are respected in turn by the Closed Books.

Su-Menent

The Shepherds of the Chamber observe the goings-on of Egypt under Cleopatra with a cynical eye. Mortals die, but the Deathless always remain. The activities of their fellow guilds in attempting to hasten or preserve one dynasty of pharaohs seem trivial to the Priests, who caustically judge their companions, asking, "Why this pharaoh in particular? Why not any of the Ptolemies before this one?"

The Su-Menent suspect a natural fear of change, to which they're not immune. The unreserved growth of the Roman Empire brings memories of Irem to the fore, and the grand times of conquest and unbridled study. Many Priests welcome the wars wrought between Romans, Egyptians, and Parthians, as Shepherds can be as vultures over a battlefield, picking out the choice vessels once nothing moves but the dying. Additionally, death does little to sever the channels of communication or research. Through their own Affinities and Utterances, they intend to make the widespread destruction work to their benefit: summoning spirits, interrogating them for information, and binding them to service.

The overwhelming presence of Shuankhsen in Egypt is troubling, but Su-Menent find tales of Deceived more intriguing. A recently awoken Su-Menent Tp-a Priest named Khnumhotep became active in the Roman Empire, and after spending time investigating Pompeii with his meret, Utterances apparently obliterated him. His meret survived and explained to other mummies their companion spoke of "Deceived" in the area of Herculaneum, before his destruction. Others from the guild now attempt to trace the spiritual remnants of Khnumhotep in attempts to restore him, while other guilds believe Khnumhotep's meret turned on him for an unknown reason.

Shepherds begin to enlist sorcerers in their efforts to discover any potential Deceived. Sending them throughout the Roman Empire, the Priests promise great rewards should they be successful. Most are lambs being sent off to slaughter, but they're a sacrifice worth making. An unusual number of Su-Menent have mooted that the Cult of Isis and Cleopatra VII are tools of the Deceived and must be destroyed, but such paranoia is widely admonished in the guild. At the same time, Priests get closer to the Isireion to discover if there's any truth to the matter.

TEF-AABHI

The Hall of Masons sees great promise in the current era. The Romans bring with them one of the finest infrastructures the guild's ever seen. They represent a pioneering divergence for mortal engineering and politics. Cleopatra, meanwhile, symbolizes traditions, which cannot be discounted. Egypt has stood for millennia as one of the most impressive nations, the pharaoh its heart, the Nile its spirit. The Parthian expansion into trade with distant China and monumental *iwan* constructions are likewise a reason to behold and wonder. In short; the Tef-Aabhi are pleased wherever they come to rest. The guild is content to stand aside and allow mortals to wage wars for their empires. What is worthy shall last.

At an individual level, the Masons aren't so apathetic. A guild comprised of many passionate mummies; no few Arisen stand to involve themselves in the construction of an adopted empire, while others in their guild remind their peers it's not a Deathless imperative to meddle in mortal politics. Individual Tef-Aabhi may adore the ancient architecture of Egypt, and be fearful of its destruction and replacement should it fall to the Romans. The same can be said for Masons who revere the structures of Romans or Parthians. Less concerned with the fates of personalities, and more for the great building works and idols of the empires in confluence, it behooves many Masons to move their tombs to the localities most precious to them.

The Isireion activities tied to Egypt's fate pique the Masons' interest, as a means of building something new. Tef-Aabhi argue there's no necessity for Iremite memory. Clinging to the role of perpetual servants is a humiliation, if liberty is at hand. The guild would be spurred into rushing to the pharaoh's side, if such a flagrant act wouldn't go against everything they've built until now.

The great polarization of the guild comes with the realization that if they became free from the Sothic cycle, the speed with which they must always work, the passions driving them each Awakening, and the rush of Sekhem that only comes with desperately trying to eke out one last construction before Descent, would all be gone. The guild uses the watching eyes of Shuankhsen as an excuse for inaction, but most Masons know they're prisoners of nostalgia. They don't want to lose what they are. This truth provokes many to humiliatingly sponsor the Parangelía Seth as they attempt to bring ruin to the Ptolemies, and avert the possibility of the Isireion Prophecies becoming reality.

THE DECEIVED

Where go the Arisen, so go the Deceived. The Isireion Prophecies draw the Restless Stars to Egypt, their temakh hungry for the potential advent of Azar. The question facing Deceived is whether they seek to manipulate the rebirth as a trap for other Deathless, or aim to cultivate its fruition. In truth, the Deceived are of two minds.

Their temakh vehemently desire the Ptolemaic line crushed, Cleopatra murdered, her body and that of her children ripped to pieces and cast to the Nile. The future of authority, conquest, and creativity is in the hands of the Romans. Clinging to a bastardized Irem in the form of Egypt, Cleopatra, and her fabled offspring is foolishness, fit only for the delusional guilds. They also desire the prophecy's conclusion. Luckily, Azar's birth and his mother's death can happily occur in concert.

The temakh claim they killed Azar to raise him up as king of Duat. The plan's failure led to the Rite of Return, so he might be supplicated, and keep them at his side. As this plan also failed, the temakh now hope for his rebirth, seeking his validation for the atrocities they committed. They want Azar reborn so he can tell them they were wise, and right, and the best of the Shan'iatu. His gratitude will no doubt elevate them. His words will affirm their view that it was their rites that led to mindless apes building civilization. The temakh see Azar's potential advent as the point where they prove he is on their side, and the Arisen are the true monsters. The temakh believe they are completely justified in everything they have ever done, and they want their god to tell them that.

The Deceived suffer a discomfiting feeling. The rebirth of Azar may provide a means of freedom from an eternity



of enslavement and bitterness. It may also empower the temakh riding them. Deceived work at cross purposes, striving for the Isireion Prophecy's fulfillment, or attempting to quash it. To many among the Deceived, working against Fate and the prophecy might have once implied fear of Azar's wrathful punishment, but their arrogance and spite now overrides any sense of caution.

The Restless Stars identify Sybaritic omens in Egypt, and see one of Fate's greatest masters in Rome's shadow. Anpu, or maybe one of the Judges, possesses a being or group of entities among the Romans, who will forever crush Irem's memory. Fate scholars among the Deceived work to examine and harness this near-unstoppable force. They do not know whether Fate is inclined towards Azar's rise or his obliteration. Deceived need to be in control of the situation so they can guide Fate to their preferred conclusion.

Deceived movements converge on Ptolemaic Egypt in earnest. The Tomb Legion marches on Alexandria among the Romans and occasional Parthian armies, obliterating cults through cautious strategy, and claiming the plunder of war for their own reserves. They vigilantly maintain watches on Arisen tombs, looking for weapons of important reputation, and vessels and relics capable of harm. They rarely leave a location without looting these artifacts, spitefully destroying them or using them, turned against their former owners.

The Rotting Temple despises the promise of Octavian, and within its membership hosts Deceived wary of Fate's Roman intentions. They believe no matter the outcome of Azar's prophesied return, chaos and outrage must follow. For all Rome's talk of invasion and rampant bloodshed, the Corrupters identify the Roman political system, hierarchy, and ordered armies as the true threat of civilization. They work their powers and place their cultists in efforts to drive Mark Antony to manic decision making, and encourage decadent vice in the heart of Rome. They will not allow anyone to orchestrate the prophecy and shepherd it to fruition, preferring the taste of anarchy following the slaughter of each demigod—Cleopatra, Antony, Caesar, and the children of all.

Unlike most Deceived movements, which send members along the Nile in conflict with Arisen and Shuankhsen, the Shattered Crook hides in Rome. Consumed by blind hate for the Su-Menent, they resolve to prevent Shepherds of the Chamber from gaining any footholds in Rome, whispering convincing words to other supernatural denizens regarding the danger the Priests present. The Shatterers protect Rome the city, and Rome the eventual empire, destroying all Su-Menent and their entourages entering the region. Their strangest act involves providing protection to the Arisen known as the Crimson Pharaoh. His fortune in surviving multiple coup attempts is partly due to the Shattered Crook's heavy support, as they use their skills in propaganda and artistic vision to portray the Pharaoh as a benevolent mummy, worthy of maintaining power over the Roman necropolis. The movement believes the Crimson Pharaoh is a figure of

future importance, and that he directly serves Fate. The Pharaoh acts oblivious to the Shatterers' actions. Either he's truly in the dark, or so confident in his guardians' ability to protect that he sees no need to acknowledge their existence.

Sorcerous Servants

Arisen claim they're the only beings who manipulate Sekhem under the Judges' auspices. The Lifeweb of geomantic paths, the energies conveyed by Azar, the Judges and their decrees...all are unique to Iremites who became mummies. Other supernatural beings seize powers from raw elements, gods outside the sphere of Irem, the potency of accursed blood, and countless other sources. Arisen believe these beings manipulate Sekhem only in the most abstract sense. Sekhem is the energy of existence, but only Irem's heirs and a few other entities shape it with pure will and language. Others use some indirect medium. Most other supernatural beings know little of the Arisen and, once they learn enough, avoid them, in case the sinister powers that rule the Deathless cast an interested eye upon them.

Yet sorcerers of various traditions exist in the Arisen world, and have often crossed paths with mummies. Besides ghosts, these are the unusual beings most likely to become entangled in Deathless plots. In the First Turn, magician-priests led a solar religion that opposed the newly Arisen. Nobody "won" the ensuing war, but both sides learned to respect each other's strength. After the Deathless diaspora, sorcerers practiced diverse arts under the patronage of the distortions of Irem's gods worshipped during the historical dynasties. During the New Kingdom a sect called the *Weret-Hekau* attained supremacy, but were suppressed during Persian rule.

War of the Sleeping God

When Alexander the Great liberated Egypt these sorcerers returned to power; some of them recognized him as a Zeus-Ammon, a synthesis between the supreme gods of Greece and the New Kingdom. Alexander died in Babylon, but Ptolemy Soter stole him, entombing him in Memphis. His successors eventually moved him to Alexandria. The first Ptolemy took Alexander's body to declare himself a true successor — perhaps even a god himself. Rumors arose of magical rites designed to transfer some divine essence from Zeus-Ammon to the Ptolemaic Dynasty. War broke out between sorcerers, between Greeks and Egyptians, as they all battled for the secrets of godlike power supposedly contained within Alexander's sarcophagus. The Weret-Hekau broke, and many cults rose to replace it. Magical lore flowed in numerous shallow currents across Hellenistic culture, promoting the rise of the ad-hoc "petty" magician.

Sorcery Arisen

By Cleopatra's time, these philosophers, priests, and educated tomb thieves are the dominant sorcerers, and as they stitch together spells from mistranslated papyri and folk wisdom, they believe they're unearthing the oldest secrets. Ironically, they're right. The chaotic age has forced them to rediscover fundamentals lost to other priests and thaumaturges, once they encounter a missing piece: the Arisen. Mummies offer direct access to Sekhem, providing a single, potent power source for diverse rituals.

Now, at the sunset of the Ptolemaic age, sorcerers and mummies possess an intertwined destiny. Sorcerer cults reach their zenith at this time, becoming among the Deathless' most valued servants. They're given free rein by masters who care little for the sorcerers' petty intrigues. After all, even with Arisen help, mortal sorcerers' powers cannot match the might of Utterances or the reliable excellence granted by Affinities. Mummies don't consider sorcerers a true threat. They can't even imagine that some of Egypt's magicians not only believe their patrons to be less than gods, but might be treated like mere resources: the soil from which sorcerers might grow some grand working.

The sorcerers' plots steadily grow in destructiveness. Deathless aware of their activities turn a blind eye, as impressive results outweigh their crimes. It's a simple thing to justify sacrifices when the consequences are newly created or distilled relics, and expertise in arcane fields. Arisen rationalize sorcerer abuses whenever they behold cults made stronger by mystical aid.

Capricious and hungry by nature, sorcerers possess a need to strike out whenever denied an increase in power. Coveting the powers of their peers, sorcerers are drawn into destroying one another with curses, summoned demons, and more prosaic means, since few of their spells can turn knives aimed at robed backs. Bloodshed is frequent as sorcerers practice increasingly dangerous rites and meddle in Egyptian and Roman politics. While generals, kings, and Arisen fret over the fate of empires, sorcerers aim for personal power: an answer to mortal weakness. It doesn't matter if queens die and cities burn. Like Arisen, they fertilize the soil of knowledge, and hunger for the coming fruits of the Final Dynasty.

What Can Sorcerers Do?

Sorcerers are individuals exposed to more horror and mystery than the average mortal, but unlike the average mortal, they make an exceptional effort to understand things that terrify and mystify them. Sorcerers utilize the knowledge they accrue for their own benefit. Their minds slip askew as the events they witness shape their lives forevermore, driving them to obsessively accumulate and wield more esoteric knowledge.

Yet, they remain human. They do not taste the rudiments of enlightenment, and their studies do not alter their souls or other spiritual aspects in obvious ways. They neither "awaken" nor chain their souls to demonic powers (well, not unless they make a foolish deal with one, though even the existence of such powers isn't assumed). In Chronicles of Darkness terms, they have not adopted a supernatural



template. They simply know what others do not: that certain rituals, practiced with extreme concentration and precision, grasp the loose threads of a half-unraveled universe and weave them in certain ways. Strictly speaking, almost anyone *could* do it, if they learned how.

Sorcerers are specialists in the unfathomable. They believe in secret energies that can be harnessed through study, ritual, and the practice of techniques not requiring innate supernatural power. Summoning demons, practicing exorcisms, and psychic communication are parlor tricks to mummies, but to sorcerers they're talents that set them apart from rank mortals. Few sorcerers reach the stage where they can perform such feats, but all dedicate their lives to learning more of the world's true nature. In their highly focused, obscure fields, they're unparalleled experts.

Arisen grant sorcerers status in their cults for their specialized knowledge. Sorcerers know that effective magic requires complex ceremonies and material foci. By adhering to the Rule of Three (see below) they can use rites unavailable to the uninitiated. Other intense studies allow them perform more "common" magical rituals with particular efficacy. Each sorcerer cults develops different steps to achieve their aims. To cast a "spell," one group requires a papyrus upon which a god-king wrote a powerful spell, which must be read aloud under the correct celestial alignment in a specific language. Another sacrifices a hundred virile men, so that virgin women may bathe in their blood as they sing to demons and angels, to benefit from the same magic. A third performs acts of sensory deprivation lasting a month, invoking the true names of long forgotten creatures of the dark. Cults stumble upon or research unique methods to acquire power, nearly every one being arduous in the extreme. In cases of rites available to sorcerers alone, the Rule of Three dictates that they must contain at least three elements.

Sekhem changes the rules. The Pillars act as substitute components for sorcerers' rites. One point from the correct Pillar replaces the need for the correct constellation to be in the sky as the ritual takes place, or reduces the required sacrifice from a screaming human to a reed effigy. The sorcerer still needs to perform a ritual, but it's faster and simpler, easily within the means of even an impoverished, friendless occultist. The Pillar point replaces one of the required elements, and even makes the spell stronger.

Sorcerers with Arisen masters can ask for Pillars, and in times of great need rip them from Vestiges (provided they know the rite required to do so). Sekhem allows repeatable, stable, and accessible sorcery. This frequently draws sorcerers into Deathless service. Mummies provide a shortcut to greater power, from which sorcerers leech happily.

Sorcerers build relics only slightly more frequently than singularly inspired artisans — that is, still exceedingly rarely (and far too infrequently and unreliably to use sorcerers as "relic factories"), but as intentional acts of sublime magic. A sorcerer would be lucky to produce one or two such masterworks in a lifetime. Despite Arisen coaxing, few sorcerers are truly interested in creating them, because they must eschew the immediate potential of their rites for deep study that may never bear predictable and/or potent fruit. Forcing anyone to create a relic is akin to demanding a masterpiece at knifepoint — the motivation is too distracting to get fine results. On occasion, a sorcerer *chooses* to devote his life to creating a relic, to please a meret greatly with the offering. These artifacts tend to be of lower power, and provoke jealous reprisals from rival sorcerers. Tragically, no few relics are stolen or destroyed by other sorcerer cults just after completion.

So, How *Do* You Make Relics?

There's no system for creating relics, and for a simple reason: If there was, it could be harnessed to find and produce them predictably. Arisen exist across such a vast timescale that even a method that produced just one relic in a generation could be optimized into an industry. There *was* a way to do it once, but it was lost with the Shan'iatu. Arisen have explored every possible alternative and failed. The best they can do is encourage talented artists, occultists, and craftspeople in the hope that inspiration strikes. The Storyteller decides if it does. That's the rule.

Arisen can create relics by attaining Apotheosis and thus the power to make them themselves, using the old Iremite methods, but of course this is Arisen blasphemy.

If you're running **Mummy** you can devise an event that allows mummies to acquire new relics to order, but this would most likely trigger an apocalyptic endgame. Flush with terrestrial Sekhem, the Judges could do any number of unpleasant things. You're free to run a world full of howling demons and necromancer kings who scowl over the ruins of cities, or an all-Duat game where the Arisen have been brought "home," mission accomplished. Let your imagination fill in the details. Point is, outside of Apotheosis only motivated sorcerers (and the occasionally freak occurrence) can create relics.

Mental Merit: Ritual Sorcerer (••••)

Your character has studied the magical secrets of the world, knows of rituals to evoke them, and, with time and effort, can learn them.

Prerequisite: Must be truly alive, and not Lifeless, Deathless, a ghost, or undead. Must have witnessed something ordinarily inexplicable, such as a mummy unleashing an Utterance, or a ritual successfully performed by other sorcerers; possess two of Intelligence, Wits, or Resolve

at a rating of 4 or higher; possess three Mental Skills at a rating of 4 or higher, one of which must be Occult; have two Specializations in Mental Skills, one of which must be applied to Occult.

Those who achieve these conditions but don't have a cult to support them are unlikely to be able to perform the rituals needed to become active, successful sorcerers. Such loners tend to burn out or be indoctrinated into proper cults, as supported sorcerers unrepentantly steal from their more solitary peers, often murdering them to assure silence.

Effect: The Merit grants Sorcerous Rite slots equal to the character's Resolve. You may fill one slot with an Open Rite Mastery (gaining +1 to a Mental or Social Attribute while performing an Open Rite and +1 to rolls related to an Open Rite) or use it to teach the character a Closed Rite. Other slots are "open," waiting to be filled with rites the character encounters during play. Filling a slot during play has no cost, but it is impossible to swap a known rite for a new one.

The player can also purchase the Sorcerous Knowledge Merit to acquire additional slots. Note that your character may not invent new Sorcerous Rites without purchasing them with the Merit: Sorcerous Knowledge, below. He must fill his initial slots by learning rites that have already been invented by others.

Mental Merit: Sorcerous Knowledge (•)

Your character intensifies her study of sorcery, learning more hidden rituals and secret names. The character can even devise new Closed Rites.

Prerequisite: Ritual Sorcerer

Effect: Your character acquires a new slot beyond those granted by her Attribute. The slot may be filled with an Open Rite Mastery or Closed Rite. With the Storyteller's permission, you may invent a new Closed Rite to fill this slot. Slots gained this way are automatically filled, since they represent such specific studies.

Drawback: You may purchase this Merit multiple times, up to the number of Occult dots (not counting specialties) your character possesses.

Optional Rule: The Desert of the Soul

The mightiest mortal sorcerer (Resolve 5, Occult 5) knows 10 rites, total—and your character probably isn't that sorcerer. Remember, these are not wizards blessed by powers on high, but radical scholars and clergy who've bent all the efforts available to earthbound minds. At the Storyteller's discretion, a character may add an additional Sorcerous Rite slot in another way: by abandoning human values and perspectives.

When a sorcerer encounters supernatural power and risks losing a point of Morality, the player can choose to make the loss automatic. She must do so before rolling dice to see if her character would suffer the decrease. This adds one Sorcerous Rite slot, but permanently reduces her maximum Morality by 1. This can be done multiple times, but further losses during the same incident cannot be used to gain this dubious benefit again. The slot is "open," and must be filled with a rite discovered during play. Note that using a rite with a wretched enough ceremonial requirement to risk Morality loss for the first time qualifies as an opportunity to use this rule, but subsequent castings do not. Any force that removes or lessens the maximum Morality cap removes the slot and any rite it contains, since its methods can't be comprehended by more reason-bound minds.

Thus, the ranks of sorcerers include wretched, powerful psychopaths. In fact, at Storyteller discretion, it may be possible that some sorcerers sidestep the Merits related to sorcery completely, and learn sorcery through this alternate method.

Sorcerers and Other Magicians

The sorcerers described by these systems ultimately represent a half-lost, degenerate tradition. In the time of Irem, sorcerers enjoyed instruction and Sekhem from Shan'iatu princes, mastering mighty spells and the ability to help their masters reliably and more swiftly produce relics.

There might once have been some form of greater sorcerer that conferred a true supernatural template, but those days are long passed from this world. Even if it was to be rediscovered this would not confer the kind of "awakening" seen elsewhere, since all sorcery stems not from some numinous higher world, but through living intersections between worldly Sekhem, chthonic powers, and Fate.

In its current form the Ritual Sorcerer Merit doesn't confer a supernatural template, so it is *theoretically* open to any being who meets the prerequisites. Ghosts, vampires, and other beings who aren't truly alive lack the metaphysical standing to learn it, or may simply lack a lust for life and fear of death that, once twisted to serve a sorcerer's desire, inspires him to excel. Otherwise, the Storyteller decides who can acquire these Merits.





Sorcerous Rites

Sorcerers benefit from the Hellenistic resurgence in magical lore. In Egypt, they can dig eon-old artifacts from the sands and read rituals on the walls of violated tombs. Most of the magical papyri floating around are nonsense. Most of the spells are flights of fancy by fraudsters, or have been corrupted by ignorant copying... but a few really work. These were transcribed by ancient sorcerers or excellent witnesses, or describe a spell that might be too powerful for an untransformed mortal, but which can be partly employed to weaker effect.

The rules in this section split these spells into Open Rites, which anyone can perform (but which sorcerers tend to be better at), and Closed Rites, which can only be enacted by characters with the Ritual Sorcerer Merit.

Open Rites

An Open Rite refers to a number of miscellaneous practices than anyone can attempt whether or not they possess the Ritual Sorcerer Merit. There are many such rituals, which might use wildly different systems. Many of them are also extremely dangerous. A malefic spirit listens to anyone attempting to summon it, but might tear apart mortals who mispronounce their names or skip an obscure honorific. Treat any action that a normal person without a supernatural template can perform that has a supernatural effect as an Open Rite, unless, as Storyteller, you decide it somehow doesn't qualify. Examples include the following (and this is not an exhaustive list):

- Contact, Summoning, Exorcism, Warding, and Binding in the **Chronicles of Darkness** core rulebook (any actions listed in either edition). Each is considered a separate Open Rite.
- Creating Greater Amkhata. Each act of Amkhata creation is a separate Open Rite.
- Designing sacred architecture (see **Cursed Necropolis: Rio**). Each construction is a separate Open Rite.
- Summoning certain unclean spirits called *akathartoi* or, in loose modern translation, "demons." Each demonic spirit possesses its own Open Rite.
- Summoning one of the Deathless back from being slain (**Mummy: The Curse**, pp. 151), into a new body (p. 152), or making the Call (p. 214). Each is a separate Open Rite.
- Unveiling Sybaritic Omens (**Mummy: The Curse**, pp. 149-150).

Sorcerers who learn Open Rites don't distinguish themselves by being able to perform them, since anyone can do that, but by being exceedingly skilled compared to a dabbler. The requirements of the Ritual Sorcerer Merit usually give them better dice pools. If they spend a slot on Open Rite Mastery, they acquire the following benefits:

- 1 additional Mental or Social Attribute dot (in a single Attribute) for the duration of the rite. The Attribute is either one which contributes to the rite's dice pool, or one which is thematically appropriate (such as Presence for rites that command other entities). They keep this benefit during relatively short breaks and distractions, lasting no longer than a scene or hour, during which they may harness the benefit for something other than their magic. This can raise the Attribute above its normal maximum. This represents the sorcerer's extraordinary powers of concentration and an understanding that all magic represents personal transformation. (As a game system, it provides a benefit that applies even when an Open Rite doesn't require a dice roll.)
- +1 to all applicable rolls to perform the rite. This stacks with Skill specialties.
- If the sorcerer utilizes a point from an appropriate Pillar (chosen by the Storyteller), add an additional die to the rite's dice pool, and an additional Mental or Social Attribute dot of a type other than what would normally be awarded for acting without it (such as Resolve and Intelligence, instead of just Intelligence), for the duration of the working. Note that Open Rites do not use the Rule of Three, but whatever is required according to their individual descriptions, and using the Pillar point does not remove any ritual requirements.

Closed Rites

Many self-styled magicians exist in the world, but few are true sorcerers, able to use Closed Rites. These are limited to those who know the correct (and extremely difficult) incantations, words, components, and rituals, along with the emotions one must feel, critical visualizations, and the memories of strange initiations the practitioner evokes. Again, strictly speaking, anyone *could* perform these precise, intense combinations of psychodrama and symbol play, just like anyone could learn a dozen languages or become the greatest swordsman in the world, but just as these feats have Merits that represent prerequisite efforts, so too do Closed Rites require the Ritual Sorcerer Merit. Each Closed Rite fills one of the sorcerer's Merit-granted slots.

There's more to a ritual than the stars being in alignment or a dozen freshly removed hearts. Closed Rites require multiple components of different origins, dictated by the effect being sought, the creator's culture, and elements of unique inspiration. All must adhere to the Rule of Three, and demand at least three separate elements working in synchronicity to achieve the desired aim.

In the presence of their Arisen mentors, the Adelfoi Aímatos drain the blood of a proven warrior into a deep bronze bowl until the liquid overlaps the sides (Element 1). The sorcerers then submerge their heads in the still-warm blood, until breath is required (Element 2). Upon withdrawing, the sorcerers must all loudly and repeatedly proclaim the name "Ares," while facing the setting sun (Element 3). That night, the sorcerers find themselves

capable of killing innocents without second thought (by gaining an additional 2 points of Resolve until sunrise), and no guilt shall ever afflict them for their actions.

The ritual can be made less complex if a mummy grants a point from one of her Pillars to replace one of the elements. The Pillar must be associated with the act; therefore, this example rite could be enhanced with Ren—for the naming of Ares. Such a contribution of Sekhem makes one part of the ritual less complex, can only be done once, and strengthens the effect. The Pillar chosen must be appropriate for the ritual, and grants the sorcerers involved an additional point of the Attribute associated with that Pillar (**Mummy: The Curse**, p. 75) for 24 hours. It also enhances the outcome of the rite in a way determined by the Storyteller.

The mummy contributes a point from her Ren Pillar as she partakes in the ritual. The contribution allows the sorcerers to practice the rite in discreet silence, or while invoking the name of another favored sponsor, likely the mummy. The Adelfoí Aímatos partaking in the rite gain 1 point of Manipulation for 24 hours, and the Storyteller deems the mummy's enhancement of the rite grants every participant a first strike benefit, the next time they engage in battle with anyone outside the cult.

The mummy must understand the basic gist of the rite — its ultimate effect, theory and symbolism — to consciously contribute the Pillar point. This requires 1 dot of Occult on the mummy's part, and a truthful explanation from the sorcerer. If a sorcerer benefits from Rite of the Sacred Flood (see p. 35) the mummy doesn't need to know what's going on, or even be conscious, as long as her body is present. The Rite of the Sacred Flood also allows sorcerers to spend Pillar points from Vestiges and other inanimate objects with defined Pillar ratings.

Storytellers are advised to be flexible and creative with the benefits mummies grant to sorcerers, but to keep in mind that sorcery is a *shallow force*, with no comparison to Utterances or Affinities. Sorcerers believe Arisen could convey more power if they chose, but the Deathless don't respond well to demands from cultists.

Most sorcerers don't invent new Closed Rites. They study those taught by their cults or ones they find in their quest for knowledge. At the Storyteller's discretion a sorcerer can *create* a new Closed Rite, but in order to do so, must purchase a slot with the Sorcerous Knowledge Merit and fill it with her invention.

Timeline of Sorcerer Activities in Ptolemaic Egypt

274 BCE: Cults of "high" Greek and Egyptian sorcerer-priests lay each other low. The critical battle takes place in Memphis, near Alexander the Great's tomb. Lesser sorcerers attached to the cult of Ptah attempt to hoard the occult secrets left behind, but are opposed by numerous rivals. The resulting conflicts take the form of religious riots, and Alexander's body is moved to Alexandria for safekeeping.

224 BCE: Seleucid prisoners from Syria harbor the cult of sorcerers known as the Taurans. Attached to a forgotten meret dedicated to Ta-Retinhu, these sorcerers claim to shape the earth for their Arisen masters. They disturb a sleeping meret of mummies in Tamiathis, who attempt to bind the Taurans to service. This attracts attention from the Taurans' masters, who come from Syria to oppose the Tamaithians.

219 BCE: Tamaithians drive the Taurans' patrons from Egypt. They recognize the sorcerers' skill and recruit them. Other Arisen emulate the practice, but not in great numbers, for the mummies' diaspora left few behind. These survivors have powerful cults, however.

202 BCE: Taurans learn that mummies can enhance and simplify their ceremonies. They keep it a secret until a solitary sorcerer called "the Flenser" tortures it out of an apprentice, and sells it in exchange for rites from other cults. Many cults seek out Arisen patronage, but in many cases must cross the sea, where mummies often accept their service and send them home accompanied by a Sadikh or other trusted lieutenant. They are reluctant to go back to Egypt, but are mightily interested in gathering influence.

182 BCE: Backed by foreign Arisen, sorcerers of the Reborn Osiris and Parangelía Seth supplant the Taurans as preeminent in mummy merets, in an event named the Decapitation of the Bull. They sacrifice Tauran leaders in Saqqara during a bloody ritual Arisen ignore, despite Tauran pleas for aid.

176 BCE: Taurans sack several Egyptian temples in efforts to recoup power. The sorcerers' destructive ritual of sex and violence presages earth tremors in Alexandria. The palace of Cleopatra I collapses; the Taurans claim responsibility. This disturbs Deathless tombs underneath. A full meret's worth rises from a slumber they maintained since the First Turn. All fall to Shuankhsen from Greece save two. The Grecians follow the first Sybaris-fueled Prophecies of Isis. They join with the two locals, interpret the prophecies together and act as patrons for the Reborn Osiris. They become known as the "Cult of Isis," even though they never refer to themselves as such.

171 BCE: Strengthened by their patron meret, Reborn Osiris propose an accord between sorcerer cults. They will not openly war, and must share power for as long as the descendants of Ptolemy I rule Egypt. Major cults sign the agreement in blood. This heralds the arrival and acceptance of Adelfoí Aímatos blood sorcerers.



Timeline of Sorcerer Activities in Ptolemaic Egypt (Continued)

163 BCE: The Parangelía Seth craft one of the first recorded sorcerer-built relics for their Arisen masters; the Sha Crown.

140 BCE: After decades of research, the Reborn Osiris use Ptolemy VIII's massacre at Pelusium as fuel for construction of a Greater Amkhata. They never gain control of the aberration, which preys on the dying of the civil war and becomes known as the Maahes Abomination. Tamaithian Arisen demand the entombment of each member of the Reborn Osiris and banishment (via execution and shipping their Canopic jars to Ionia) of their Deathless patrons. The secrets of Amkhata creation die with the Reborn Osiris.

116 BCE: The Adelfoí Aímatos claim a sacrificial ritual exists to allow them everlasting life. They practice this ritual, which is followed by an onset of pestilence and Egyptian deaths. Half the Adelfoí Aímatos disappear. Their peers claim they've become immortal.

102 BCE: Veneration cults built by the Parangelía Seth, deifying Deathless, are admonished by Arisen. These cults go underground.

100 BCE: While robbing Reborn Osiris tombs, Parangelía sorcerers discover the prophecies set down by the Osirans' Arisen masters, who they name the Cult of Isis, since the prophecies concern Esit. At first, the Parangelía conceal these prophecies to avoid punishment for breaking into Osiran tombs, but when they learn that the Deathless believe Osiris' return marks some sort of end — to their Arisen state, to cult patronage, and perhaps to the world as they know it — they decide the prophecies must not just be hidden, but opposed.

86 BCE: Sorcerers claiming a connection to the Reborn Osiris appear and proclaim themselves Loyalists of the Ptolemaic Dynasty. The Parangelía Seth begin undermining them in earnest, despite the accord of 171 BCE. Arisen assume they're obeying the banished "Cult of Isis" meret, but have little evidence and, in any event, the Loyalists uphold the status quo, offending few.

83 BCE: The Adelfoí Aímatos capture and murder several hundred Egyptian youths, draining their blood and using it for unknown purposes. The bodies are donated to the Loyalists, and used by them for their own rituals. A loose pact is formed.

75 BCE: The Parangelía Seth's shadow war with the Loyalists of the Ptolemaic Dynasty spills into the open. Severe droughts follow in Egypt, as the Nile's level drops. The Parangelía unwittingly capture a "dead" enemy mummy, and learn they can use the Rite of the Sacred Flood to pull power from their prisoner. They keep this a secret.

66 BCE: A Tauran is named Osiris by his followers as he passes a century in age. Responding to this and Sybaritic omens, their patron meret relocates to Egypt.

63 BCE: The Parangelía and Loyalists agree to a truce brokered by one of the Loyalists' Arisen mistresses. She threatens to destroy the Parangelía Seth should they continue to assault her followers.

59 BCE: Loyalists accuse the Adelfoí Aímatos of poisoning several Ptolemaic family members. With their Arisen patrons all succumbed to Descent, the Aímatos are easy prey for Loyalists. By 53 BCE, the last of the cult flee to Rome, and to the service of a mummy known as the Crimson Pharaoh. Their exile renders the old treaty meaningless.

47 BCE: Loyalists of the Ptolemaic Dynasty discover the "Cult of Isis" prophecies in a Parangelía Seth temple. Accused of undermining the Deathless, the Parangelía suffers exile from all Arisen service.

46 BCE: Parangelía sorcerers seek out vessels to increase their power, and once in a while (and very, very carefully) experiment on unwilling Arisen. Shuankhsen make contact with their sorcerers, revealing little but a shared interest in opposing the Arisen. Tauran oracles foresee a coming war of massive proportions, and wake their Arisen masters.

41 BCE: The Tauran named Osiris is murdered by Loyalists who declare Mark Antony to be Osiris (almost) reborn, with Cleopatra VII as Isis. In the face of strong opposition the Taurans publicly disband, but members still practice in secret.

36 BCE: The Adelfoí Aímatos and the Crimson Pharaoh accompany Mark Antony's entourage to Alexandria, and join the Loyalists in guarding Antony and Cleopatra.

32 BCE: The Parangelía Seth support Octavian in the war. Mystic vessels and Shuankhsen allies make them the strongest cult, but they avoid direct assaults on Egypt's leadership. Instead, they deploy their power to ease the Roman campaign, so that the invaders encounter little resistance. It is said they're particularly interested in Caesarion, or at least his body. By 30 BCE, they've won. In the future, they'll give themselves a new, ironic name: The Loyalists of the Final Dynasty.

Sorcerer Cults of Egypt

The following cults are not only active during Cleopatra's time, but deal with Arisen on a regular basis. Other sorcerers dwell in Egypt, Rome, and the rest of the world, but they are not as bound to Deathless interests. Nevertheless, a foreigner with a strange insight could throw any plot awry.

Taurans

The Taurans are experts in the field of matter, and geology. A meret beheld these sorcerers predicting shifts in the earth, discerning the weakest and strongest points, thus allowing them to form a network of tunnels in Mount Taurus. The sorcerers then went on to make arid, stony ground blossom with life after only days of ritual practice. Their powers were mild, but the Taurans clearly possessed a strong Ka.

Recruited with promises of patronage, the Taurans were sent to Egypt to ensure the Nile remained strong in the face of Shuankhsen corruption, keeping the land healthy for the people of Egypt. Their powers have waxed and waned depending on their sponsors' presence, but no sorcerer cult is so capable of revivifying dead earth with one hand, while desecrating the plots of their enemies with the other.

The Taurans are known for violent sexual rites, performed to drive both aggressor and victim into a state of terrorized euphoria. Performed in dark caverns, and observed by members of the cult who chant to Ta-Retinhu or Geb, the participants are said to be attuned to the movements of the earth. Possessing a matriarchal structure, the eldest female Taurans make all decisions of importance for their fellows. Young sorcerers — both male and female — are treated as chattel by older cultists until they visit aggression on sorcerers even younger than they. This cycle of abuse has led to the cult being appraised as sadistic by moral Arisen, who attempt to instill a sense of virtue among the sorcerers. During a mummy's brief time awake, such lessons are difficult to ingrain in an already longstanding culture.

Adelfoí Aímatos

The Adelfoí Aímatos are said to be blood sorcerers hailing from Karpathos, but they're rarely forthcoming with details of their history. Assumed to be questing for immortality, the Adelfoí Aímatos confirm they focus on mastery of life. Historically one of the more fragmented sorcerer cults, their cell-like structure has recently formed a cohesive whole, serving the Arisen of Rome during the reign of Cleopatra VII.

Blood sorcerers are unanimously distrusted, due to their successful secrecy and utility as killers. The Adelfoí Aímatos cause sickness by holding an item important to the victim and drinking a foul brew enriched with all four humors. They can murder from a great distance if they possess any of their victim's blood and know their True Name, often holding such threats over potential victims as extortion. Death can come at any time if the Adelfoí Aímatos are crossed. These blood sorcerers hold great affinity for mummies predisposed to the Ab Pillar.

The Adelfoí Aímatos are unrepentant in their acts of blood sacrifice. Some mummies are driven to recall their time in Irem when witnessing Adelfoí Aímatos rituals. A pit is carved in the ground and sacrifices are made until the hole is filled with corpses and blood. Such rituals are said to lead to wars changing course, when the incantations are right.

Loyalists of the Ptolemaic Dynasty

Once a necromancy cult known as the Reborn Osiris, the Loyalists were punished severely for their creation of an Amkhata. Somehow, the cult survived half a century of imprisonment and they reemerged as the Loyalists of the Ptolemaic Dynasty. The Loyalists reappeared more unified than before and in the service of a mummy who appears to have once been a member of the so-called Cult of Isis.

Strident believers, the Loyalists identify Cleopatra as Isis and Mark Antony as the putative form of Osiris. He is Osiris Unborn. Caesarion might be Horus, or Osiris Reborn — members argue the specifics. This is similar to what Cleopatra and Mark Antony claim. They're supported in this belief by their mistress, who foretells Esit — or Isis, as the Romans prefer — will give birth to Azar from Duat. Once reborn, Azar will liberate the Deathless. After that? Some say Irem returns. Some say the world ends. The nameless mistress of the cult prefers to not give definitive answers, and avoids other Arisen, which may confirm she is indeed part of the "Cult of Isis" meret that was banished around 140 BCE.

Cult traditions revolve around displaying fanatical loyalty to the mistress. This is true for the majority, but the core of the cult are pragmatic, believing her to be something they can become. Three sorcerers claim to have been Reborn Osiris, one a reincarnation of a high priestess, and another, someone who was resurrected from the tomb. The other elders were once independent sorcerers who learned from them, and aren't sure whether to believe or not, since all three are somewhat unhinged. In any event, their sorcerers desire Arisen creations for personal reasons: wealth, power, and immortality.

They practice necromancy with particular skill. No sorcerers are more adept at communicating with the dead than the Loyalists. One of their more bizarre rites sees the sorcerer bound like a mummy and entombed for a day and a night with a corpse. The time is spent with the sorcerer attempting to converse with the deceased's spirit. At the ritual's conclusion, open communication exists for the sorcerer between lands of the living and dead.

Parangelía Seth

Born of Greeks, Egyptians, and Nubians pledged to Seth (formerly Sutek, or Set), the Parangelía originally focused only on convincing rich, foolish men to part with coin. Fate drew each of them to the veneration of Seth. In his name they destabilized weak rulers and their lines. Gradually, they elevated themselves to various chieftainships over pacified people. Even before they became sorcerers, Arisen recruited them for their skills of influence and manipulation.



After the Second Sothic Turn, the Parangelía claim Seth appeared to them. Those were the hottest years in generations. The sun killed the Parangelía's people with drought and plagues born from rare, filthy water. Seth offered relief from the inevitable death conveyed by Re's callousness. He blessed all members of the cult with teeming fertility. Even starving women survived birth to twins and triplets — or so the story goes. The Deathless think the whole notion is ridiculous, but none of them can remember what really happened.

The strong generation was considered holy. They formed a priesthood of Seth and appropriated artifacts surrounding his worship. These included red volcanic stones, marked with hieroglyphs praising their god. The first sorcerers of any consequence learned their rites from the sacred stones. They learned rites of command and social influence, especially when they tempt people to fall to their base natures.

The cult is still known for its persuasiveness, along with a troubled relationship with Arisen. They keep their patrons at a distance, serving their own interests first, but they've acted with such efficiency for Deathless interests that mummies have little interest in changing the arrangement. But Seth hates stasis, despises unchallenged lords, and even before they uncover the Prophecies of Isis, believe the immortal lords may have gone unchallenged for too long.

Families aligned with the cult are still known for their large families and children with reddish hair: an old sign of Seth's blessing. Although Seth isn't as feared as he used to be, the cult still follows ancient traditions designed to keep them from being persecuted. They live in separate, semi-nomadic communities and only start families with sincere Seth-worshippers. They technically recognize the station of Pharaoh, but sometimes raise one of their own as a secret king of Deshret and Lower Egypt. Descendants of past secret kings couple brother to sister, like the recognized nobility.

THE PROPHECY

For centuries the Parangelía Seth served the Arisen. They were never natural followers, but performed their duties with an excellence born of pride. They even created the Sha Crown, as a reminder of Re's anger during the ancient drought, and Seth's ability to command it.

Digging in Osiran tombs in Memphis, Parangelía cultists discover the Scrolls of Isis, which set down in many languages the prophecy of Esit manifesting in Upper Egypt as Pharaoh to give birth to Azar — a strange scenario from a mortal point of view, but one sometimes whispered of by Arisen. The Parangelía's interpretation is that Azar (Osiris to the Greeks) will free his Deathless children from half-life. The Arisen will withdraw their power. The gods may steal magic itself from the world, assuming they leave behind a world to survive Azar's rebirth. At best, sorcerers lose patronage. At worst, they lose *existence*. It has to be stopped.

After unearthing the scrolls, Parangelía work to prevent Azar's rebirth. They're willing to betray the Ptolemies and even Egypt itself — better a Roman province than an enemy god's return. To this end, their sorcerers steal vessels and eventually consort with Shuankhsen. In some ways, this betrayal feels natural. They worship the eternal foreigner, god of the howling desert, old enemy of the other gods. Perhaps they were always meant to betray the Arisen?

PARANGELÍA RITUALS

The Parangelía revere Seth as they breed among their own, strengthening the purity of their line in emulation of the pharaohs, while simultaneously debasing it through corruptive inbreeding. The cult's proximity to Arisen allows them the strength to pursue their sorcery to greater heights despite the physical and mental ailments after centuries of incest, committed in glory of their god under the burning sun.

Every week, the male Parangelía Seth undertake vision quests by standing naked, upright, and unsupported, in a room coated with mirrors of highly polished brass while exposed to the sun for the full ascent and descent of the day. Such ordeals cause profuse sweating and hallucinations, but also convey prophecies and messages from Seth as their minds travel to Duat. Another popular male rite has cultists attempt to cow and weaken the resolve of one another each season; the victors, by sheer force of personality, claim the positions of hierophant and make slaves of the weakest males, until they have to defend their titles the next season.

Excommunications are determined by the women, who — while bearing few ostensible leadership roles — are recognized by the hierophants as those responsible for deciding which of the men are most capable of fathering the next generation of Seth's children. Any men found to be physically intimate with those outside the cult, or who haven't fathered a child by the age of 20, are excommunicated. Excommunication is an extremely painful experience as, while coaxed to sensitivity, the men must endure an asp or Egyptian cobra bite to the penis, causing it to wither and fall off. Punishments do not exist for cultists who have sex with those of their own gender, so long as they continue to procreate at other times.

The cult possesses a polarized relationship with the sun. The rank and file cultists adulate Re, stripping themselves bare to receive its warmth, and copulate without cover—allowing the light and heat to enter each party during the sexual act as a third participant. The hierophants and elder male sorcerers, however, abjure the light, keeping to the darkness in which they believe Seth awaits them. These sorcerers often wear thick wraps and cloaks, not dissimilar to Arisen who've just awoken.

Parangelía Seth learn the following Closed Rites.

RITE OF DELUSION

The Parangelía Seth first came together as con artists over the weak willed, and to this day they still rely on social authority over physical prowess. Some say Parangelía Seth can convince a merchant pieces of natron are diamonds, and they're right; the sorcerers are skilled scammers. The sorcerers take a material resembling something of value — whether crystals, iron pyrite, or similar — and crush it to powder. The

powder is imbibed when mixed with waters from the Blue Nile, with no food or other liquids passing the drinkers' lips until three sunrises have come and gone. The sorcerers can then present items of the same material to non-cult members, and gain 2 dots in Manipulation when attempting to convince others of the material's veracity. Arisen intervention in the ritual typically takes the form of donating Ren, making the item physically change in appearance to undeniably be called "gold," "diamonds," or whatever is sought. Ren also grants the sorcerers an additional point of Manipulation. The effects of the rite last until a further three sunrises have passed.

Rite of Piety

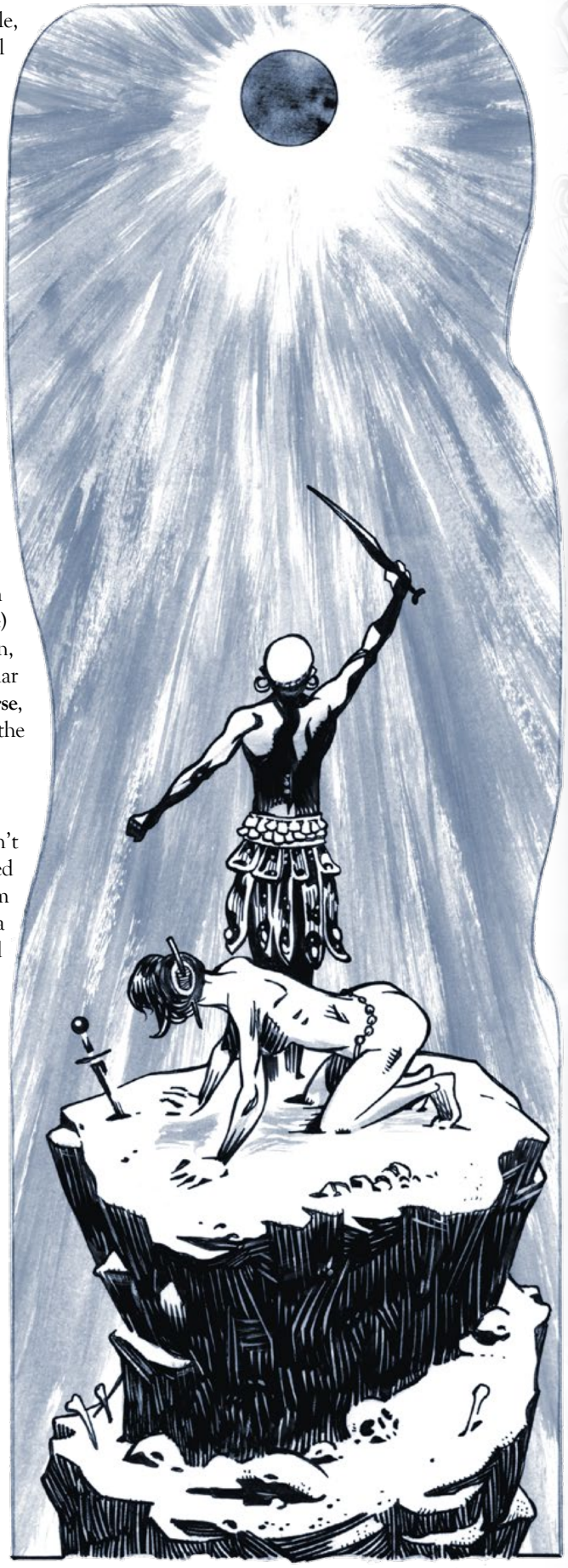
This rite isn't unique to the Parangelía Seth. Virtually all sorcerer cults who were allies with the Arisen know it but, for this conspiracy, the name is ironic. They no longer worship the Deathless, so practice the spell with formalized sarcasm and elements of intentional disrespect. They know the old way, however, and use it when they want to pretend to love the Arisen. From the fall of a moonless night until dawn, the sorcerer prostrates himself before an image of one of the Arisen, or one of the Deathless themselves. Once the sun's disk separates from the horizon, the sorcerer bleeds himself (for 1 lethal damage) into a receptacle, and offers it to the image or mummy. In return, the sorcerer is immune to the effects of Sybaris for the next lunar month, but cannot acquire Sybaritic Omens (**Mummy: The Curse**, pp. 149-150). If one of the Arisen contributes a point of Ba, the sorcerer can do so, and recovers all spent Willpower as well.

Rite of the Sacred Flood

Like the Rite of Piety, the Rite of the Sacred Flood isn't unique to the Parangelía Seth, but is known to all sorcerers allied with the Arisen, as well as to sorcerers who have studied them well enough to uncover the secrets of Sekhem. The Parangelía Seth's version requires the sacrifice of a man who has fathered children. Officiants castrate the victim, drown him in an urn bearing the image of Osiris, and drink the bloody, death-fouled water. This confers the ability to channel Pillar points from a Vestige or other inanimate object with Pillar ratings into a rite, or from a mummy who willingly allows them to be channeled, whether or not she knows the intentions of the rite into which it will be channeled. The benefit lasts until the next full moon, so most sorcerers time the rite so it will be effective for a lunar month. A few sorcerers have also learned that the rite can even be used to channel Pillar points from Arisen who are dead, or between Descents, but they're not sharing that secret — yet. If one of the Arisen contributes a point of Ren, the sorcerer can channel *two* Pillar points to replace two elements from a rite upon one other rite cast while the Sacred Flood remains in effect (so at most, one per month). This does not increase the rite's potency in any other way.

Rite of Seeding

An emulation of Seth's actions against Osiris, the Rite of Seeding is the Parangelía Seth's preferred fertility rite. A storm



must be raging as a priest or holy man caught by the cult is held in place on the banks of the Nile by sorcerers. Pieces of the priest are dismembered, and used to lure crocodiles to his location. Prior to death by being devoured, the priest must be drowned in Nile water; the only segment of him which needs to be retained is his penis. The penis is mummified and buried on the eastern slopes of a hill. Providing a male and female copulate over the burial spot at sunrise, their chances of conception are increased. If a mummy intervenes in the ritual by lending a point of Ab, conception is guaranteed, and often produces multiple offspring; an additional dot of Presence is granted to the children.

Rite of Sovereignty

Sovereignty cannot be given; it must be taken. The Parangelía Seth have long possessed rites dedicated to increasing their influence over others, to take the authority due their line. The Rite of Sovereignty is complex, dangerous, and based around specific timing, but its practitioners have reaped fruits from its completion. At the commencement of a solar eclipse, two partaking sorcerers must do battle with one another in a place without cover — such as a hilltop or open field. The contest is fought with bladed weapons or bare hands, the combatants attempting to cut their opposition three times without causing death. As the solar eclipse concludes, one sorcerer must open the throat of the opponent, letting blood in the direction of the revealed sun. Given the differing lengths of time an eclipse can last, such combats can be frantic affairs taking minutes, or carefully orchestrated dances lasting hours. The victor gains 2 dots of Presence and 2 dots of Intimidation until the next eclipse—which can take months or years to occur. When Arisen oversee this ritual and contribute a point of Ab, the benefits conveyed by the ritual become permanent, and the sorcerer gains an additional dot of Presence. The benefits of this rite do not stack, if performed multiple times.

Relics

The reign of Cleopatra sees a wave of relics used by Arisen to further their internecine activities, as mummies fall on all sides of the conflict between the Parthians, Rome, and Egypt. When the Parangelía Seth sorcerers produce a relic for the Tef-Aabhi, there's a brief assumption these talented mortals could be used for the creation of more vessels and Vestiges. Unfortunately, it proves to not be the case. Relics created outside Irem are rare, and when mummies attempt to force cultists into working on one piece, the result is a pile of slag and one dead cultist. Unless the sorcerer voluntarily dedicates his life to a relic's construction, and is fated to make it, he won't possess sufficient will to complete his life's work.

The Sha Crown ⟨Effigy ••⟩

Durability 3, Size 2, Structure 5

The grand achievement of Muthis, a member of the Parangelía Seth sorcerer cult who died shortly after completion of the relic, the Sha Crown is in the style of a Lower Egypt Deshret and made from copper, reeds, leather, and cloth. This red headwear comes with a black, leather mask, bearing the visage of the Set animal. The wearer is said to bear the heat of the sun and desert in the Crown, as Seth repudiates Re and casts all heat from his own body. The ability is more symbolic than practical, but as a tool of intimidation can hardly be surpassed. Arisen who wear the Crown tend to show great pride in what their mortal cultists have wrought, putting aside the death that went into the effigy's making.

Power: The wearer of the Crown must grasp a mortal with bare hands, and look upon the same mortal through the eyes of the mask. The effigy imparts great heat into the body of the mortal, boiling the victim from the inside out (four points of damage for every turn the mortal remains grappled.) Screams, steam, and smoke pour from the victim, adding two dice to any Intimidation rolls made by the Crown's wearer. It's seen as the mark of a good cultist if they'll accept the first touch of the Sha Crown's power without attempting to break free from the mummy's grip.

Curse: The Arisen continues to radiate intense heat for the next 24 hours after using the relic. Upon contact, a mummy will burn paper or dry wood, damage complex machinery beyond repair, and inflict one point of damage through burning for every turn touching a living creature. The Tef-Aabhi are immune to this penalty.

The Eunuch's Fertile Lunula ⟨Amulet •••⟩

Durability 4, Size 2, Structure 6

This crescent moon shaped pendant is sized to fit a young woman's or child's neck, and is marked with multiple vulva engravings around its circumference. Suspected to have origins with the Maa-Kep of Macedonia in the 3rd century BCE, the Eunuch's Lunula is formed of solid gold and would be a rich find, were it not for the curse attached to it. The Lunula is passed between Arisen merets operating in Rome, and further north, but mummies of Egypt have recorded sightings of it in their vicinity recently. This would mean little but for the relic's properties. This relic is known to have been worn by mummies identifying as any gender, as Maa-Kep used it to ensure rulers—both male and female—became more or less likely to produce heirs. In this way, the Bearers of the Engraved can control the fate of dynastic lines.

Power: The Lunula must be worn around the neck for the power to work. If the amulet is removed, its effects cease. The user of the Lunula develops the power of fertility transference, which is to say that if an Arisen wearer has sex with a mortal while wearing the Lunula, the mortal will either be incredibly likely to impregnate or conceive the next time they have sex, or will be guaranteed to not impregnate or conceive for a full year. The choice of fertility or sterility is that of the wearer. A baby born via the use of the Eunuch's Lunula will bear the features of an ethnic Paionian, no matter the parentage of the child. All children of the Lunula bear similar features, down to blood group and eye color, but minor differences set them apart from one another.

Curse: According to the Maa-Kep, the capricious fertility alive in this amulet was drawn from the body of one of Alexander the Great's generals. After a foray into the realms of forbidden pleasures, a disease afflicted him, leading to his sterility, and ultimately to his becoming Alexander's chief eunuch. Any but Maa-Kep who use the Lunula run the risk of passing this same degenerative sickness on to their sexual partner, and guarantee it will be passed to any baby born to their union.

THE ISIREION PROPHECIES (TEXT •••••)

Durability 4, Size 3, Structure 7

Unique in their potential for power; the papyruses known as the Isireion Prophecies tell the tale of how the Iremite goddess Esit will manifest in the body of the last pharaoh, and bear a child who shall become Azar in mortal form. Should Azar grow to manhood and judge his servants worthy, he will bless them with release from the chains of the Sothic Turn. Their great work shall be completed.

The conjecture surrounding these scrolls, their reliability, and who exactly the last pharaoh *is* all energize Arisen conflict. Some Deathless eagerly support whichever pharaoh is in power just in case they happen to be "the one." Others become so assured of one pharaoh's failings they conspire towards his or her fall. The gender of the pharaoh is hotly contested. A number of Arisen believe Esit could only appear in female form, with Azar in the body of a male. Others argue the gods aren't so limited as all that. Dissenting voices state the Prophecies are clearly meant as a test for Arisen loyalties to the Judges, and should not be believed. Paranoid mummies wonder if they've been invented by charlatans and enemies of the Deathless, perhaps even foes of the Nameless Empire. If so, they're potent fuel for confusion and disharmony.

The writers of the Isireion Prophecies are unknown, but are assumed to be of the Sesha-Hebsu. Most Closed Books maintain they've no record of such a responsibility but, Memory being what it is, acknowledge they're the only scribes likely to possess the talent for such a masterwork. The papyrus scrolls number 17 in total, marked with hieroglyphics believed to be Iremite in origin. The designs differ from scroll to scroll, implying multiple authors.

In fact, the prophecies are a product of Reborn Osiris sorcerers produced under Closed Book guidance, written with such mastery as to seem of Iremite vintage — even the papyrus is an antique supply from the tomb of their patrons.

The potency of the relic is evidenced through its effects on the readers. The "Cult of Isis" meret formed around the Prophecies and conspired to see its predictions become truth, but by the reign of Cleopatra VII, only one mummy still claims to be of the group. The others are exiled, deranged, or yet to awake from Descent, depending on whom a mummy asks.

Power: The Isireion Prophecies inspire Arisen and mortals to perform phenomenal and vicious acts in equal measure, due to what they bestow. Magic is in the hieroglyphics, which empowers the wielder and enforces dedication as a result of reading the scrolls. When reading every scroll to its conclusion, the reader must succeed on a Resolve + Occult roll, and gains a single point of Sekhem for each success.

A single success also moves the consciousness of the reader elsewhere. Mummies debate where their spirits go when reading the Prophecies, with the most popular theory being a future not yet written upon the Scroll of Ages. They manifest at a point where the overbearing weight of the Judges and their Decrees is lifted, but the world is dark and the mortals are sickened. The Sekhem gained through reading the Prophecies is only usable in this "future," but can be used in ways that would normally affront the Judges with no risk of penalty.

Mummies who visit this land and ask the date, location, name of the sovereign, and the powers of the gods are told different answers by different people. The proclamation of one god above all is common, with "Azar" a frequent whisper on dying lips. No Arisen appear to be native to the time visited, causing some traveling Deathless to speculate this is not a reality, but a dream state.

Most fortuitously, any relics acquired in this time — of which there's an apparent abundance — can be brought back to the mummy's true place and time, which is always returned to within a day. When the mummy reappears, it's as if no time has passed, but the memory of the journey remains and the gained Sekhem is gone. No mummy can use this relic more than once a month.

Curse: The papyruses pervert a mind towards their ends, either in utter devotion or abject revulsion of what the Prophecies dictate. The reader is compelled by the way they instinctively feel (as determined by the player) to work towards their conclusion or subversion, with a Willpower roll required to prevent impulsive action towards their preferred end. Mummies will either find themselves unconsciously attempting to preserve the Ptolemaic dynasty or trying to destroy it. Although unlikely to manifest through outright assassination attempts, Arisen find themselves supporting wars and secret intrigues on opposing sides.

Additionally, the lure of a world where Deathless aren't limited and where Sekhem can be used to its fullest has an addictive quality. To resist the urge to reread the Prophecies each month takes a Resolve + Composure roll. Each extra time one reads the Prophecies, the return trip costs 1 dot of Memory. Sesha-Hebsu are immune to all negative aspects of using the Prophecies.

BANE RELICS

The Shuankhsen dominate Egypt's shadows, keeping a baleful eye on the activities of Arisen and other supernatural beings. The kingdom is precious to the Lifeless, not as a location for which they hold affection, but as one they hatefully keep from the Arisen who would claim it back. The typically-disparate Lifeless coordinate action during Cleopatra's reign through use of debased relics long predating the rise of the Egyptian pharaohs. The Shuankhsen have



yet to utilize sorcerers for bane relic creation, but should they plant the Parangelía Seth completely under heel, it is their intention that these mortal dabblers become their manufacturing slaves.

Cerumen of Neb-Imkhu (Regia ••)

Durability 0 (liquid), Size 1, Structure N/A (liquid)

The Judge Neb-Imkhu despises those who pry into the secrets of others, listen in on confidential conversations, and steal words and symbols from hidden texts. The Mesen-Nebu maintain Neb-Imkhu advocates learning through self-awareness, progressive thought, and embracing change. To steal someone else's thoughts or plans is the opposite of what allowed Irem to become great. Pioneers, not charlatans, are ever required in Arisen cults, as well as the guilds.

The Shuankhsen laugh at such preciousness over secrets. They understand why the Arisen want their secrets kept. The know the horrors of Irem and the creation of Deathless. Some Lifeless even realize secrets of the Deceived. The Shuankhsen do not want these secrets kept under wraps. They want the mummies humiliated, tortured with guilt, and driven to swift Descents. The Cerumen of Neb-Imkhu assists in this aim.

The alchemy that went into this bane relic's creation is unknown, though none can deny the regia's bestowed effects. Consuming the adhesive brown substance, which continues to replenish in its cask after being emptied, makes the drinker's words ring with pervasive truth. Not simply a potion designed to make a mummy talk a convincing game, the Cerumen is designed to make the drinker's speech plant doubt in the minds of any who listen to her honeyed words.

The Shuankhsen and others who use this bane relic upend the cask and pour the thick, waxy liquid down their throats. Soon they are able to make even the most loyal Sadikh doubt his master, Priest distrust his longtime Scribe companion, and cult abandon their master.

Power: The Cerumen is easily transportable in its original cask. While it's never been decanted except to be directly imbibed, it can be separated into up to six measures. The cask does not refill until bearers consume all six measures.

Users activate the Cerumen of Neb-Imkhu after consuming it. The player makes a Stamina roll to avoid the Cerumen rejecting its host. Successful drinkers are granted 9-again on all rolls in which they attempt to convince someone of disloyalty, betrayal, or untrustworthiness — whether directed at someone's mentor, friend, colleague, loved one, or figure of worship. Drinkers can make a listener lose faith in their god, leave a spouse, abandon a child, or even abandon the mummy they've been following for decades. The aura of credibility only applies when attempting to charm someone in this way. The target of the drinker's campaign gains the Notoriety Condition (see **Chronicles of Darkness**, p.290.)

Failure on the activation roll results in the Cerumen crawling out of its drinker on sticky tendrils. Dramatic failure inverts the effects of the regia, making previous loyal cultists and relations instinctively distrust the relic bearer, enforcing a -2 penalty to all rolls attempting to convince them of the truth. An exceptional success grants the Inspired Condition to the relic bearer (see **Chronicles of Darkness**, p.289).

Curse: The Cerumen of Neb-Imkhu isn't named after a Judge as some pithy Shuankhsen attempt at humor. The syrupy liquid is in fact fluid from the Judge, though it remains a mystery when or how it was acquired. Mummies who pronounced their decree before Neb-Imkhu see any who use this bane relic as anathematic, and must attempt a Resolve roll to prevent flying into an attack. Drinkers suffer a -3 penalty to Investigation rolls when attempting to discover true information regarding an individual, as the Judge wills the bearer to fail in their attempts at sowing further secretive intelligence. Shuankhsen are unaffected by the curse.

Ikhtil's Carapace (Uter ••••)

Durability 2, Size 14, Structure 16

When Irem stood at its height, the world crawled with exotic and powerful beasts. Not all were natural to the world. Just as the Judges represent the chthonic and unknowable, so did many of the creatures prowling the land. In various texts kept by the Sesha-Hebsu, a great beast known as Ikhtil crawled the lands surrounding the Nameless Empire. Alternately described as a limbless, writhing thing from within the earth, or a black star's parasitical leech cast out from the Twilight, Ikhtil was a being of terror and destruction, in blind service to the Devourer and mad with hunger.

Centuries after Irem's fall, Ikhtil followed. The Scribes hold recorded references to the Devourer discarding the creature, and other terrors of the desert eventually consuming it. Only after its destruction did the Devourer reclaim its shell, igniting in the uter remnants of a foully-inverted Sekhem. Ikhtil's carapace was gifted to the Shuankhsen tearing apart Irem's successor states, who used the great shell to harness spiritual energy from the recently deceased, and channel it into the bodies of any — whether mortal or immortal — who rest within it.

Come the rise of Cleopatra, the Shuankhsen continue using the Carapace to cement their dominion over Egypt. The larger the volume of dead used to fuel the relic, the greater the power conveyed to its users. The relic's curse mitigates many of its benefits, leaving the souls of the relic users damaged and committed to feeding the Carapace's future users, as they develop increasing numbers of physical ailments and mental conditions. Some maintain that use of the Carapace is worth the cost, though, as few relics make such fundamental changes to its users.

Due to the Carapace's size — as tall as an elephant, and slightly broader — it's not a relic transported easily. Additionally, its thin membrane is fragile. Presently it rests inside a tomb beneath Alexandria controlled by the Shuankhsen of the nome, neatly lining the walls and ceiling of its prison. Its intact delivery to the tomb is a mystery, but it will not easily be removed or destroyed.

Power: The Carapace is a static relic, and activates upon the expenditure of at least 3 points of Willpower by three separate users. The users must then roll Manipulation +

Occult, attempting to achieve at least six successes between them. If the roll succeeds, spirits of Alexandria's recently deceased draw towards the Carapace and line the uter, solidifying it and coating it in a thick ectoplasm. The users within the Carapace gain one point in Mental Merits for each success after the fifth, as the unconscious talents of the dead funnel into the relic bearers. If a conflict resulting in over a dozen deaths occurred within Alexandria's borders since the relic's last use, the users each gain one point in Physical Merits in addition to the points in Mental Merits. These Merits remain in place for a number of days equal to the total number of successes, divided by the number of users. Failure to activate the relic results in a wasted Willpower point and no further effects. Dramatic failure forces the relic's curse on the bearers, with none of the benefits. An exceptional success grants the Inspired Condition to the relic bearer (see **Chronicles of Darkness**, p.289.)

Curse: After using the Carapace's power, a mortal relic bearer automatically takes on the Soulless Condition (see **Chronicles of Darkness**, p.290) as his soul is bound to the relic, fuelling its power for future rites. An Arisen who uses the relic finds himself unable to use his Ba and Ka Pillars until descending and awakening again. Shuankhsen are unaffected by the curse.

Gross murder sprees waive both types of curse in full. The Carapace requires dozens of deaths, blood spilled in each case, within the Alexandrian nome. The relic users must be integral to these murders' completion. The quick accrual of Conditions or a plummeting Descent can only be mitigated by Integrity and Memory rolls. Each time the relic is used, the number of deaths required to return the users' souls increases. During the Cleopatran Era, the murder count stands at 72.

SEBA

Many of these notional relics exist, scattered, buried, and floating aloft in Egypt and Rome, awaiting their Deceived masters' use. Created through wonders of art and the fusion of Fate and Sekhem, these fluid treasures exist only in the sight of Deceived and rare sorcerer cultists, who wield these golden halos and ethereal words to tip Fate in their favor. As with all relics, but especially the seba, curses balance Ma'at's scales. For every sublime gift a seba conveys, a dreadful affliction strikes the user.

For more information on seba relics, see **Book of the Deceived**.

BLEED THE PRETENDER (SEBA •)

Powers: The seba bearer cannot sense sorcerers, but her Utterances and Affinites do. The Shattered Crook believe this seba formed when a Deceived first shared her gifts with a mortal sorcerer, and the cultist in turn attempted to steal further knowledge from his mistress. The seba formed as the Deceived swore to crush further pretenders to power, and continues to routinely orbit the location where it was first used.

A mummy bound to this seba finds all offensive Utterances and Affinities unconsciously target sorcerers, no matter their attitude to the mummy. Any time a dice pool is rolled for damage on a power targeting an area or group of people, any damage that would be caused to mundane mortals is instead channeled to any sorcerers in their midst — if any happen to be present. This seba holds the potential to completely obliterate sorcerers, and leave mortals miraculously unscathed by massive destruction. If the bearer is a sorcerer, they are not targeted.

Curse: Mummies and sorcerers carrying this seba appear graceful and kind to mortals, and near-demonic to sorcerers. Social situations involving regular mortals gain a +1 to rolls. The same situations involving sorcerers incurs a -2 to rolls, as sorcerers instinctively recoil or take aggressive action.

THE SAHU WITHOUT (SEBA ••)

Powers: This seba allows its bearer the gift of physical transmutation, allowing her to slough off her old skin, and emerge from a dried cocoon in a distinctly different form. Tales tell this seba formed when a sculptor grew frustrated with his slave model, and began shaving off the parts he found troublesome to emulate in marble.

Once per session, a mummy or sorcerer linked to this seba may — upon sleeping in a sarcophagus — emerge in a different body. This body need not share any physical similarity to the previous form, though it will be humanoid. The previous form, left as a hollowed husk, fills with a viscous fluid and remains intact until disturbed. Subtle uses of this seba allow a Deceived's enemies to mistake the "sleeping form" for the mummy, when in fact she's since changed forms several times.

The new form uses the same number of points as the previous body's Social Attributes, but they may be moved into any combination. The seba affects the personality of the user as much as it does the appearance.

This seba is particularly attractive to body thieves, who seek to emulate its powers.

Curse: This seba's user loses something each time she abandons a husk. A part of the user's self disappears each time a body is left behind. This loss is reflected in a deduction of 1 dot from any Skill or Attribute, which may only be recovered with future Experiences. The lost abilities disappear into Twilight, each one lost forming a dim reflection of the mummy as she was, though it is no true spirit. Necromancers believe these reflections could potentially be consumed, and the skills they represent be recovered. None have yet succeeded.

THE UNRAVELING (SEBA •••)

Powers: The Unraveling is a cosmic seba used tentatively by its bearer, for it manipulates the strands of Fate, and by its name implies the ability to unwind Fate's tight knots and strings. This seba is capable of altering its bearer's fated course, though not in as limited a fashion as The Coward's Path (see **Book of the Deceived**, p.110.) The Unraveling allows the user to unpick and reassemble Fate's chosen course. This is no light undertaking.



The seba's user must carve her True Name into a mortal, who must survive the mutilation. Whatever Fate had planned for the mummy instead visits the mortal, whether it be fair or foul. Such effects range from the mundane — being the target of an assassination, or becoming the recipient of cultists' offerings — to the magical — averting a speedy Descent, or benefiting from consumption of a vessel. These effects will continue to afflict only the mortal, until the mortal's death or until the bearer flays the mortal's skin and consumes it.

Curse: The seba's bearer is incapable of issuing Utterances with no access to her True Name. The temakh rages at the Deceived for as long as the True Name is separate, impotent to act, but truly retributive once the True Name is recovered. It forces a Memory roll of only two dice. Additionally, Fate has a tendency to punish those who thwarted its plans, or at the very least balance the scales. If a mortal benefited from Fate's largesse, the seba's user may gain even more. If the mortal was injured in an attack meant for the bearer, she can expect Fate to make up for lost time and harm in short order.

Celestial Assembly (Seba ----)

Powers: Deceived scour the world for the lost seba known as Celestial Assembly. In this era, when Azar's rebirth may come as result of portents and predictions, this seba is perhaps the only relic capable of revealing the truth behind Sybaritic omens.

Celestial Assembly forces a physical change on its bearer, causing the mummy's eyes to swim with stars. If the mummy should look into the night sky while reciting the words of an established prophecy, the celestial bodies above begin to swirl and form shapes, illustrating to the bearer the direction Fate will take the divination. Celestial Assembly is without flaws in its ability to predict Fate's course. The future as it relates to the prophecy becomes completely visible to the seba's user.

The seba's analysis of omens is only averted if the bearer plays an active role in stopping them. The bearer will almost always see herself in the celestial play of future events, and is therefore capable of subverting Fate's intentions. Whether her choice to act differently from the analyzed prophecy affects anything is down to the Storyteller. An absent player on the stage of portent is often replaced, the original participant punished for their insolence.

Curse: Celestial Assembly's curse is a subtle one. There's no immediate detrimental effect for viewing the future, but, steadily, the seba's bearer becomes so obsessed with prophecy they become more concerned with the future than the present. The bearer gains the Obsession Condition (see **Chronicles of Darkness**, p.290) and it is persistent, focused exclusively on analyzing probability, predictions, and omens, no matter how insignificant. Their present state decays in appearance, modernity, and awareness, representing a single-minded fixation on the future. The bearer suffers -2 to all rolls related to gaining information regarding anything not omen related, and the same penalty to all social rolls related to events of the present day, and attempts to avoid surprise, unless the surprise was foreseen.

The Isireion Bull

In this time of war and prophecy, mummies attempt to position themselves above trivial mortal conflict, but find themselves sucked into the thick of it. The potential tied to which empire will stand victorious, and which sovereigns will still rule, is too great to be disregarded. The possibility for calamity is too high to tolerate ignorance of mortal actions. Among the Arisen and their cults, a figure makes himself known for his aggressive moves.

Mithridates

Quote: *"In their subservience, Arisen have allowed Fate to control them. Well, we shall bludgeon Fate until* we *control* it*."*

Background: Mithridates was born the son of siblings in the Persian city of Istakhr. His parents' union was a blessed one, according to the Parangelía Seth cult to which they belonged. The blessing allowed him to be a strong and fully formed child, unlike many others born of incest. He was acclaimed by the Persian Parangelía as a hierophant in the making, as his intellect and reasoning were put to the test time and again, and never found wanting. By the age of 11 he'd participated in his first Rite of Delusion, and by 13 he was receiving visions from Seth. Among the members of the cult, Mithridates stood as a savant, fated to perform great works in their god's name.

Mithridates elected to travel to his god's homeland, bringing with him an entourage of followers he consistently abused and bullied into remaining loyal. Upon reaching Egypt and meeting the native cultists in Memphis, he rapidly dominated the cult into following his edicts under pain of excommunication. Recognizing alongside his brutality the mind of a touched individual, few cultists opposed him. After only a year in Egypt, he commanded the rest of the Parangelía Seth as one of the cult hierophants.

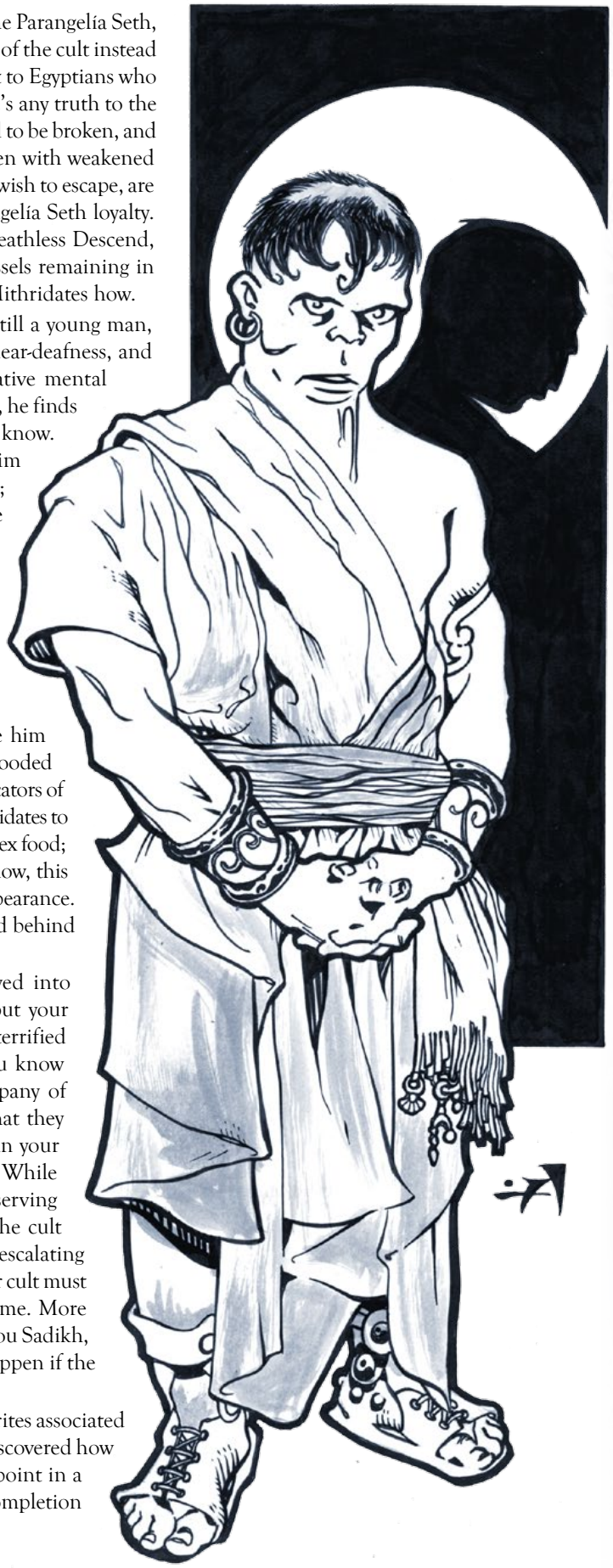
The current era sees Mithridates orchestrating the activities of the Parangelía Seth as they attempt multiple methods to reach their zenith in power. Mithridates knows from his studies the cult's former Arisen masters battle the Shuankhsen, so he's opened diplomatic negotiations with them. Shuankhsen advice is making Mithridates aware of how important relics can be to his cult, allowing sorcery without Arisen sponsorship. The cult now traces relics, to hoard and drain them for the fuel of rituals. It's a task they've taken on with gusto, since their dismissal from Deathless service has caused desperation for other routes to sorcerous furtherance.

Mithridates possesses a deep wisdom which belies his young years. He knows the Shuankhsen use the Parangelía Seth to help hunt the Deathless, but doesn't trust them, and resents their demands for captured relics. They've taught the cult new ways to harvest Sekhem, however, and both sides want to break the Isireion Prophecies.

To Mithridates' mind, the potential for Deathless autonomy is extremely damaging. His research on the history of his cult and the pinnacle of their reach all tie to Arisen

backing. He would see the Arisen back in the fold of the Parangelía Seth, but with them unknowingly working toward the vision of the cult instead of the other way around. To this end, he's reaching out to Egyptians who will work with the Romans in the coming war. If there's any truth to the Prophecies—and Mithridates believes there is—they need to be broken, and fate twisted to the whims of the Parangelía Seth. Arisen with weakened resolve, reshackled to the Judges many of them secretly wish to escape, are perfect targets who would welcome the offer of Parangelía Seth loyalty. With such welcome comes rewards. Whenever the Deathless Descend, the Parangelía Seth will be standing by to use the vessels remaining in the mummies' tombs—the Shuankhsen have shown Mithridates how.

Mithridates knows time is of the essence. While still a young man, his hearing has in recent years swiftly debilitated to near-deafness, and he's increasingly afflicted with encroaching, debilitative mental conditions. On top of these effects of his inbred nature, he finds himself sterile—a great shame to the cult, were they to know. His constant presence as a hierophant has allowed him leeway and the ability to excommunicate true fathers; claiming their offspring as his own. The one thing he fears is being discovered as less than a true son of Seth. Anyone who as much as intimates this is the case bears the full brunt of his cruelty.



Description: Broad-shouldered, tightly-muscled, and tall with it, Mithridates is not typical of Persian academics. His hulking stature has paved the way to his being revered as godlike by other cultists, and he uses it to great effect in intimidating those who would see him deposed as one of the hierophants. His perpetually hooded eyes, bulbous brow, and disarmingly receded jaw are indicators of his parents' consanguinity. His mouth defect forces Mithridates to struggle when forming complex words or chewing complex food; a constant stream of saliva runs down his neck. Somehow, this contributes to, rather than undercuts, his imposing appearance. By torchlight his face resembles a near-jawless skull, and behind the deformity is a shrewd, aggressive intellect.

Storytelling Hints: You want people to be cowed into subservience. You know you're far from attractive, but your presence is sufficient to ensure everyone in your cult is terrified of voicing any concerns regarding your breeding. You know the best place for the Parangelía Seth is in the company of the Deathless, but your view of the relationship is that they should be coming to the sorcerers' bosom, rather than your people having to supplicate at the feet of mummies. While you direct the base members of the Parangelía into serving the Shuankhsen, you and the other sorcerers drive the cult in opposition of the Ptolemies. You do not fear your escalating debilitation, but are conscious that, like the Arisen, your cult must act fast for you to reap the benefits during your lifetime. More than anything, you'd like to see the Deathless making you Sadikh, but you're pragmatic enough to know this will only happen if the guilds become indebted to the Parangelía Seth.

Notes: While mortal, Mithridates knows all of the rites associated with his cult, and through Shuankhsen teaching has discovered how to sap Pillars from vessels. He can only hold a single point in a Pillar at a time, but can contribute this Pillar to the completion of a ritual as a mummy might.



Wrestling (Dice pool 7)

Mithridates is an able combatant with most weapons, but prefers to use his bare hands to apply damage. He wrestles in the Palé style, taking great pleasure in throwing his opponents to the floor, and applying vicious holds to cut off circulation and cause immense pain.

Command (Dice pool 9)

In part due to his troubling looks and bearing, but mainly due to the authority with which he speaks for Seth and his cult, few mortals are capable of rising in opposition to Mithridates' decrees. He commonly strips naked for rituals, using his imposing body to project his commands to fellow cultists, and exalt in power in his purest form. This sets Mithridates apart from the typically cloaked hierophants, making him even more daunting.

Ritual Comprehension (Dice pool 8)

Mithridates possesses an innate attunement to sorcery, birthed to blessed parents of the Parangelia Seth. Growing into adolescence within a cult who frequently executed overt rites for the purposes of fertility and deception, he swiftly became an adept researcher and practitioner himself. His interest and dedication to bringing the cult and Arisen back into alignment has led to his studying the Deathless, their enemies, and all history his cult has recorded regarding the mummies. He's formulated his own rituals in recent years, and knows — but rarely shares — the art of draining a relic of its Pillars.

A SLEEPING THREAT

Something — or more accurately, some things — in the Roman Republic strike out at the Deathless, and instill a rare fear in the Arisen. These hidden entities possess an unnatural sense for mummies' sleeping forms, and mercilessly fall upon them with hungry mouths and a taste for Sekhem. From Fluentia to southern Palermo, no mummy is safe during Descent. The Legio wrack every sleeping journey with nightmares. They revisit all sins on the Arisen until the time they wake — if they are capable of doing so.

Immortal scholars need to understand the Legio's nature. The beings only seem to have appeared in the last century, but appear drawn exclusively to mummies in the southern half of the Italian peninsula. The Legio's attraction to mummies undergoing Descent leaves most victims defenseless, as little other than highly-alert cults can prevent this unknown set of attackers' assaults.

The Sesha-Hebsu hold a theory. The Scribes whisper to each other about the Scroll of Ages. It tells of a time when creatures born of Twilight will prevent Arisen from reaching Duat and the Judges. The souls of all who died so the Deathless might have eternal life will stop mummies on their winding path. The Legio certainly appear to be spirits. They only attack mummies undergoing the journey to meet their Judges. Could these voracious dead be the creatures described by the Scroll of Ages?

The Deceived definitely think so. As the movement known as the Eternal Light retreated to henet one century past, their spectral bodies in Neter-Khertet discovered a relic somehow intact within the Twilight frequency, guarded by leagues of Amkhata. This relic — an ornate box crafted of dried skin and bones — acted as a potent lure to the Eternal Light. In their weakness and freedom from the temakh, they lured as many Amkhata away as they could before snatching the relic and bringing it forth to the land of the living — in Rome, where the Eternal Light made their nome. The Eternal Light movement, which had never been rational or predisposed to careful judgments, destroyed the relic and fled the nome. They left the resident Arisen and Shuankhsen to deal with whatever was unleashed.

The Legio burst free from the damaged relic. They targeted the Eternal Light's ranks first, devastating the Deceived and feasting on their souls. They prowled the Roman Republic territories, never leaving their borders. In the current era, they await Roman rule over Egypt so their own net might spread wider. The risk they pose to Arisen is high, their elimination vital, but to date no mummies have found a way of destroying these starving spirits. The recurring question among Deathless scholars is "if these are the spirits of many of Irem's sacrificed dead, then what does that make the Shuankhsen, and are the two connected?"

ONE POWERFUL NAME

The Legio each resemble horribly stretched, gaunt humans of all ages and ethnicities. Markedly, the Legio are visible to any creature of supernatural origin. Though they react to vampires, mages, and the like, and appear to understand the words of these creatures, they rarely, if ever, attempt to communicate. They just watch — eyes small in enlarged sockets — and at the sniff of a sleeping Arisen take to the air and float towards their meal.

The few necromancers and mummies who manage to eke a word from the Legio get monosyllabic declarations, such as "Teh," "Ka," and "Anf." The words were at first assumed by mummies to be guttural grunts and groans. The Su-Menent now believe them to be identifiers. The Legio stand bold as they make their noises, and the Su-Menent believe they may be the spirits' names. These spirits react with anger when others make the same noises against them. True names carry great power, though no name magic has found purchase using the sounds issued by the Legio. A clue to opposing them may come in the form of a Su-Menent hypothesis: What if each of the Legio are part of one larger entity, and the creature can only be banished, mollified, or destroyed once the entire name is known?

The Deceived quietly agree with the Su-Menent theory, but have no desire to allow mummies to chronicle the names of the 100 or so Legio present in the Republic. The Legio seem particularly keen to guard the mummy known as the Crimson Pharaoh, who has an unknown spirit constantly floating in his presence. They do a fine job of haunting sleeping mummies, making them weaker at the time of waking, if

not preventing waking entirely. The Deceived are content to step back and let these creatures of Twilight ride roughshod over the servile guilds, as the temakh anticipate Rome's rise and would rather see it cleared it of the Judges' mummies.

Herding the Legio to attack specific mummies is impossible. If one of the Deceived were to fall to Neter-Khertet within Legio boundaries, they would be as vulnerable as any other Deathless. The Deceived attempt to steal Sesha-Hebsu research on the Legio. The Shattered Crook movement advocates stripping all Su-Menent relics, vessels, and works while they're at it. The Deceived look for secrets between the lines — clues the guilds may have missed — courting necromancers and death cults for clues to protection from the Legio. Some few Deceived reach out to Shuankhsen to find out the Lifeless view. Excessive violence is the common response. The measure of aggression Shuankhsen use when confronted with talk of the Legio lends credence to the theory they are in some way connected.

THE LEGIO

Quote: *"Nek. Nek. Nek. Nek. Nek."*

Background: Those sacrificed in ancient Irem formed the Legio. They are the twice murdered. The Shan'iatu sacrifices were not clean or final. Organs were cut out, or the sacrifices were just stabbed in the side and left to bleed; many took hours or days to finally expire, in the bottom of pits thick with bodies. In that time, other sacrifices struggled under intense heat, lack of water, and rapacious hunger. They turned on each other, desperation forcing them to drink the blood of their fellow sufferers, chew on the soft meat of the dying, and cry hopeless tears. While tales hold that the sacrifices became the Shuankhsen, the Shuankhsen themselves made the Legio through their own distressed panic, and desperation to survive in the pits of the damned. Eventually all within were buried, whether alive or dead.

The Legio formed in Twilight as thousands of individual spirits, clawing for a way to move on or give their awful ends meaning. Instead they found themselves permanently weak. The best parts of their souls were used as part of the Rite of Return, the worst consumed by hungry Shuankhsen; the Legio are hollow spirit reflections. All that's left forms a bare wisp of a spectre, hardly capable of manifesting in the lands of the living. Anpu tired of their moaning and corralled them, forcing them into their individual Twilight prisons — ornate boxes and chests scattered across the Twilight frequency. The time came when a movement of Deceived discovered one, and brought it back to Rome.

While housed in their prisons, the Legio coalesced. They are still capable of doing so, but unless drawn by the odor of rejuvenating Sekhem they remain disparate, weak observers. Mortal necromancers have shown they can banish singular Legio, but they always return within a week. When they coalesce, the Legio are capable of terrible feats and horrors and use them on sleeping mummies, avoiding cultists and Sadikh as if they were irrelevant. Currently they exist only in Rome and seem attached to the Republic, but other Legio boxes exist throughout the Twilight, waiting to be opened.

Necromancers assume the Legio can only be completely neutralized when in coalesced form, though combating such an opponent is beyond most mortal death magicians. As they prey on descended mummies, the coalesced Legio enters the mummy's Twilight via the mummy's still corpse, and terrorize him in the Twilight. This act sometimes prevents a mummy's reaching Duat, thereby also preventing a subsequent awakening.

To achieve expulsion of the vengeful spirits requires destroying the mummy's body during his sleep — which does not wake the mummy in the standard way — or through reciting the full name of the coalesced Legio. If this happens, the Arisen continues his pilgrimage to Duat. The Legio turns on the source of the interference.

Description: In individual form, the Legio present a pitiful appearance. The emaciated spirits possess distended orifices in their translucent bodies, which represent ancient stab wounds. Their jaws lop open and their eyes bead in sockets too large to contain them. Fingernails hang loose from where, in their final living hours, they attempted to claw free from their pits. A trail of dirt and dried blood stains the ground where a Legio treads. They all speak exclusively in monosyllabic recitations of their own name, or something close to it. Each of the Legio stands or sits forlornly, barely able to support their own weight as they fix their gaze on supernatural creatures.

When a box's Legio coalesce over a mummy, the spirits wind around one another in thick tendrils. They form a giant of starving dead, maw wide with hunger and face taken up by enormous, black pits where its eyes should be. The Legio move as one, and are capable of communication in this form, though they rarely deign to converse.

The Twilight is more a state of being than a plane of existence. To the mummies passing through the Twilight en route to Duat, it becomes frighteningly real when a coalesced Legio appears before them as a form of gatekeeper. It either attacks in giant form, or splits into its component parts and swarms the Arisen. If expelled through destruction of the mummy's body, it remains in coalesced form but attacks the cultists responsible. If destroyed in conflict with the mummy — who has his full array of abilities available in Twilight — the Legio disperses, but begins manifesting again as separate spirits one week later.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 5, Resolve 5

Physical Attributes: Strength 7, Dexterity 4, Stamina 6

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Occult 4

Physical Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl 6, Stealth 3



Social Skills: Intimidation 5

Merits: Demolisher, Giant, Indomitable, Relentless

Potency: 6

Health: 19

Willpower: 14

Virtue: Just

Vice: Gluttonous

Aspiration: To punish.

Defense: 8

Size: 12

Speed: 16

Initiative: 7

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Dmg	Range	Dice Pool	Special
Massive Bite	4L	Melee	10	A successful bite results in a grapple

Bans: By reciting the coalesced Legio's full name, it is banished back to its box, which reforms if destroyed.

Dread Powers: Discorporate, Immortal, Natural Weapons • (Massive Bite), Sekhem Thief (as per Soul Thief, except for each success steals two points of Sekhem from the mummy that does not return until two Descents have passed.)

Notes: These are the ratings of the coalesced Legio's form. In its individual parts, the Legio have a rating of 1 in each Trait held by the coalesced version, and no Dread Powers or Weapons/Attacks.

Clutching at Immortality

Deathless and Lifeless clash over the wavering strands of Ptolemaic power, as rival immortals watch from the sidelines with intent stares. Perhaps due to their status as slaves to unseen masters, few Arisen offer sympathy to mortals seeking their own immortality. Mummies and Shuankhsen alike view immortality seekers with a mix of disgust and pity, and, in a rare show of unity, would hardly deign to spit on one were they dying of thirst. The guilds ostensibly attempt to coordinate in opposition to everything these life-hungry mortals pursue, but, as has ever been the case, no guild moves as one. As Arisen attentions focus on pressing matters, the immortals they spurn seep from the cracks and reestablish their schemes.

Body thieves and blood bathers play active roles in all places central to mortal power, and at this time, few locations are as important as Egypt and Rome. Secreting their number inside cults — sorcerer cults among them — and delving into the resting places of dreaming Arisen, the immortals consider mummies placeholders: decrepit, weak, and lacking in the iron it takes to justly their own immortality.

Blood Bathers

The Roman bath is deep but filled to the brim with thick, dark, blood. It is not a consistent liquid. Patches coagulate. Froth lines the bath's sides. The corners develop a skin that a young adherent scoops with a heavy net, and drops into a pail. He averts his eyes in case the diseased bathers look up and request the bath refilled. He's unafraid of their seeing him. He is just completing his job. He is concerned they might notice his accumulated bloody syrup is not being disposed via the sluice, as ordered. He keeps it for his own private bath. This blood bather has been 11 years old for three decades.

The beautiful cultist bows to the Sadikh, his gifted dagger clutched tightly before her. As the master's chosen servant turns and addresses the other cultists, she sets to work, locating the target assigned. A troublesome mortal probed too deeply into Sesha-Hebsu plans, and the intruder is to be intimidated to silence, his family threatened. The cultist sets forth in the knowledge there will be no threats. She will kill the intruder. She will open his throat, and open the throats of his children. She will shower in their blood and return — even more attractive, and even more capable of courting the lust-filled Sadikh's favor.

The Adelfoí Aímatos chant with increasing volume, their prayers to Ares answered by the flow pouring from the statue's mouth and filling the mosaic-lined bowl with precious life blood. Behind the wall, a newly-muscled man lacking any body blemishes but for thick, flaky lines of brown on his body's contours, pumps the blood for the sorcerers' rituals. An hour ago the blood bather was of weak constitution and covered with scars. He's nearly died four times. On each occasion, he uses the blood of cultists to revitalize his body, and provides the sorcerers dregs for their petty rites.

Some immortals will sacrifice anything or anyone to retain their eternal youth. Blood bathers are not naturally immortal, nor are they granted their endless lives through service to a supernatural benefactor, or bestowed a curse without end. Blood bathers *choose* the path of immortality, and the stains that go with it. Arisen aware of the bathers wonder at these individuals' twisted natures, which force them to countless murders in efforts to stave off a permanent end. Few blood bathers are repentant for their sins. To display qualms would be to reveal one's jugular to a fellow immortality seeker, and blood bathers refuse to be victims.

In Rome, and the increasingly Roman-influenced Egypt, blood bathers operate with a degree of impunity. In times of war and social upheaval, victims are easy to procure and bodies simple to conceal. Locating static locations in which to place their baths, and avoiding the ire of creatures who would rather their servants are not targeted, are both trials with which bathers must contend. Solitary blood bathers require wealth and security to build baths sizeable enough to contain the blood needed in their rituals. Many form

coalitions to communally indulge in their visceral ritual, as a means of pooling costs and offering mutual defense, though jealous violence is common.

Independent blood bathers of means build great bath buildings on the banks of the Nile and Tiber, promising locals work, and offering their facilities as resting places for boatmen and traders. It is better for their pursuit of immortality to mix ritual with industriousness, the operation of legitimate baths allowing them victims as well as facilities. After filtering the river water as much as possible, pools and basins are exposed to the sun receive the pumped, unsoiled water, so a bather may take the heat of the air with the refreshing chill of the river. Blood bathers murder lone travelers and small families opting to stay at the bath house, using their blood to fill the baths come nightfall. Immersed in darkness and accompanied by the thick scent of blood, listening to the flow of the nearby river, the blood bathers renew their lives. When the victims are dead, the bath house is empty, and the blood grows too thick, bathers drain the runoff and throw the bodies into the river. Along the Nile, crocodiles draw close to blood bather dens. A trouble-free meal is never far away.

Within the Adelfoí Aímatos, blood bathers find a sanctuary. A small number of Roman Adelfoí Aímatos are experienced in blood baths, and they join the Crimson Pharaoh's campaign as he leads his followers to Egypt. The Pharaoh turns a blind eye to his cult's activities, provided they serve him with their sorcery. For that, bathers are grateful. The Arisen's sponsorship gives them unprecedented access to mortals of all stripes.

The Adelfoí Aímatos' Greco-Roman influences lend themselves to bathing for a multitude of purposes. The sorcerers construct their baths in Rome and Egypt for everything from relaxation and cleanliness to meetings and ritual use. Romans arriving in Egypt mirror the Adelfoí Aímatos by building their own baths in garrisons, towns, and temples, so they may temper the Egyptian heat with cool reverence of the gods. Even the poor have access to public baths in Roman settlements.

Arisen serving blood bathers attack cultists opposing their masters, but rarely stop at a mummy's enemies. They murder their target's loved ones and colleagues, too — killing anyone capable of producing a drop of blood. For this reason, blood bathers rarely engage Arisen or Sadikh. Sekhem is not something bathers can manipulate, and for most of them, its metaphysical nature is frankly beyond their sphere of interest. Bathers among the Adelfoí Aímatos do however express an interest in infusing their blood baths with Sekhem, and ponder inviting the Crimson Pharaoh to join them in their ritual. Unknown to them, other blood bathers in his service one century past attempted this act. The mummy destroyed them. Something of mass sacrifice, and filling a pool with blood, profoundly disturbs the Crimson Pharaoh's Memory.

Of the guilds, the Mesen-Nebu and Tef-Aabhi hold the greatest interest in the blood bathers. The Alchemists find





Sample Short-Term Aspirations

Find my next victim.

Eliminate my evidence trail.

Conceal the bodies.

Locate fellow blood bathers.

Sample Long-Term Aspirations

Win the Adelfoí Aímatos' favor.

Earn Arisen backing for my pursuit.

Discover a method of immortality involving less death.

Build a new den.

the process bathers go through in efforts to retain eternal life fascinating, witnessing physical and mental alteration before their eyes. The mystical power of the rite itself entrances the Tef-Aabhi. Though in some cases a blood bather may benefit from a simple skin coating of blood, or wallowing in a mixture of ground body parts, the Masons find particular interest in those who abide by firmer strictures. Blood bathers requiring pure blood, the same tub each time, or a rite performed at a set time play to the guild's intrigue, and court the mummies with their deplorable magic.

The role blood bathers play in this time is one of wary slaughter and cautious grasps at power. War between Rome and Egypt presents an opportunity for thousands of victims, and, depending on the victor, decadent celebration. The Adelfoí Aímatos diligently serve their master, all the while strategizing the best way to survive a time where the winning side is not apparent. Their blood bathing contingent procures increasing numbers of Nubian and Egyptian slaves in case the cult is forced back to Rome, and victims suddenly come at a premium.

System: Create blood bathers in the same way as mortals in **Chronicles of Darkness**, but with an additional 10 Experiences. Integrity starts at 5, and Willpower is Resolve + Composure –1, as one dot is spent making the Bathing Ritual work. One Aspiration must tie in to the character's quest for immortality. Breaking points for blood bathers typically revolve around fear of discovery, desperation for one more attempt at life, and the frantic need for victims.

The Adelfoí Aímatos Bathing Ritual's completion requires the following:

- **Limestone or Marble Tub:** The bathers can only perform the Ritual in a tub built of one of these substances.
- **Iremite Symbols:** The tub must bear mosaics of the Crimson Pharaoh's design, including a prominent interpretation of the Pharaoh atop a dais, a flame in his right hand, water in his right.
- **Human Blood:** The Adelfoí Aímatos gain no benefit through bathing in animal blood, or the blood of supernatural creatures.
- **Attendants:** At least three others must be present and aware during the ritual. They may be other bathers, living victims, cultists chanting to Ares or the Judges, or even staff on hand to clean the bath's accumulated dregs and slime.
- **To Spare:** The ritual only works if the tub contains enough blood to submerge in — probably more than 100 gallons.
- **Semiannually, from dawn until dusk:** The ritual must commence at sunrise and conclude at sunset, twice yearly. If it does not, the practitioners suffer aggravated wounds equal to the number of weeks spent without the ritual's completion.
- **Nile / Tiber-infused Blood:** The bathers must be immersed in blood mixed with the filtered waters of the Nile or Tiber, with over half of the liquid being blood.

The effects of the Bathing Ritual are as follows:

- **Immortal:** The blood bather does not age for as long as the ritual is in effect, will not die of natural causes, and is immune to non-supernatural disease. She will gain five dice to rolls to resist supernatural diseases.
- **Return from Death:** The blood bather can return from death, as long as her body remains intact. The bather heals one point of aggravated damage per hour after death.
- **Stamina Increase:** Each time this ritual takes place, the blood bather gains a permanent dot of Stamina, up to a maximum of 5 dots. This in turn affects Health.
- **Immune to Sybaris:** The bather is immune to the effects of Sybaris.
- **Blood Manipulation:** The blood bather has an affinity for blood, and can kill with a touch by inducing a stroke or heart attack. After successfully touching an opponent, the player rolls Manipulation + Occult (difficulty of the opponent's Stamina.) The resistance roll is reflexive. Every success inflicts a level of lethal damage. If the blood bather grapples the target, this attack is made each turn. This power only affects humans.

Independent mortal practitioners of the Bathing Ritual require the following for the rite to succeed:

- **Unique Tub:** The independent bather requires a particular tub for the rite to succeed. If the tub is destroyed, the character loses her immortality and gains a spontaneous negative Condition (see **Chronicles of Darkness**, p.288.)
- **Night:** The ritual can only take place once the sun has set.
- **A segment of the population:** The rite uses the blood of a particular type of human, possibly restricted by gender, age group, or ethnicity.
- **Drained to Death:** The victims used for the rite must die and be drained completely of blood.
- **Immersion:** The blood must cover the practitioner completely. An individual bathtub tends to require approximately 30 gallons.
- **Yearly:** The character must perform the ritual annually. If the bather passes a year without the rite's completion, she immediately dies, no matter her natural age.
- **Pure Blood:** For the ritual to succeed, the bath must contain blood with no foreign contaminants such as drugs or assorted biomass.

The effects of the Bathing Ritual are as follows:

- **Striking Looks:** The blood bather emerges from her bath looking young and beautiful, no matter how old she truly is. This trait is identical to the 2-point Merit of the same name in **Chronicles of Darkness**, p.54.
- **Intoxicating Presence:** The blood bather gains a mesmerizing quality, whether via a seductive glint to the eye, intoxicating pheromones, or a predatory mien. The character receives a +3 modifier on all attempts to seduce, persuade, or distract.
- **Immune to Poison:** The blood bather is immune to all poisons, drugs, and other toxins, mundane and supernatural. The bather can choose to benefit from pleasurable effects such as hallucinations, but these effects remain in place for up to 12 hours.
- **Attribute Increase (temporary):** After the ritual is complete the character can, at any point, spend a Willpower point and roll Resolve + Composure — each success allowing the character to increase Presence, Manipulation, or Composure by 1 dot. The increase lasts for the duration of the scene in which Willpower was spent, and increases derived traits.

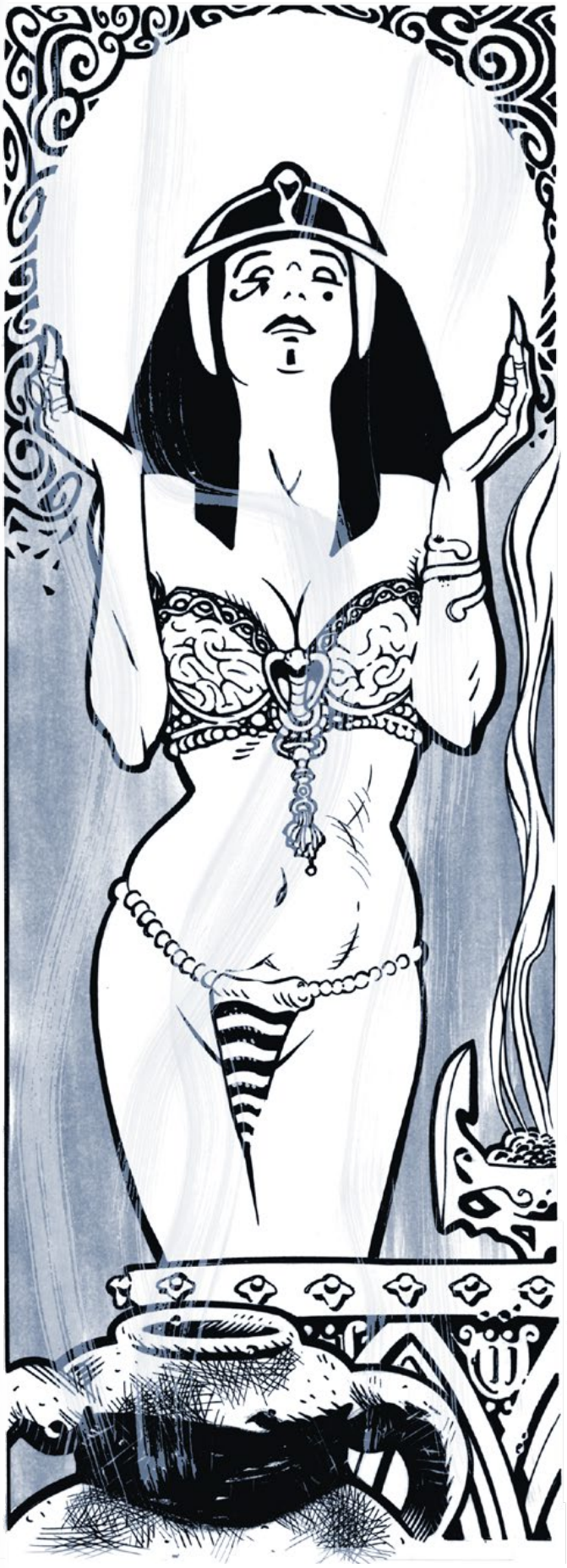
Immortality's Many Forms

Blood bathers and body thieves comprise the larger groups of aspirant immortals focal to this era, though others exist. Humans known as the Reborn and the Eternals pursue their own schemes, while an apparent alien threat with alarming knowledge of the Judges secretes itself into cults far and wide.

Reborn reincarnate again, and again, and again. Their journey never ends; their memories rarely fail. For this reason, Arisen and Deceived despise these free immortals. Reborn struggle at first when born into a new body. They recover memories of their previous lives as their powers of recall and reason grow throughout childhood. Although their dedication to remembering previous lives' teachings and experiences takes them on a different path from the Deathless, bitterness consumes the Arisen aware of them. Many a time a Reborn is hunted and enslaved by a cult, as the mummy wishes to manacle the being who unknowingly mocks their unbreakable bonds to Judges or temakh. For this reason, Reborn often plot against mummies. Where Deathless are saddled with forgetfulness, Reborn are not, and recall every injustice done to them by mummies.

Eternals anchor their lives to relics, putting them keenly at odds with Arisen who seek to accumulate such artifacts. An Eternal finds immortality by storing his soul in a mural, a sculpture, a death mask, or perhaps a coin. Anything altered by man can be used as a soul vessel. It never degrades or shows signs of its age. For a mummy's purposes, an Eternal's treasured art piece acts as a valuable Sekhem receptacle. Eternals attempt avoiding Arisen for this reason, as while mortals may be blind to the items maintaining their youthful beauty and stamina, mummies sniff these articles out like jackals.

Very few **Visitors** exist on Earth, yet for some reason, they choose this era to dispatch a reconnaissance mission. These parasites latch on to their hosts' brainstems and manipulate victims as expert puppeteers. It seems they possess great interest in the Isireion Prophecies' workings, the fate of Arisen conflict in Egypt for some reason important to these aliens. The handful of Visitors engaged apparently understand all about the Judges and Rite of Return, and find the entire thing hilarious. They speak of Judges as if they were nothing — mere children playing with toys so long they have long since lost interest. Visitors are still passengers in their hosts' bodies, so while the human can move, the alien strongly advises its host what to do. A Visitor's host is effectively immortal, able to regrow body parts and never age. Only with destruction of the host's brain is the Visitor removed. The alien is capable of communicating telepathically with other Visitors, via images and sensory information, up to a distance of 100 miles.



Body Thieves

The cagemaker winds thin reeds around his fingers as his dull, gray eyes spy the activity on the other side of the bazaar. He watches the same group of bald men and women, dressed like rich priests, entering the mausoleum every week at the same time, and leaving with chests heavy with *something*. It's no temple or burial chamber for anyone of import. He recognizes one "priest" always lags behind, clearly disfavored by his brethren. The cagemaker's eyes light up as he realizes that one will be his new host. He wants to solve the mystery of this enigmatic priesthood, claim some of the wealth in which they clearly bask, and will happily shunt a soul into oblivion to satiate his curiosity.

The handmaiden rests on her knees, eyes cast to the ground, as Cleopatra passes by. She covets the power of this woman so fortuitous by birth, destined for greatness by luck and nothing more. Steadily she's climbed the ranks of mortal prestige; living the lives of a beggar, a merchant, a midwife, and now an attendant to the pharaoh herself. She turns her head to see Cleopatra's form disappear through an archway. Clenching her teeth and fists, she resolves to take the body of the oh-so-fortunate Cleopatra Philopater.

The Maa-Kep whispers to the man brought forward by her Sadikh. "You will be great," she tells him, stroking his face, "but not in this frail husk. You will take the role of a cultist to the Order of *Ízft*, living that cultist's life, wearing his face. You will take everything from that meret for me. You understand what I ask of you? You understand what I will give you for your service?" She drops her hand, but his head does not move. He smiles at the mistress with full understanding.

Monarchs, tyrants, and holy men are beyond the ken of most mortals. Figures such as Cleopatra, Mark Antony, Caesar, and the rival players on the Isireion stage might as well be deities for the power they wield and distance they maintain from the common man. Slaves, farmers, merchants, and priests look upon the adulation Cleopatra receives with envy. The gods grant such status, and servants may never claim it. Arisen and mortals alike know well their place. Body thieves refuse any such principle. They reject enslavement to destiny by birth, disability, or looks. Body thieves covet the positions of priests, warlords, and pharaohs. Their immortality comes through unnatural gifts, allowing them to take whatever role they please. Fate is their slave.

Body thieves in the Cleopatran Era come in the form of opportunistic individuals and scheming conspirators. They understand the precipice upon which Egypt stands and, importantly, the all-consuming vacuum facing Arisen interests in the kingdom. Many Egyptian body thieves have swum from host to host across generations, interfering with other supernatural matters only when it suits them. They are used to claiming the bodies they want, to achieve aims they hold dear. Objectives differ from body thief to body thief, but a unifying theme of hatred for the Shuankhsen binds them. They want Egypt and Cleopatra strong, and for them to be the empire's dominant immortals.

Over centuries, body thieves have become keenly aware of the Shuankhsen dominance in Egypt. The Lifeless seem compelled to eject body thieves' errant souls from their hosts. They guess at the reasoning behind this compulsion, but facts are unlikely to present themselves, as Lifeless rarely stop to communicate with their nourishing meals. In fact, the magic of body thievery conveys a point of Sekhem to Shuankhsen using Jaws of the Devourer (**Mummy: The Curse**, p.194) on a body thief, as if they were biting into a mummy. Shuankhsen see this Sekhem as a yellow embryo hanging from the body thief's head.

Due to their persecution, body thieves welcome Deathless returning to Egypt, readily offering service as cultists. They want to assist Arisen in manipulating the kingdom, fighting the Lifeless so they need not spend their immortalities hiding from hungry monsters. Such willing servitude to the Deathless is not an implication of moral high ground, however, as body thieves still pursue every avenue for longer life, resorting to removing the souls of fellow cultists if it means a few more decades. Selfish desire drives the body thieves. Even the apparently loyal among them betray their masters if their host forms begin to age or illness afflicts them.

The body thief faction known as the Heads of Sekhmet, or the Lion Guild, are set on smuggling their number into the most prominent roles of Egyptian, Roman, and Parthian government, stealing bodies of priests and advisers to grow close to rulers and learn to emulate their traits. When they feel confident they can perform in an identical fashion to a king or member of the senate, they invade the host body of that ruler, and take power for themselves. Arisen and most mortals know their destiny is to serve, but the Lion Guild are not cut from that cloth. Were the Deathless to discover the body thieves' hostile intentions on the bodies of Cleopatra and her children, they would likely purge the self-obsessed immortals from Egypt entirely.

The Maa-Kep utilize body thieves extensively for spy work, and the subtlest of assassinations. The best murders leave no corpse, and body thieves bear a singular talent for ensuring their victims remains walking around and acting perfectly alive. For their part, body thieves in service to the Maa-Kep reap the rewards of their low morality. The guild promises much to these aspirant immortals, though they've yet to deliver on extinguishing the Shuankhsen threat from Egypt.

Su-Menent, conversely, despise body thieves in all their forms. The guild maintains the shell is the most sacred of articles. Petty sorcerers violating bodies with designs on immortality offend the guild's sensibilities. The Shepherds of the Chamber take great interest in the vacated bodies of body thieves' victims, and seek answers as to the destiny of host souls. They know some body thieves switch souls from their new body to their old one, but the Lion Guild seems at odds with thieves of this type. The predominant form of thief — those who foist a spirit from its body and cast it into Twilight or elsewhere — are profane scum, as far as the Su-Menent are concerned.

System: Create body thieves in the same way as mortals in **Chronicles of Darkness**. High Willpower and its associated traits are encouraged for Lion Guild body thieves, as they must spend permanent Willpower to use their abilities. One Aspiration must tie in to the character's quest for immortality. Breaking points for body thieves typically revolve around fear of Shuankhsen, boredom of retaining the same form, and the need to extend life.

Note that when a body thief enters a new form, he retains his own Mental and Social Attributes, and any Skills. A body thief will gain the Physical Attributes of his host, and 5 dots of the host body's Skills (chosen by the player,) until they leave. Carry over a body thief's non-physical Conditions between hosts. Mental Merits remain the same across hosts. Physical Merits may change. Small-Framed and Iron Stamina will not carry over, for example. Social Merits will almost definitely be lost between hosts, though the body thief gains new ones via the host's Contacts, Allies, and the like. Review Merits with the Storyteller to ensure that what your character retains and loses makes sense.

Sample Short-Term Aspirations

Push this body to the limit.

Escape the Shuankhsen on my tail.

Experience something new.

Locate a potential new host.

Sample Long-Term Aspirations

Move to a new body.

Join the Heads of Sekhmet.

Discover a method of moving bodies without destroying the host's soul.

Pass the secrets of immortality on to my children.

The Heads of Sekhmet

The Lion Guild is made up of Mentally Talented body thieves. When attempting to overtake a mortal's body, a Lion Guild member must spend 1 dot of permanent Willpower and be able to see and hear the target. The body thief engages his victim in an extended contest using his Resolve + Composure versus the target's Resolve + Composure. Each success on the thief's part removes 1 dot of Willpower from the victim, and each success on the part of the victim removes a dot of Willpower from the thief.

This extended contest lasts until one participant has all their Willpower drained. The victim is unaware she is being targeted, but supernatural creatures with gifts of soul sight and aura perception are able to see her essence degrading. If successful, the soul thief gains a negative mental or social Condition, and must roll to maintain their current Integrity. The victim's soul exits her body, and the body thief occupies the new host. His old form dies as if from natural causes.



Body thieves cannot target major supernatural creatures, but are able to inhabit the bodies of ghouls, wolf-blooded, psychics, sorcerers, and other servants of monsters.

Modifiers: If a target is suicidal or depressed the player gains +1 to his Resolve + Composure pool. If the target is willing and knowingly gives up her body, the player gains +3 to the roll. If the target is injured, drugged, or ill, she incurs up to a -3 modifier to her pool, depending on the severity of the condition.

Independent Body Thieves

The Lion Guild forces independent body thieves underground as a matter of course. Their long-term presence in Egypt makes life difficult for other body thieves, especially due to animosity related to difference in abilities. Body thieves outside the Heads of Sekhmet may swap bodies without the death of the new host, where the Guild's only ever been capable of moving their souls at the expense of the new host's life. These Magically Talented body thieves are by no means morally superior; by killing their old form they successfully keep a hold on their new one, and many pursue deviant agendas in new bodies knowing that a new body, or their old one, is never far away. Self-interest and a desire to experience governs their loose confederacy.

Independent body thieves require a sympathetic link with their target, whether via possession of a physical piece of the victim (hair, skin, or bodily fluids) or a personal possession of great importance or frequent use (a family amulet, the chisel a sculptor uses every day, or a favored item of clothing). Even more successful are the body thieves who seize and intern their target, getting to know their upcoming host body intimately. The body thief must touch a connection to the target, the target themselves, or the target must be doing similar for the host. If the body thief ingests a connection, such as a target's fingernails or treasured gold rings, the link between the two lasts 24 hours, allowing more time for the rite's completion.

The body thief must spend one point of temporary Willpower to initiate the ritual, and engage his victim in an extended contest using her Wits + Occult versus the target's Resolve, rolling every 10 minutes the connection remains. The extended contest lasts until achieving a number of successes equal to the target's Willpower. The victim is aware that something unnatural afflicts him during the rite, as he begins to sense what the body thief can sense, and starts losing control over his original body through fits and spasms. If successful, the soul thief gains a negative mental or social Condition, and must roll to maintain their current Integrity.

Murdering the target's original body to make the transition permanent requires a further Integrity roll. If not made permanent, the swap lasts for 10 days minus the victim's Integrity. The victim's soul exits her body, and occupies that of the body thief. Body thieves differ in their treatment of their original form — some intending to return, thereby keeping their old body somewhere its new possessor can do little self-harm, while others abandon it freely after committing some heinous act or simply growing bored of it. Few would believe it if the new possessor starts proclaiming the body is not his own.

Body thieves cannot target major supernatural creatures, but are able to inhabit the bodies of ghouls, wolf-blooded, psychics, sorcerers, and other servants of monsters.

Modifiers: If the body thief holds a removed piece of the target the player gains +1 to his Wits + Occult pool. If the body thief holds the target's body in her hands, the player gains +2 to the roll. If the target is willing to host the body thief and swap to a new form, the body thief gains +2 to the roll.

INSPIRATIONS

The Greeks and Romans are known for their great chroniclers of history, geography, and personalities of note. Strabo, Lucius Annaeus Florus, Marcus Velleius Paterculus, Plutarch, and Suetonius all wrote of Cleopatra VII Philopator's life and death in detail or in passing reference, allowing us insight into the political and religious situation across Egypt and the Roman Empire of the time.

Such historical accounts must not be taken at face value, however. Many scholars wrote sensationalist accounts of the death of Cleopatra by asp bite to the bosom, or of Mark Antony's betrayal of Rome and ultimate suicide. While such accounts offer grains of truth, many writers were writing in the centuries following the events of Egypt's downfall, while living under the reign of successive rulers who had reason to benefit from besmirching or aggrandizing the last of the Hellenic pharaohs.

The inspirations listed below are a combination of the historically accurate and dramatic. Neither type of source is wrong for use in a chronicle of **Mummy: The Curse**, but considerations should be made for the tone and theme of the game being played.

NONFICTION

The Civil Wars by Appian, translated by John Carter: Five incredibly comprehensive books written by Appian of Alexandria concerning the end of the Roman Republic. Useful as a conflict-based approach to history, covering Cleopatran Egypt in detail.

The Battle of Actium by John Mackenzie Carter: An intriguing take on the battle that led to Egypt's fall; especially useful for understanding Mark Antony's motivations and capabilities as a leader.

The Hellenistic Kingdoms: Portrait Coins and History by Norman Davies and Colin M. Kraay: An excellent reference for accurate portrayals of Hellenistic features, and Cleopatra's appearance.

The Roman History: the Reign of Augustus by Cassius Dio, translated by Ian Scott-Kilvert: Not necessarily accurate due to Roman politics of the time, this classic gives some of the most widely-accepted thoughts on Roman-Egyptian relations at the close of the Ptolemaic reign.

Army and Society in Ptolemaic Egypt by Christelle Fischer-Bovet: A readable, comprehensive breakdown of Ptolemaic society and the military structure of Egypt up to c. 160 BCE. Especially interesting for the linkage between the army and temples in Egypt.

A History of the Ptolemaic Empire by Gunther Hölbl: A compelling and necessary companion piece for any historical

research into the era. Particularly interesting for Hölbl's view on Cleopatra and Antony's eastward aims.

Cleopatra by Jack Lindsay: Somewhat heavy going without accompaniment from Plutarch's "Lives," this book is fantastic for examining the role of Cleopatra and Antony as symbols and deities to the Egyptians.

The Twelve Caesars by Suetonius, translated by Robert Graves: Not a little salacious, this history is unreliable, but provides a fun, accessible account of Roman involvement in Egypt, and the activities of later centuries.

Fiction

Cleopatra's Heir by Gillian Bradshaw: An interesting "what if?" novel concerning the survival of Caesarion, who in **Mummy: The Curse** is believed by some to be a possible reborn Azar.

Lily of the Nile by Stephanie Dray: A fantastical take on Cleopatra's daughter. Readable, and useful for inspiration on the Cult of Isis. Perhaps Cleopatra Selene is the true Esit embodied?

The Memoirs of Cleopatra by Margaret George: A fun biography of Cleopatra with the backdrop of romance and conflict, concluding with inevitable tragedy.

Caesar and Cleopatra by George Bernard Shaw: A witty satire on Shakespeare's play, with a melancholy undertone befitting the fall of a dynasty.

Music

"The Egyptian Music" by Soliman Gamil: A solemn, naturalistic album for backing a chronicle in Cleopatran Egypt.

"Giulio Cesare in Egitto" by George Frideric Handel: Possibly the most successful opera addressing the story of Cleopatra. A gripping and inspiring tale, still acclaimed today.

"An Ancient Lyre" by Michael Levy: As authentic as period Egyptian music can get, the artist performs Egyptian folk songs and improvises on his lyre.

"Desert Sands" by various artists: This album is an exciting backing track to any Egyptian or Arabian-based chronicle of **Mummy: The Curse**.

Chronicles of Darkness During the Fall of Isireion

While the central figure of this era is of course Cleopatra, it's important to remember what she *represents* to the broader roll of history: Her lifetime more or less embodies not just Egypt's final pre-Roman era, but the final era of Egypt as a place governed by Egyptians. After Cleopatra, it would be almost 2,000 years before another Egyptian sovereign was allowed to ascend to power over Egypt. For Storytellers looking to thicken their Isireion chronicles with a dose of outside supernatural interference, the following ideas might prove inspirational.

Naturally (or perhaps unnaturally), **vampires** are an obvious notion when one seeks to cross-pollinate the seeds of doom in the Isireion era. Rome is a notorious vampire hub during the first century BCE, and if any antagonist outside those native to **Mummy** is to play a part in the story of Cleopatra's reign and downfall, it is the vampire. And of course, in any iteration of the setting where vampires exist at all, some are bound to already have interests in and around Egypt by then.

Another potentially rewarding crossover endeavor might revolve around those mortal protagonists who might one day consider themselves **hunters**. While source material on their composition and activities during this ancient stretch might be sparse, that does provide an opportunity for a Storyteller to contextualize hunters and what they represent in his *own* way, using the themes and subplots of the Isireion era as guideline or even full-on framework for same. During this era the civilized world is filled with monstrosity and occult upheaval, from the shadow-masters of Rome to the Lifeless who roam free across Egypt's interior, and tying it all together could result in one hell of a thrilling chronicle for a group. Hunters might not be able to kill Arisen, but they can sure make unlife interesting.

Given the Isireion era's focus on sorcerers and sorcerer-led cults, some creative overlap with "true" **mages** (of the Awakened sort) would seem to open up readily. There's already plenty to work with for mages during Cleopatra's time, but the internal focus on sorcery, cult activity, and prophecy lends itself to crossovers with mages that aren't perhaps as fleeting or superficial as many crossover interjections tend to be. With the right story idea, it could prove fully rewarding.

One of the few things that makes Egypt potentially inhospitable or undesirable to mortals and other supernatural beings — its topography — is precisely what makes it potentially appealing to the **Created**. During Cleopatra's time Egypt isn't remotely as inhabited as it will be in the modern age, and this openness, this status as predominantly "wasted land," could easily draw the hermitic Prometheans to it. Narrative and thematic ties can be woven easily into the fabric connecting these two types of created undead souls, and one or more Prometheans could play a role in not merely the prophecies of the era, but even in the court of Cleopatra, herself.


PERFVGA

"PERFVGA."

The hanged Germani man was a traitor. Someone had carved it on his forehead.

Decimus Taro, Venator of the Eighteenth Legion, coolly inspected the scene. The barbarians had lashed the man's wrists to one of the great old beech trees — a mockery of the Roman rites. Coins littered the dirt at his feet. "He was known to us, wasn't he?"

The legionary beside him quickly nodded. He was a munifex: a boy of few summers, clearly nervous. "Yes, sir. He was our guide. "

"And he simply disappeared from camp? No one actually saw him leave?" Taro said. He watched the boy's throat as he swallowed.

"N-no sir," the young man said. "I mean yes. I was sitting watch all night, though, and –"

"Stop yapping, boy!" Taro boomed, clapping a hand on the munifex' shoulder. "I'll not punish you for an ignorant native's foolishness. But know — there are things out there among the trees that you *should* fear. Things that leave no footprint and snatch men up as easily as an owl does worms. Keep watch for *them* tonight, eh?"

The boy went as pale as milk, and Taro couldn't help but smile. "Now go. Pray to your Lares and to the Mother. If you have a charm, keep it with you today. You'll need it."

Taro watched the boy scurry off, and his smile dropped. His mouth contorted, stretching into a short, hairless snout. He took a long deep sniff, then growled. It was there, beneath the dry iron of old blood — a scent marker.

• • •

They came under cover of darkness from all the tribes of Germania — the Chatti, the Bacti, the Suebi, and a dozen more besides. Enemies for as long as any of them had lived, they gathered together on the muddy banks of the Rhine.

The speaker was young. He used the native tongue, but his accent was strange. Foreign. He opened his cloak, and the armor hidden beneath glinted in the half-moon's faint light. It was gold and red, the colors of the empire. A ripple of murmurs snaked through the crowd.

"You all know who I am — Erminaz, son of Segimer; the one the Romans call Arminius. Rome stole me away as a child and raised me as her own. I have seen many things in the belly of the beast. You have heard many tales, and I come to tell you this…"

A pregnant pause. A fearful silence.

"It is all true."

• • •

A plume of smoke rose ominously in the distance. While the herd marched off in search of vengeance, Taro and his Venatores slipped into the Shadow. Among his personal slaves was a man plagued by spirits but treasured by the Uratha – a Waystone. He cried in pain as the wolves breached the Gauntlet.

The legion's Totem dominated the *Hisil*. She soared high into the sky, each silvery feather – or was it fur? Taro was in no rush to inquire – catching the light in a brilliant display. She noticed him and swooped low to land on a massive pine tree half a league away. She began to pick at it, tearing away shards of ephemera, swallowing in single, terrible gulps.

"Hail, oh blessed Aquila!" The Iron Master shouted. "May your Mother and mine turn her eyes upon us."

It spoke without opening its mouth. It spoke with the voice of a thousand senators and a million citizens. As strong as marble, as wise as sybilae, driven straight into Taro's mind.

"YOU HAVE WORD OF THE WOLVES AT YOUR BORDERS."

Taro was taken aback. "I…I hadn't realized you knew, Mother. I wanted to inform you of my discovery."

"I SEE ALL THAT HAPPENS IN MY DOMAIN. WHERE THE LEGIONS TREAD, I AM THERE. WHEN EVEN THE LOWLIEST OF MY PEOPLE SUFFER, I KNOW."

The tree spirit screamed in agony as the silver eagle tore an entire branch off in one go. It flailed pitifully at its attacker, but it was as good as dead.

"Then I shall avenge your pain, domina. I will punish all who oppose the empire."

• • •

A voice cut through the din of the crowd like a hidden knife, soft but sharp. From the back of the crowd, a figure stepped forward draped in furs. Her hood was low over her face, but he saw a flash of skin — wrinkled, deeply tanned, and marked with a web of black scars.

"The day-tribes trust you not, thin-blood," she said. The woman raised a clawlike hand. In horror, Arminius saw it only had two fingers.

"Rejoice, though, for the night-tribes give you ear. The Tribes of the Moon eagerly await the hunt to come. And for the others…"

For a moment, the old woman seemed unsure. She examined her mutilated hand, as if only now noticing it, before she finally spoke again. "We have come to an arrangement."



Forsaken by Rome
(9 CE – 12 CE)

Miseram pacem vel bello bene mutari
(A bad peace is even worse than war)
–Tacitus, *Annals*

Roman power, Roman expansion: Western Europe trembles with Rome's inexorable advance. The mighty war machine crushes local resistance with its power, technology, and discipline, expanding further and further in search of new lands for its veterans and new money for its coffers. Cultures fall before the Roman standards, accepting taxation in return for peace.

On the northeastern border of the Roman Republic, the Germani tribes (in what would someday be Germany) prepare to fight the invaders. The werewolves among the Germani smell others of their kind among the Roman troops. First among the invaders is one Wolf-Blooded man who strives to bring together a coalition of Germani tribes to fight the Roman alliance. Once Erminaz, the Germani chieftain's son, he was taken hostage and raised as Arminius by the Romans. Of German blood but Roman culture, he knows about Roman strength, Roman *virtus*, Roman arrogance — and Roman weakness. In order to save the land of his birth, he betrays the country of his adulthood to save the people of Magna Germania from Roman rule.

Arminius is right to fear Roman rule, for the strength of her legions is unnatural in source. In the name of power and ancient ways, the Forsaken and Pure of Rome have formed an alliance based on a devil's bargain, putting aside their ancient hatred for the good of the Republic. Good intentions never guarantee good ends, however, and the agreement has led both sides into hubris, the *Hisil* twisting into unrecognizable chaos under dark influences. Spurred onwards by their spiritual patrons, the Uratha guide the legions to continually expand Rome's borders, regardless of the cost.

Forsaken by Rome is about war: both the human war to either expand a burgeoning empire or remain free from foreign rule, and the unprecedented civil war among the People, which crosses traditional boundaries between *Anshega* and *Urdaga*, pitting sister against brother. War brings change. The *Hisil* is resultantly in turmoil, as the Shadow becomes just another battleground in a war between werewolves and the spirits they follow. It's those spirits who gain from the situation, no one else: drunk on easy Essence and exuberant in the physical world's slaughter, they consume everything in their path, becoming twisted in purity and purpose. The Germani tribes must change if they want to overcome the Romans, protect their territories, and eject the largest invading force they've ever known.

Theme and Mood

Rome is coming; the old ways are insufficient to prevent the military juggernaut from taking what it wants. The theme of Forsaken by Rome is *Adapt or Die*. The Germani tribes can't remain independent of one another and hope to defeat an army of disciplined, well-trained soldiers who have advanced equipment and tactics. Arminius knows the Roman ways and has a plan, but the tribes don't trust this Roman-raised Germani. Their suspicion could be their downfall.

On the other hand, the Roman military has never faced as difficult a situation as it will find in Germania. The region is unlike any other territory the Romans have sought to conquer up to this point. The seasons are savage, particularly the winters, and the thick forests refuse to yield to traditional formations and legion

tactics. The Romans must go beyond what they know, or else content themselves with a stalemate across the Rhine.

The mood is *Strange Bedfellows*. The Uratha tribes on both sides are allied in ways that none of them find comfortable. The Iron Masters and Ivory Claws of Rome have convinced themselves that Rome is greater than their ancient enmity, not questioning how that could be until it's possibly too late. Faced with the threat of losing all they know and letting Roman corruption infect the Shadow of their lands, the Germani tribes similarly have to come together — or at least, agree to leave each other in peace while a greater enemy exists — in order to defend their territories and traditions.

How to Use This Dark Era

"What Has Come Before" examines the state of the world and the imperatives that led the Uratha to the point of impasse among Germani tribes across the Rhine River. It describes the history of Rome and the rise of the Republic — and the Shadowy influence of spirits and werewolves driving the nation forward. This section describes the allegiances and intentions of both Forsaken and Pure tribes — though every tribe has its share of members who buck the trend.

"What is to Come" explores what happens if the Romans and their allies win. How would history change with Germany under Roman rule for much of its early history? What happens if the Romans don't just lose the battles to expand the Republic, but are actually repelled and pursued by the Germani tribes? Could the Germani form a sufficiently effective alliance to not only hold on, but also take the fight into Roman territory — and perhaps claim the capital itself?

"The Supernatural" shows the impact the Roman advance has had on the *Hisil* and other supernatural elements of the time. It explores the powers operating behind the scenes of Rome's conquest, as well as the opposition and obstacles faced by the invaders. This section also gives information for players to create characters of the *Anshega*, to fight alongside or against the Forsaken, and to conduct *Siskur-Dah* of their own.

"Playing the Game" delves into what's needed to play on either the Roman or Germani sides. It contains the rites, tactics, and equipment both foes need to defeat the other. It also includes sample characters for Storytellers to use as the basis for soldiers in either army.

Glossary

Ancile (pl. Ancilia): One of the twelve Saturi members of the Council of Eagles and Lightning. Named for the sacred shields of Rome.

Aquila (pl. Aquilae): Hybrid wolf, eagle, lightning *magath* that function as legion Totems linked to the *Magna Mater*; legion standards after the Marian reforms.

Brekan Protectorate: The alliance of Blood Talons that hunted Skadin in the second millennium BCE.

Council of Eagles and Lightning: A.k.a. the Council of Jupiter, and in later years the Lodge of Seven Hills; the Romulan Protectorate's guiding council of *Ancilia* and *Salii*. Membership in this prestigious lodge is for life. When a seat is vacant, the respective family decides upon the replacement. The Council arbitrates disputes between *Urdeshga* and claims authority over all Uratha within the Protectorate. Led by dual Augurs: the Augur of Eagles and the Augur of Lightning.

Evocatio: Roman rite to sacrifice foreign gods to Rome, performed by the legions.

Fa-ninnalu: Vampires living in Rome; the descendants of Remus.

Foederati: Conquered allies bound to support Rome with troops but who are not Roman citizens themselves. Used by Roman Uratha to describe allied werewolves who refuse to vow allegiance to the Council of Jupiter but remain willing to fight with or for the Romulan Protectorate.

Lares: The inhabitants of the Roman *Hisil*.

Lupi Album: The name of the Saturi before *Hathis-Ur* adopted them.

Magna Mater: The Spirit of Rome; the Great Mother.

Marisi: The Roman *Farsil Luhal* families, including Wolf-Blooded and human members. Originating in Etruria, they have only plebeian status in Rome.

Paeon: The Greek *Izidakh* who claim descent from Apollo.

Romulan Protectorate: The combined territories of all packs that identify as Roman. Note that this area is not necessarily contiguous, and is not perfectly synonymous with the borders of Roman territory.

Salius (pl. Salii): One of the twelve Marisi members of the Council of Eagles and Lightning, named after the leaping priests of Mars.

Sangghullu: Lightning spirits used in the Rite of Shackled Lightning.

Saturi: The Roman *Tzuumfin* families, including Wolf-Blooded and human members. Every patrician family descends from the original Saturi families.

Skadin: Southern Scandinavian lands, including the islands of the Baltic Sea.

Teresh: One of the seafaring peoples that raided across the Mediterranean four centuries before Rome's founding.

Urdeshga: The First Tongue term for the Roman Uratha. Encompasses all Saturi and Marisi families. By the time of the Roman Empire, it also includes those Uratha who swear allegiance to the Protectorate.

What Has Come Before

The armies of Rome have crossed a thousand miles to get to the battle that faces them, in country unlike any they've known, against people who are willing to give everything to see them beaten back, including ignoring ancient feuds in favor of present troubles. The Wolf-Blooded find themselves on both sides of the battle, in similar straits. Pressed into alliances that go against not only their histories, but also



their very natures, they fight alongside the herd of humans in matters greater than any they have faced before. The spirit world reflects and encourages this chaos, driven by a force in hiding that manipulates all behind the scenes, corrupting all it touches in the name of feeding a hideous hunger.

Roma Sunt Non Reges

800 years ago, Rome was just another unexceptional village. Today, however, it stands as the capital of a vast and mighty territory. Its mighty legions annex, conquer, and consume neighboring states, expanding the state's borders and coffers. As with all places, though, there is more beneath the surface of human endeavor than is easily seen. The core of Rome is her families and their ancient lineages. Of those lineages, two families — the Saturi and the Marisi — hold the core of Roman life between them, two Uratha tribes who have come together in unlikely alliance to serve and preserve Rome. They call themselves *Urdeshga* and claim all of Rome as their territory: the Romulan Protectorate.

Both the Saturi and Marisi families can trace their human lineages back to before Rome's founding, as well as their Wolf-Blooded descent from the First Pack. Both also are more rightly seen as a *gens*, or clan, than a single family; while they are all linked to the same ancestors, there are hundreds of family lines within each group. Though ancestors may be lost to common knowledge amid the complexities of marriage and adoption, the families know their own. They scrutinize each generation for *Urfarah*'s blessing and initiate the newly changed into their greater family.

The Saturi family is linked with The Ivory Claws. Claiming descent from Silver Wolf in the time of heroes, their people have hunted the hills and forests of Latium since the Stone Age. The Iron Masters belong to the Marisi families, having sailed and raided with the Teresh people before settling in Etruria centuries before Rome's foundation.

The families work together in an ancient pact with Rome at its center, overlooking enmities that stretch back to the death of *Urfarah*. This compact, blasphemous to some, served the Roman people well for centuries. Since the families' pact, however, the city has been corrupted by influences from the east. An ancient parasite now sits at the heart of the Republic — the *Magna Mater*. Once the spirit of Rome itself, this twisted approximation of a god knows only hunger and gluttony. She feeds on a diet of prayer, ritual, and dead spirits brought to her through the conquests of the Roman legions. Her growth and transformation from benign spirit to secret horror has been slow, so much so that, by the time of Augustus, no *Urdeshga* has known it was ever anything else. To them, it simply is the Great Mother and Spirit of Rome.

To Live And Die Free

In remote Germania, the Uratha hunt, fight, and die alone, telling themselves they live free. Few think to ask what cost that freedom has. Warring packs hold grudges unto death, tribes whisper legends of a time they were the prey, and the Blood Talons feel shame for reasons long forgotten. Yet the *Hisil* are healthy, largely kept in balance, and the

WHERE ARE WE?

Germania Magna is huge. Beginning at the Rhine, the province stretches as far north as the Baltic Sea — the site of the legions' winter fortress - and as far east as modern-day Poland. Much of it is still unknown to the Romans; though outposts dot the land, deep, treacherous woods divide them.

One such wood is the Teutoburg Forest, a range of low, deeply-forested hills about halfway between the Rhine and the Baltic. Few Romans have set foot in it, and even the locals avoid it whenever possible; strange creatures live amongst its ancient trees.

All roads lead to Rome...eventually. Travelling overland or by river, the Rhine is over a thousand miles away from Rome; that's nearly a month's travel in the empire's fastest ships, or up to two months across the treacherous Alps.

territories are kept in check. It is not Pangaea, but it is as close as any in this day could hope to see.

No monolithic tribal cultures yet exist, either in Germania or elsewhere. A werewolf born to a family tends to remain with that family — though she might dwell hidden as protection against her rage and Lunacy. That werewolf takes mates from the families she knows, gives birth and raises her children in the same manner. If any among her family suffer the First Change, they too will be taught her ways. A family of Bone Shadows rarely allows a new Uratha to choose a different tribe, even if they know the choice exists. In this way, Uratha tribes are tightly linked to their human tribes and territories.

Despite this isolationist view, some packs occasionally establish short-lived alliances. These tend to end in violence or death, however, once the unifying cause is gone. The Germanic Uratha look to the Romulan Protectorate and wonder how it is possible. They talk of foul pacts and point to the legions' totems — the *Aquilae* — that feed upon the native *Hisil*. They whisper *idigam*.

HOC VERO NARRO

The Uratha of Rome hold themselves apart from — and above — the barbarians beyond Rome's borders. The *Tzuumfin* families call themselves the Saturi. Their bloodlines ruled the villages and cities before Rome. Every ancient patrician family in Rome is Saturi in origin. On the other side, the *Farsil Luhal* marauded the Mediterranean with the Teresh before settling in Etruria. Their kinfolk call themselves the Marisi and take Mars Red Wolf as their patron. They form the backbone of Rome, the equestrian and plebian classes. Both families claim mighty Romulus as one of their own.

BLOOD CALLS TO BLOOD

The story of the founding of Rome is well known. Romulus and Remus were powerful and charismatic twins — grandsons of Numitor, the usurped king of Alba Longa, and sons, the stories say, of Mars himself. The Uratha Acca Larentia raised them as her own children, only revealing their true heritage after their First Change. Though the brothers restored their grandfather to the throne in an orgy of bloodshed, they rejected their inheritance in favor of starting anew.

The twins set out to found their own city, but the two were prone to disagreement. Unable to agree where they should claim territory, they looked to the auspices to settle the matter. Remus looked to the Aventine hill and saw six well-omened birds circling above, while Romulus saw 12 eagle spirits circling the Palatine. Romulus declared victory, and his followers quickly marked his first boundary. Remus was angry and belittled his brother's attempt at a city wall with bitter taunts, leaping over the trench that had been dug to mark the city boundaries. Provoked to anger, wrathful Romulus struck Remus down and left his brother's corpse to rot upon the Aventine.

To strengthen his city, Romulus offered better lives to the disenfranchised and the dispossessed. He raided Rome's neighbors for women so that families would grow within the city's walls, justifying his actions to outraged Uratha as obeying *Hathis-Ur's* teachings. He led Rome's defense against the inevitable retaliations and was generous in victory, preferring to settle matters rather than prolong them.

Despite his legendary rage, Romulus enslaved none of the defeated — after all, many were Saturi kin. Instead he seized their lands and their *lares*. In three Triumphs, he fed defeated *lares* to Rome's exultant spirits. Rome's *Hisil* became unruly as spirits clamored for more of this bounteous feast, groveling before generous, fearsome Romulus. Aware of the potential fallout, Romulus divided Rome and its citizens into 30 great wards to protect his people from unwanted spiritual attention,. He set a respected Saturi family in each

ILL-OMENED HOSTS

As night falls, malevolent spirits ride Remus' corpse — his dead flesh excites them more than their own intangible forms. Soon other corpse puppets walk the streets at night, playing their own political games. Unable to stand the light of day they manipulate human pawns with vile magic from hidden catacombs beneath Rome. Since these *Fa-ninnalu* obey Roman laws and Traditions, the Saturi care little other than noting their vow to *Hathis-Ur* to leave the dead alone.



to control both the people and spirits within. His own Saturi pack — the *Celer*, the Swift — enforced his will on both sides of the gauntlet throughout Rome's territory.

Growing ever more powerful and autocratic, King Romulus found himself growing ever more obsessed with policing the Hisil as the growth of the city changed the Shadow. He distanced himself from the senate, patricians, and people, leaving the city to run itself without him. He hunted the *Hisil* alone for weeks at a time, then months, as his ruddy fur silvered with age and might. His pack grew concerned at the time he spent alone, but said nothing for years, until at last they were refused entry to his presence.

Determined to regain the love of their king, the *Celer* broke into his chambers without permission to confront his behavior. Enraged at the disturbance, Romulus replied, "Accept none of lesser blood as your brother!" and gutted his pack mates.

Realizing their king was lost to them and had become a danger to the city, Rome's Saturi ambushed the king when he next fed the *lares*. Powerful storms shook the city and *Hisil* alike, and day turned to night as the werewolves fought. When the last drop of blood fell, however, Romulus lay dead in the field of Mars, finally at rest. Victorious, the Saturi scattered Romulus' remains throughout Rome. Weak from battling Romulus, the Saturi couldn't prevent the Curiate Assembly (the legislative precursor to the Senate of the Republic and Empire) from electing Numa Pompilius, the Marisi Wolf-Blood, as king.

Following Romulus, the kingship moved back and forth between the two clans in a constant struggle for dominance in Rome. Each king fed the Roman *Hisil* with Triumphs and sacrifice. Each Triumph fed foreign Essence to Rome's *lares*, which slowly become amalgams of unrelated concepts — *magath*.

Seven kings ruled in all over roughly 250 years, ending with the final Saturi king, Tarquin the Proud. His brutality and arrogance finally united Rome's entire population against him, spelling an end to the monarchy and ushering in a new form of government. After years of rebellion, the Romans and their new twin-headed Republic emerged victorious.

Concilium Aquilarum et Fulminum

Not only the humans of Rome came together with the defeat of Tarquin, however. Realizing that their ongoing feud would tear asunder the territory both sides claimed, both the *Tzuumfin* and the Farsil Luhal entered into negotiations with one another. Despite tensions, the birth of the Republic codified the Roman Uratha as the *Urdeshga*, and their territories as the Romulan Protectorate. The *Urdeshga* established the Council of Eagles and Lightning, *Concilium Aquilarum et Fulminum*, to represent and rule the Protectorate and their families.

The Council consists of 12 Saturi *Ancilia* and 12 Marisi *Salii* — each respected and politically powerful within their family, and usually of advanced age. Members are chosen by elections. *Ancilia* choose applicants and vote among themselves, whereas the Marisi hold a popular vote to determine new *Salii*. Women are eligible to enter but few win the election. Despite its supposed unity, though, the Council remains a hotbed of argument and diatribe. Tempers flare, but outright violence is uncommon; the Council severely punishes and shames any member who falls to rage.

Only *Urdeshga* may join the council — a sticking point for Uratha from other tribes desiring citizenship and representation. Non-*Urdeshga* have no rights within the Protectorate save by pledging allegiance as "foederati" to a councillor who promises to represent them within the Council. The Council respects foederati, but the Uratha who pledges unwittingly dooms his tribe; the *Urdeshga* claim all newly changed werewolves within their territory and adopt them into their tribes and families, leaving none for foederati to claim. Uratha who refuse to pledge must find new territories or else become prey to Protectorate hunts.

The Roman Rites

Religious rites are crucial to the Romans. Whether or not a given individual feels deeply religious, the rites are as much about Rome as about the gods. Every stage of life, every political effort, and every undertaking has specific observances to honor the gods, the spirits, and ultimately Rome itself. Religious officials speak with their deity's authority and must correctly perform the scheduled rites lest the gods withdraw favor.

Within the Protectorate, every prayer and observance feeds the *lares* (the household gods) and *Maters*. Through the late Republic, these in turn feed the ravenous *Magna Mater* **(p. 59)**. Such close contact with humanity tempts all too many spirits to ride flesh bodies, willing or not. Saturi families — wealthy, powerful, and religious — are especially tantalizing targets and they encourage expertise in warding against and expelling spirits in response.

Much of the religious observances in Rome owe their origins to Numa Pompilius. Unusually pious, Numa instituted the cult of Terminus, the god of boundaries. He created cultural, social, and physical boundaries for Rome to help limit the predations of the Hisil upon the human population and yet keep the spirits of Rome fed and content. Along Rome's border, King Numa set up mystical boundary stones to ward the city and trap spirits of all kinds in order to sate Rome's ever-hungry *lares*. During the Punic Wars, they protect Rome from even Carthaginian war gods. Later still, they serve to catch the remains of the Legions' *evocatio* rites to feed the *Magna Mater*.

Lightning and Eagle spirits favored the original council, as the name indicates, acting as totems to those on council business. Over centuries these spirits, called *Aquilae*, have gradually changed, each picking up attributes of the other, until the Magna Mater subverted them during the late Republic.

Magna Mater

Rome's Hisil began no differently than anywhere else's. Rome's Triumphs fed the spirits on victory, pride, and conquest. King Numa quelled the lares' riotous hunger with a steady supply of spirits ensnared by his boundary stones. The lares grew fat and complacent, most becoming *Magath*. The most powerful among them, the *Maters*, took the names and forms of Rome's gods. It seemed that Rome would forever remain ascendant, and the spirits forgot their natural ways.

When the Gauls sacked Rome in 390 BCE, then, the *Maters* had no idea how to react. Their food supply suddenly vanished; they turned on each other, with the terrified *Maters* devouring Rome's *lares* in order to survive hunts by the Gallic Uratha. Any loss by Rome sent the *Maters* and *lares* into a frenzy; any win saw them feast on new, strange spirits with the fear of famine ever in their minds. When Carthage's greatest general, Hannibal Barca, invaded Italy, the *Maters* fed upon each other in blind panic, in memory of the Gallic hunts.

Their spiritual patrons in disarray, the Saturi consulted oracles and soothsayers in hopes of restoring order and strengthening Rome. The Sibylline Books, the great oracles from the time of Tarquin, appeared to prophesy that the last and greatest of *Maters* would come from another land to safeguard Rome's wolves. In 205 BCE, the Senate sent for a statue of Cybele from Pergamon, an ancient Greek city, in accordance with oracular interpretation of the sayings — adding another *Mater* to the city's list and recruiting the goddess for Rome's pantheon. The statue of Cybele, however, was made of a strange stone, said to be a star fallen to earth during her festival, and thus evidence of Cybele's heavenly presence. Unknown to all, the stone contained not a goddess but an alien spirit desperate for freedom and power, one imprisoned by *Urfarah* in the time before: an *idigam*.

All of Rome bowed before the *Magna Mater*, asking for her help and offering her devotion. Given partial freedom by this tribute, the foreign goddess devoured and corrupted the *Maters*, quickly determining her dominance within the Shadow of Rome. Desperate for victory, the *Urdeshga* accepted the strange ways of the *Magna Mater* and ignored the *Maters*' new quirks, doomed by their arrogance and willful blindness to the changes before their eyes.

The *Magna Mater* learned much about her new territory over the following decades. She encouraged Rome's growth in order to feed her with tribute, and made new conquests of the *Aquilae*. Perhaps most insidiously, she encouraged rivalry between the *Urdeshga* families and sees the *Paeon*, the Greek Uratha, as the perfect tool to separate them.

When Gaius Marius reformed the legions in 107 BCE, the *Magna Mater* subverted these *Aquilae* and bonded them to herself. The Council continued to ignore the spirits' eccentricities for generations, but mistrust gradually spread among the *Urdeshga*, even if it was never spoken aloud. The *Paeon* belatedly realized the magnitude of the problem, however; during the reign of Augustus, an *Ancilia* faction conspired with the *Paeon* to replace the Council's *Aquilae* with *Hurin-sihil* — pure eagle spirits — changing the balance of power completely.

Supremacy in the Mediterranean

The legions are a testament to Rome's ability to adapt. Soldiers are trained and disciplined to high standards — fighting, building, and maneuvering as one. Rome equips her soldiers well and expects them to move mountains in return. It was not always so.

Greek Fire

Unable to defeat Hannibal, the Romans attacked his Greek allies. The *Urdeshga* possessed a unity unknown to the Greek Uratha, and the fractious Greek packs fell one by one. While Rome's legions conquered Magna Graecia, however, Greek ideas conquered Rome. Greek culture fascinated the Romans, and the *Urdeshga* were not immune to this seduction.

Before Romulus, the Italic Uratha had hunted the Fire-Touched, considering them diseased curs. Since then, the *Izidakh* had remained rare and unwelcome in Italy. In Greece, however, their power grew as the *Paeon*, Apollo's students. They were renowned as healers and oracles. As attitudes mellowed after the Greek conquest, the enamored *Urdeshga* invited the *Paeon* to Italy to share eastern decadence and enlightenment. The *Paeon* never forgot the past, though, and were ever ready to interpret or prophesy in a way that might undercut their old enemies, the *Urdeshga*. While they did not know the nature of the spirit within the stone statue of Cybele, they suspected that Rome's *Hisil* would not benefit from the addition of one more hungry spirit. Her fevered ravings were a sure sign of Apollo's favor.

The influence of the *Paeon* spread alongside eastern philosophy and education. The Fire-Touched retained a low profile in terms of political power, but their culture and ideals spread through rhetoric and art, as well as religion. Young Saturi, Marisi, and even foederati turned to the *Paeon* to remove Luna's taint and grant them a new beginning. Within a century, the *Paeon* had spread to the furthest reaches of the Protectorate.

When Romulus stalked the streets, every man provided his own equipment and they fought as a tribal mob. The Gallic invasion spurred reforms on military service. The Pyrrhic War demonstrated the legion's need for discipline and drilled battle formations. The Marisi encouraged new training regimes until every new recruit demonstrated iron resolve and tactical cunning. The Saturi created potent fetishes from the first slain Pyrrhic elephants and used them to slaughter yet more.

The Punic Wars proved the need for unity between *Urdeshga* and the legions. Saturi-led war-packs caught the Carthaginian forces in the Alps. The packs butchered elephants, giants, and strange gods — but at great cost. Very few werewolves survived the battles to lend aid to the legions against Hannibal's armies.

Unfettered by the *Urdeshga*, Hannibal dominated Italy. Uncoordinated packs frenzied while defending the Protectorate, often damaging the Roman legions more than the Carthaginians had. Hannibal marched on Rome, intent on crushing the enemy of his people —and the ancient boundary stones first planted by Numa Pompilius stood fast, trapping his war gods at Rome's ancient boundary. The hopes of the *Urdeshga* rose, and together the *Ancilia* and *Salii* fought alongside Rome's *lares* and *Maters* to slaughter the trapped spirits. With the loss of their gods, the Carthaginians refused to enter Rome and rampaged across Italy for years, plundering, until finally returning home without capturing the greatest prize.

The last significant reforms came from the Marisi Consul, Gaius Marius. He standardized good quality arms and gear, training, and generous pay. Before succumbing to madness, he bound the first *Aquilae* to the legion standards and ensured the legion priests knew the rite of Trapped Lighting and the *evocatio*. Along with these changes came the Marisian Rites, allowing Urdeshga to run alongside and among the herd without fear of Lunacy. With these legions, Rome conquered the world.

CAESAR'S TRIUMPH

Gaius Julius Caesar entered Gaul as Proconsul, owing debts to both men and gods that only conquest and plunder could repay. His first victory — against the Helvetii tribes — confined the defeated people in their old alpine lands as a buffer between Rome and more belligerent northern tribes. Rome's Gallic allies celebrated Caesar on his victory and requested Rome's assistance against the Germanic Suebi tribes. Caesar seized this opportunity to conquer enemy Gallic tribes as well.

Individual tribes faced a painful choice — fight alone, surrender to Rome, or unite with rivals and enemies. Few chose unity, and those who did ally with one another were still too few to resist Rome's might. After defeating the Suebi, Caesar marched the legions against the Belgae. The Gallic tribes petitioned and bribed the formidable Nervii tribe to crush Caesar. The Nervii almost succeeded. Their destruction disheartened the other tribes, and Caesar pushed Rome's border all the way to the Atlantic.

As the Romulan Protectorate expanded with every conquered territory, the Council devolved into endless arguing.

BETWEEN A ROCK AND A...

The creation of buffer states between Roman provinces and Rome's enemies provides Rome with time to muster and deploy legions from Hispania to Syria. The allied state receives support such as favorable trade deals and military aid. Conversely, enemies must pass through the allied state to attack Rome. To the Romans, the ally is disposable — only Rome is important. Rome uses a similar tactic in Gaul and Germania. They shower gifts and favors upon the weaker of rival tribes. Such largess provokes further conflict while creating a sense of indebtedness within the favored tribe.

Many kings weigh their pride against their people's survival and bend their knee to Rome. With Roman support they gain wealth, trade goods, weaponry, and a powerful ally against their enemies. If those enemies call them weak Roman lapdogs, well, that's better than destruction.

Increasing numbers of foederati clamored for representation, if not full citizenship. Packs of *Urdeshga* and foederati traveled alongside the legions, defending them from the enemy Uratha and hunting those who refused to join the Protectorate. The *Aquilae* fed the shredded essence of tribal totems and local spirits back to Rome. Gallic Uratha, so long used to battling each other, found unity harder than their human kin.

Caesar tamed the Gauls and set his eye on his rightful recognition at home. He misread the mood of both the city and his enemies, however, and his allies were unable to win the day. Despite his success, in spite of all tradition, the Senate and Pompey denied Gaius Julius Caesar his Triumph, denying the *Magna Mater* her reward at the same time in the name of saving the Republic. She howled at this political insult, calling for blood and driving the spirits under her command to turn against one another in frenzy. Dread filled the heart of Rome, and the broken alliance between Pompey, Crassus, and Caesar tore the Republic asunder.

The ensuing civil war lasted four years and fed the *Magna Mater* her own cannibalized essence with every victory. The Council was nearly broken, with the Saturi backing Pompey and Crassus and the Marisi backing Caesar. In the end, though, Caesar was victorious and the balance, however fragile, was restored. In honor and gratitude for his service, the beleaguered Senate appointed him dictator for life. He celebrated his long overdue Triumph — and the first Triumph to celebrate victory over Rome itself. The *Magna Mater*

ADOPTING HEIRS

Julius Caesar was a Saturi by birth, but the Julii were not political heavyweights by the time of his birth. The Saturi had backed Julius Caesar because the Julii were a historically prestigious Saturi family. Caesar then championed reforms for the plebeian masses, turning his back on his patrician upbringing, and bringing the Marisi to his side. What worked for Caesar and brought unity to the Council, however, would fall to ashes upon his death.

Augustus' paternal line was Marisi, but his mother was Caesar's niece. His plebeian Marisi lineage would have worked against him, however, if not for Roman adoption laws. Legally — and to the Ivory Claws, spiritually — Augustus is Saturi, no matter what the Marisi claim.

During Augustus' lifetime, the *Urdeshga* families compete in intricate political games to control him. Patrician families grant him honors and favors. The plebeians shower him with popular support. With each maneuver, Augustus rises in esteem and power.

feasted in crazed euphoria, uncaring that her own ephemera provided the repast.

IMPERIUM SINE FINE

Caesar's days as dictator were few. He wanted to rule, but wanted more to lead armies. He welcomed his foes with open arms, oblivious to the knives that lay waiting under bleached cloth. Caesar's final defeat was on the floor of the Senate, betrayed by those he trusted most. The newly fledged peace of the Council foundered but not along family lines, leaving both Marisi and Saturi to wonder how their pact had gone so badly awry.

Following Caesar's assassination, civil wars once again wracked the Republic, with proscriptions decimating both Marisi and Saturi families and the traditional divisions between patrician and plebian confused beyond reckoning. With each victory, the *Magna Mater* cannibalized her own essence. With ruthless guile and political skill, Caesar's grandnephew and adopted son, Gaius Octavius, restored the Republic while retaining supreme military, political and religious status. In time, the Senate dubbed him Augustus.

In 12 BCE, with things largely settled within Rome and his enemies beaten, Augustus sends his stepson, Nero Claudius Drusus, into Germania against the Germani tribes. He is a brilliant general who earns the love and loyalty of his men, and his victories earn him the cognomen Germanicus — but no Triumphs. As commander of Rome's legions, every Triumph belongs to Augustus, and each draws the *Magna Mater* to him. Drusus dies three years later, leaving Germania largely unconquered.

Finally, upon witnessing these events, the Marisi's unease with the *Magna Mater* becomes too great to hide. They still honor her as the spirit of Rome, but fewer wish to remain in her vicinity every year. The *Salii* warn the *Ancilia* of their misgivings, but to no avail. To the Saturi she was ill and is now recovering her full power, in conjunction with Rome and the Imperator himself.

In 2 BCE, Imperator Augustus becomes the *Pater Patriae*, the Father of Rome. He espouses the ideals of the *Magna Mater* to all listeners. *Imperium sine fine*, sovereignty without end, becomes his goal. In 6 CE, Augustus transfers his Saturi nephew-in-law, Publius Quictilius Varus, to Germania — a safe, prestigious position for one of the family.

THATO SPELLO TREWWEZA ISTI

Long before the bloody birth of Rome, the Blood Talons prowled the mountains, islands, and dense forests of Skadin, known later as Scandinavia. They hunted mountain giants, forest trolls, and dragons of sky and sea. With cunning *Fenris-Ur* by their side, they stalked the Uratha, too. Packs howled for glory in the moonlight. They crafted songs of heroes and rivalries, wise men and foul monsters. Every victory pushed the other tribes further away. Every captured Wolf-Blooded family became Blood Talon property and a valued source of new Talons. When the other tribes were gone — either hiding or dead — the *Suthar Anzuth* hunted other prey. They devoured gods, terrorized humans, annihilated the Hosts, and mercilessly pursued the Claimed and Ridden.

THE BREKAN PROTECTORATE

After many years of vicious predation, a seemingly endless winter afflicted the land. The Blood Talons suffered as much as any; some whispered *Fenris-Ur* had blighted the land as punishment for showing mercy, others that enemies had cursed the land. Packs of Blood Talons joined together in renewed purpose against their prey. Redawulfaz the Breaker united the pack territories as the Brekan Protectorate. Packs grew larger, bolder, and ventured further. Every kill nourished them, whether human, god, or monster.

Rather than die beneath claw and fang, whole clans of Skadiniz people abandoned the frozen lands. Braving icy seas, they arrived on the forbidding shores of Europe. With them came a supernatural flood: all the Hosts, Claimed and Ridden, tribal gods, and stranger creatures escaped into the dense primeval forests, putrid bogs and wide river valleys. All reveled in freedom from the frenzied *Suthar Anzuth*.

Deprived of their objectives, the protectorate crumbled after only two generations. With no external foes, the violent Blood Talon packs turned on each other. Isolated pockets of Ghost Wolves hiding in deep pine forests and mountain vales rejected *Fenris-Ur* and his blood-soaked kin and were ignored in return. They harbored newly changed werewolves. When the *Suthar Anzuth* packs died, these new Uratha claimed their new territories.



THE HERCYNIAN PROTECTORATE

Encompassing the middle of the sprawling beech forest, the Hercynian Protectorate is an alliance of convenience between the Bone Shadows and the Predator Kings. Deep within the heart of the forest nests a spirit court of ancient potency. Neither tribe could defeat these strange gods alone. While the tribes have little love for each other, the Predator Kings understand the Bone Shadows honor their hunt through the *Hisil*. Together they hunt the old gods, and together they are victorious. For now, they remain tentatively allied. When the gods are gone, though, the trees shall feast on Uratha blood.

THE SWEBA

Centuries later, the Brekan Protectorate is remembered only in dreams and myth. Skadin belonged to the *Suthar Anzuth* by right of blood, as it had since *Fenris-Ur* hunted with *Urfarah*, while other tribes remained rare. The Predator Kings returned to coastal forests and mountainous river lands, and Bone Shadows hunted alongside Blood Talons. United only by culture, tribes and packs readily fought each other over the smallest insults. These nomadic clans call themselves Sweba, meaning "our own." Another series of hard years forced the Sweba to migrate south to join their long distant kin across the sea. Three packs of Blood Talons and Bone Shadows and their families — led by Hludawiga One-Eye, Herudis Deer-Sword and Rikirun the Sly — accompanied them.

The southern people who had fled Skadin so long ago held little regard for their distant kinfolk. They were strong and proud, having wrested the land from the Celtic tribes and fearsome creatures that dwelled there before them. They owed no fealty to Sweba chiefs. And yet, not wishing to battle their kin just yet, the chiefs bargained for days before reaching agreement.

The Sweba could not settle on land claimed by their cousins, but the continental families would allow them free passage as guests. The *Hisil* was less welcoming; the gods hold long grudges and bore no love for the *Suthar Anzuth*. Nonetheless, the Sweba Uratha survived, carving out new territory for themselves throughout the ancient oak and beech forests.

A NEW HOME

The Sweba Uratha split their packs, each moving in a different direction. Rikirun's clans explored the wilderness of northern Europe and fought the Scythian tribes. Vast forests concealed isolated Predator King families and stranger beasts. Meanwhile, King Hludawiga led his clans in war against the western Celts. As he pushed west to the Atlantic, the Celts moved south, jostling with yet other tribes. Eventually the two cultures and their Uratha kin reached a stalemate. From these mingled families emerged the violent Belgae tribes. Lastly, Herudis' families forced Celtic tribes to migrate south to the Alps and beyond.

Entrenched Uratha defended their ancestral lands with furious might; even those that won, however, found their territories slowly surrounded. Celtic tribes and their own Uratha kin blunted the movement of the Sweba, but few could withstand the Blood Talons' frenzied might allied with the Bone Shadows' spiritual prowess.

The warlike Sweba pushed the Celtic tribes against each other and forced many into long migrations. Some found safety in the isles of Albion, while others reached Hispania. Of those that moved east, some entered Illyria and Dacia; others plundered Greece and settled in Anatolia. The Gallic Uratha abandoned established territories only because of bonds of alliance and kinship with their families. The Senones, however, entered Italy and sacked Rome itself.

Wherever the Sweba tribes settled, werewolves claimed hunting grounds and ferociously fought local Uratha and gods. Other monsters — Giants, witch-folk and more — fled before the Sweba Uratha. Such disturbances enraged the local werewolves — many had longstanding pacts with these creatures.

The Sweba clans spread across northern Europe, splitting and merging into scores of independent tribes in eventual equilibrium with the Celtae. The clans' initial alliances faded after only a few generations until they warred against each other almost as much as against the Celtae. Tenuous lines of kinship, worship, and shared hardship brought them together. Arguments, pride, and old grudges pulled them apart.

FRACTIOUS ALLIANCES

Over many years, the Sweba split into dozens of individual clans and nomadic tribes, dominating the lands east of the Rhenus River. The Gauls knew them as noisy, warlike neighbors. The Romans knew them as Suevi.

Most Suevi Uratha were Blood Talons and Bone Shadows who lived among their kin as "the Night-tribes." Before battle, they hunted sacrificial victims through stinking fen and bog. They tortured and drowned the chosen in "*Fenris-Ur's* mouth." Mixing with the Celtae, however, opened the Night-tribes to Hunters in Darkness and Storm Lords. The rare Iron Masters hunted peat bogs and coastal lands. Ghost Wolves either clung to their families or wandered the world.

The Fire-Touched came from the east, following ancient spoor. They ran in isolated packs and sold their services to all who desired them. They acted as lorekeepers, tale-tellers, and firebrands. Predator Kings, meanwhile, hunted all who disturbed them. Their domains in Dacia, Illyria, the deep European forests and mountains were nigh impenetrable — filled with old gods, monstrous men, and death, only the

WHO GOES THERE?

Multitudes of tribes jostle for safe, fertile land amidst the European wilderness. Amongst the Germani tribes live the Alemanni, Ambrones, Angles, Batavi, Baravii, Brisgavi, Chatti, Chauci, Cherusci, Cimbri, Dani, Dalgubnii, Eburones, Fervir, Frisii, Harii, Istvaeones, Jutes, Lacringi, Langobardes, Marcomanni, Marsi, Mattiaci, Quadi, Sicambri, Teutons, Ubii, Usipetes, Vangiones, and Varini.

Many more examples can be found online.

HOSTAGE NEGOTIATIONS

The Romans commonly abduct the heirs of foreign rulers. Despite the name, the Romans raise these hostages well, giving them educations, military training, and sometimes even citizenship. They expect them to return to their homeland instilled with Roman virtues and friendly towards their adopted home. Should their parents act against Rome, however, the Romans respond with typical pragmatism.

strongest survived. The rarest tribe of all was the Ivory Claws — all of whom were visitors from foreign lands. Their claims of lineage, refinement, and nobility were openly mocked as weak, meaningless lies.

In the land of the Belgae people, the Blood Talons and Hunters in Darkness gave the Nervii tribe wide berth. Most scoffed at such tales, but the Nervii tribe was clearly something other than human. Able to catch spears in midair, tireless, fearless, and swift as horses, the tribe was terrifying in battle. Yet they operated under a Ban to "*use no weapon not of your own hand*" — preventing their use of arrows or slings. The Uratha wondered what gods empowered them, and what else they demanded in return.

In 120 BCE, the Cimbri and Teuton tribes of Jutland abandoned their homeland by the Baltic Sea due to poor weather and belligerent neighbors. Over years of migration, they gathered allies among the Gallic Tigurini and clashed with the Illyrian tribes. The Taurisci in particular, who had already been conquered by Rome, called upon the Romans for help when the Cimbri coalition threatened them. The Romans answered, sending their forces against the interlopers with little expectation of a serious challenge.

The Cimbri initially complied but, at a perceived betrayal by the Roman commander, rose up and rousted the Roman army — over 100,000 legionaries, support personnel, and camp followers died. The Romans called this the *Terror Cimbricus* and gave unprecedented power to Consul Gaius Marius to reform the legions while the coalition headed west into Gaul and Hispania. Two years later, Marius's new legions destroyed the Teutones; a year later they annihilated the Cimbri. The rest of the Cimbri coalition disbanded rather than face Marius' legions.

The Helvetii clans settled the northern Alps plateau. The Suebi had pushed this confederation of tribes out of southern Germania before the Helvetii joined the Cimbri. After less than five decades, the Germanic tribes were threatening them again. The Helvetii decided to leave the Alps for southern Gaul. Their route was to pass through the territories of several Gallic tribes and the Roman province of Transalpine Gaul, but Julius Caesar blocked them and finally defeated them at Bibracte.

Caesar entered Gaul to fight the Suebi tribes on behalf of Rome's Gallic allies. He defeated King Ariovistus of the Suebi and then conquered Gaul. Caesar even defeated the unnatural Nervii, stunning the local Uratha. Packs began to take note of the Fire-Touched tale-tellers who spoke of the Romulan Protectorate and its hunger for gods, but failed to unite against Rome. Each pack merely harassed the constantly marching troops. They defended their territories to the edges, then withdrew, satisfied that the threat had passed on.

ERMINAZ, SON OF SEGIMER

The Blood Talon Elodoth Segimer was chieftain of the Suebi Cherusci when the Romans campaigned against Germania. He saw the *Aquilae* shred Cherusci gods while their legions butchered his people. Broken-spirited, he agreed to send his two young sons to Rome as hostages, cementing their alliance with Rome, rather than see his people destroyed. Stoic Erminaz comforted his weeping younger brother as they left their home behind. He vowed to the god Donar that he would get his vengeance upon the Romans.

The Romans renamed Segimer's sons, calling them Arminius and Flavius. Arminius, previously known as Erminaz, adapted well to Roman life. He entered the military and became a Roman citizen. As Commander of the Cherusci Auxilia — a cavalry unit attached to the legions — he served with distinction in the Pannonian wars. He also saw Rome for what it was: the twisted *Hisil* and bloated *Magna Mater* were clear to his Wolf-Blooded senses.

Meanwhile, in 6 CE, Publius Quictilius Varus arrived in Germania as Governor. A Saturi noble who enjoyed political favor with Augustus, he expected Germania to be as easily taxed as Syria had been, where he had greedily brutalized the population. He was mistaken: the Germani tribes could only



be dealt with individually — a deal struck with one meant nothing to another.

Varus brings the XVII, XVIII, and XIX legions to Germania to make a show of force. Arminius is attached to the XVII with his cavalry auxilia. At last back in Germania, Arminius sees his chance to defeat Rome and the *Magna Mater*. He knows Roman strategies and tactics. He knows Roman weaknesses.

As Varus extracts taxes from brutalized Germani tribes, Arminius meets with the chiefs and warriors in secret. He tells them of the rot in Rome's heart, and how Rome's successes come from unity in the face of adversity. Many among the tribes disbelieve him. They call him traitor or lapdog, and point to his Roman finery as evidence. Others listen and make plans with Arminius.

The Night-tribes also debate Arminius' motives. Some packs argue to betray Arminius and join the Romulan Protectorate, while others scoff at surrendering their freedom. They confer with gods to determine the truth of his words, yet even the gods fear Rome and the obscenity squatting at its heart.

What Is To Come

Exciting times lie ahead for the Forsaken of Rome, as well as events that will shape the destiny of the Uratha for millennia to come.

9CE — Mission Accomplished?

According to Rome, there is no longer a war in Germania — the empire has already won. Emboldened by his recent victories, Varus dreams of bringing civilization to his hard-won province and extracting wealth in return. Unfortunately, such a work requires funds. Arminius encourages him to send his legions all across Germania Magna collecting taxes, meting out Roman justice, and building roads and other infrastructure. Varus's great work begins to take shape, but — as his cunning praefectus hoped — it turns the locals against him.

As lofty as the general's dreams are, Arminius knows that his kinsmen will never accept them. While tribal clashes and changing borders are nothing new to the Germani, Varus's program of occupation and assimilation is like nothing they could ever imagine. Rome's touch is everywhere in Germania; even the land itself transforms into a foreign country before their very eyes.

Tribe after tribe balks at Varus's punishing taxes, and the tax collectors' methods become ever more brutal. More and more crosses line the Roman roads; for the first time in months, legionaries walk carefully among the locals. As tensions reach a boiling point, Arminius's secret alliance swells. Summer steadily approaches, and the would-be revolutionary knows that he must soon act — such a groundswell cannot stay hidden for long, nor can his part in it.

The Changing Hisil

Augustus' *Pax Romana* rules the land, but a storm is building behind the enforced calm that keen-sighted Uratha see clearly. Strange new spirits appear wherever the empire goes; mighty stone giants wrestle with untamable river spirits. *Ensah* of trade and coin wage petty wars with each other over newly built cities. Foreign gods whisper into the dreams of children as they sleep.

The legions — and the *Urdeshga* that lurk among them — seem to know exactly what they're doing. They burn down sacred groves and topple idols, destroying once-mighty Loci. They loot holy places for Fetishes and Fetters. Even their roads serve a secret purpose — canny Saturi direct them straight through the enemy territories. Many times, a well-placed road has slashed a Predator King territory to pieces. Roman roads carved through their territories cause anguish and fury when the children of Dire Wolf attempt to walk upon them, fragmenting their most fearsome domains. The roads themselves are hotbeds of spiritual activity — sometimes, spirits of peace and protection linger, shepherding travelers on their way. Other byways are plagued by the thunder of 1,000 phantom feet, marching as if to war.

Roman roads enable rapid military response across the Republic, but they also serve as Essence aqueducts to the city's spirits. Each milestone channels essence to the next until the spirit-stuff collects along Rome's boundary stones. In the *Hisil*, the roads pull at spirits that cross them just like a swiftly flowing river, snaring the slow or unwary and pulling them inexorably toward Rome.

The Battle of Teutoburg Forest

In 9 CE, after months of unrewarding tax farming, Varus turns his legions south to winter in Gaul. Seizing his chance, Arminius signals his allies to enact his plan. Before he can leave Germania, though, Varus' scouts spy smoke on the horizon. Conferring with his trusted legion commanders, including Arminius, Varus determines to investigate and quash any intertribal trouble while he has the chance. At his command, the legions, baggage trains, and camp followers veer north into the Teutoburg forest.

Summer, 9CE — The Storm Breaks

Arminius sends a messenger to Varus with urgent news — the Chauci tribe in western Germania has turned against Rome. He advises an immediate response: Varus must gather all his forces together and march without delay. He suggests a shortcut through the vast, untamed wilderness of the Teutoburg.

Heeding his praefectus' words, Varus marches 32,000 men straight into a trap.

The Ambush

A secret army has gathered in the Teutoburg, drawn from nearly every tribe in Germania. Although they are intimately familiar with the land and have numbers and surprise on their side, they face the legions — the finest warriors to walk the earth. Gods and monsters march at their command. Fortunately, Germania has its own monsters.

Packs of Uratha converge on the Teutoburg. For the first time, rival Protectorates come together in an uneasy truce.

When Arminius's army swoops down on the unsuspecting Roman caravan, longtime enemies run shoulder to shoulder in *Siskur-Dah*. They massacre their enemies. Cut right through the middle, the Roman forces bravely stand their ground... until something *changes*. Their formations fall apart. Their unity shatters. Even respected centurions lose faith and turn tail. Complete defeat looks certain.

The Marisi quickly figure out what changed — the *Aquilae* have been attacked. For months, Germanic Ithaeur have studied the wolf-eagles from afar; today, they hunt them. They bind them, one by one, and as they do each legion falls. Without their totems, the Marisian Rites fail. The entire battlefield breaks down into a storm of panicked Lunacy. Both sides break off while the chaos can still be contained.

The Hunt

Making emergency camp at Kalkriese Hill, the Roman survivors weigh their options; they are decimated, disgraced, and trapped in a foreign land. Worse still, their gods have forsaken them. Their only hope is to escape the forest as quickly as possible and regroup south of the Rhine. They burn all their remaining wagons and supplies, cut loose their beasts, and abandon their slaves to fend for themselves. Thus unburdened, they begin the long march toward freedom.

Meanwhile, the Thunder's Sons pack gathers all the Germanic *Iminir* they can muster, combining their Gifts to call forth a mighty storm. They chant and howl until black clouds roil across the sky, plunging the summer day into darkness. Mighty winds tear trees out by their roots, and torrential rains drown their enemies in a flood of mud and water.

For three days the Romans flee, harried and desperate. They avoid their pursuers when they can and fight when they must. The Germani whittle them down, however, picking off the messengers (and the deserters) that attempt to break away from the main force. Both sides know that if the Romans cannot escape soon, there will *be* no escape.

The Final Day

By the fourth day, the legionaries are broken. Without the *Aquilae*, they are weak, disorganized, and — ultimately — merely human. The famed invulnerability of the Legions is shattered. The Germanic alliance, bolstered by their shocking victory, continues to grow.

Varus is mad with shame and fury. He cannot face the disgrace and exile that await him in Rome if he escapes, and so there is only one avenue before him: death. He orders everyone, legionary and foederatus alike, to fall on their swords before the barbarians can capture them. While many of the herd submit, the Uratha cannot. The Blood Talons will never surrender, not even in death. The *Urdeshga*, who have seen their beloved legions decimated and disgraced, are enraged by their craven leader's cowardice.

Unable to contain their rage, the werewolves turn on the herd — and each other — in disgust, releasing days of frustration and shame in a massive wave of Kuruth. Hours later, Germani scouts find the camp a blood-spattered abattoir. A





STORY SEEDS: PLAYING POLITICS

Alliances of territorial, rage-filled wolf-monsters are equal parts ambitious and dangerous. The hurdles faced by the nascent Protectorates or the agents tasked to take them down make for a multitude of stories:

THE EVANGELISTS

The characters are wolves on a mission: to enlist other packs into Arminius's ambitious alliance. They will need all their wits to gather troops right under the nose of the mighty Roman occupation. But what will they do when someone refuses? How do they know if someone will sell them out? And what will they say when they are asked to parley with a hated enemy?

A WHOLE NEW WORLD

Perhaps the fledgling cities are the characters' hunting ground? They have seen firsthand the good that Rome brings: safe roads, potable water, and the chance to be something more than subsistence farmers. After all, a few generations ago Gaul itself was wild and uncivilized, and it's now a strong, respected part of the Empire. The characters must choose which is best for their territory — the way it has always been, or a bold new future?

THE WATCHMEN

The *Speculatores* are Rome's official spies and scouts — and sometimes, assassins — and a fitting vocation for those who change skins like garments. But the characters hunt a prey they don't even know for sure exists: a traitor. Can they root out the secret alliance before the revolution begins? Dare they believe it goes all the way to the general's right-hand man?

ACCOUNTS OF THE BATTLE

Four written accounts of the events surrounding the Battle of Teutoburg Forest have survived to the modern day, but only one really describes the battle itself: *Roman History* by Cassius Dio. You can read it all online for free.

few survivors, traumatized by Lunacy, wait numbly for death. All the wolves are dead or gone.

THE UPRISING

News from the Teutoburg spreads like wildfire. All across the province, Germani rise up and slaughter the few legionaries left behind. Like their Uratha compatriots, the herd embraces its rage — soon it is Romans and sympathizers that hang from the crosses lining the roads. Mobs of vigilantes punish all who dared to preach peace with Rome.

The Uratha go even further — many rebels cast Harmony aside entirely, hunting man and Uratha with abandon. Loyalists struggle to put down the insurrections erupting in their territory before they cause irreparable damage. Opportunists simply use the chaos to settle old feuds and steal coveted territory. Germania is lost to the Romans forever, leaving nothing but blood and terror behind them.

10-15CE — THE WAR YEARS

The Varian Disaster, as it comes to be known, sounds an alarm across the Roman Empire. As handfuls of survivors stumble home with the terrible news, Rome's leaders are first shocked, then wounded, then driven to frothing rage. All across the empire, sybils are tormented by dreams of the terrible defeat. Ithaeur recognize the signs and Cahalith give them words: Rome itself has been wounded. The Germani (and the rival Uratha who no doubt pull their strings) have discovered the secret of her power. The wheels of Rome's massive war machine begin to turn once more.

CONSOLIDATION

Back in Germania, the carnage continues. While Arminius returns home in glory, easily unseating his uncle Segestes as chieftain of the Cherusci, the Uratha who joined his crusade are not so easily distracted. They pour out of the Teutoburg like a wave, dragging scores of human revolutionaries along in their wake and slaughtering Romans wherever they find them. Though they hunt with cunning — harrying their prey to exhaustion, striking from the shadows, and sowing terror everywhere they go — their thirst for blood blinds them. They butcher nearly as many loyal Germani as they do Romans and sympathizers. They are known as The Wild Hunt.

The Romans pull back into Gaul as fast as they can. Learning well from the disaster and starting to get an inkling of the River's Curse (p. 74), they manage to repulse wave after wave of Germanic attacks as they push back toward the Rhine. In a few short months, however, Gaul has become a frontier again – complete with barbarians at the gates. Beleaguered soldiers struggle with food shortages, civil unrest, and the constant fear of rebel attacks. The Uratha among them teeter constantly on the edge of Kuruth.

STORY SEEDS: THE REVOLUTION IS NOW

Whether the characters are Romans soldiers, raging revolutionaries, or bystanders trapped in tumultuous times, the moment when resentment becomes rebellion is rich with story opportunities:

LEADING THE CHARGE

Years of planning have led to this: the first volley in a war of liberation. The characters take the lead, figuring out the secret of the legions' spiritual might, working with Forsaken and Pure alike to hatch a battle plan, and finally charging the behemoth itself. But can any plan survive contact with the enemy, especially when Kuruth and Lunacy threaten to tear both sides apart?

THE NIGHT OF LONG TEETH

Even if the characters attempt to remain neutral, the revolution will happen whether they like it or not. What do they do when war comes to their doorstep? Will they reveal themselves to keep their territory safe? Or will they flee, leaving the herd — and the People — to their squabbles?

THE LONG MARCH

The characters have been ambushed and betrayed. Now, trapped in hostile territory with enemy wolves hot on their heels, they must lead the legions to safety. Or will they stage a counterattack instead? When Varus's leadership crumbles, will they follow him into death and obscurity, or will they take charge and fight the odds?

Some packs snap. The Gallic foederati, The Lords of Stone, abandon Rome and rebel alike, claiming the city of Mainz for themselves. They make grisly examples of anyone who transgresses into their territory, whether Roman or Gaul, Forsaken or Pure. The Reliquias Civitatis pack, formed from scattered survivors of the Varian Disaster, falls to despair and fear. One night they all fall to *Basu-Im* together and are never seen again.

While the world shakes with what the alliance has accomplished, the *Hisil* shakes with its consequences. Most affected is the Teutoburg Forest itself; not only did the victors refuse to bury the bodies of their enemies, but many took body parts as souvenirs, parading severed heads through the forest with delight. Others tortured and sacrificed their captives, or even ate them. The land itself revolts against such blasphemy, giving birth to a massive Wound. In later years it will be known as Knochenburg — "the Hill of Bones," where vengeful Roman spirits linger.

What's more, a number of camps disappear within months of the uprising, either burned to the ground or snatched into the Shadow with mighty spirit magic. Many Forsaken suspect the Pure, of course, but the wisest cast a glance at the Protectorates' alphas as well. What kind of devil's deal have they struck, they wonder, to win the *Anshega*'s support?

As to who those alphas are, no one really knows. Though the Sons of Thunder attempt to leverage their successes in the Teutoburg into a position of leadership over *all* the Protectorates, the Germanic Uratha are even more fractious than their human counterparts. While Arminius uses his newfound power to unite the Day-tribes under one banner (his, naturally), the Night-tribes struggle to keep their Rage directed at the enemy.

ROME'S REVENGE

Rome's response, when it comes, is overwhelming. Caesar Augustus dies in 14 CE (some suspect treachery, but he *was* 75 years old), and his stepson Tiberius ascends to the throne. One of his first acts as Caesar is to send his nephew Germanicus back to Germania, with an incredible eight legions.

Still, the Romulan Protectorate cannot leave its fate in the herd's hands. Without the Varian Legions' *Aquilae*, the *Magna Mater*'s boundless hunger goes unfulfilled. The Protectorate — indeed, all of Rome itself — is in terrible danger. *Urdeshga* all over the world abandon territory, legion, sometimes even pack, and converge on Germania in droves, eventually sniffing out the standard of Legio XVII among the Marsi tribe. The mad Ivory Claw prophetess Drusilla Godeater communes with the slumbering spirit; according to her, only the gushing Essence of a desecrated Locus will awaken it. Luckily, that is something the battle-hungry legions are only too happy to provide.

SHOCK AND AWE

Germanicus's armies — both human and Uratha — launch a series of surprise raids. Villages burn in their wake. Enemies flee their homes. The Saturi weave rites of blood and power. The Marisi destroy everything in their path. As they lay waste to the land, binding spirits, desecrating Loci, and pouring stolen Essence before their fallen idol, a palpable sense of anticipation grows among them. Finally, after many months, a mighty bellow echoes through the *Hisil* — something between a screech and a howl. The *Aquila* has awakened.

Energized, the legions raise a fort on Mount Taunus, from which they strike relentlessly at the Marsi and Chatti tribes. Despite the risks, many battle-hungry packs march alongside their comrades-in-arms. Others push deep into Germani lands alone to gather intelligence on troop placement, Uratha sightings, and rumors of the other lost *Aquilae*. It is a dangerous game, braving unknown territory and outsmarting better-prepared locals. To make matters worse, competition among these *Speculatores* is fierce; every pack wants to be the



LIVE TOGETHER, DIE ALONE

In the time of its greatest need, the Romulan Protectorate's fragile nature betrays it. The Saturi blame the weak-willed Marisi for Varus's defeat (conveniently forgetting the Saturi that were there, too), and insist on taking charge of the war effort. Pack battles pack for supremacy and honor. Roman wolves fight each other when they should be pulling together.

For their part, many Wardens' first loyalty is to pack and territory, not the Protectorate. They don't respect the Protectorate's soft-bellied leaders, and many ignore the call to war entirely. Those who do join the invasion refuse to obey orders with which they disagree and leaders whom they despise.

Yes, it is the mightiest Protectorate the world has ever known — but its cracks run deep.

one to find the *Aquilae*. For the *Urdeshga*, sometimes the greatest threat is the soldier at your side.

In 15 CE, Rome scores another major victory — the capture of Arminius's wife, Thusnelda. She is pregnant when she is dragged in chains to Rome; neither she nor her son ever see their homeland again.

RETURN TO THE HILL OF BONES

Though the invasion proceeds well, all is not well in the *Hisil*. Ghosts in blood-spattered armor haunt the dreams of Roman leaders. Strange spirits lurk outside their camps, forever watching. A pack of *Speculatores* smell Wound-taint on them and track them to the site of the Varian Disaster. They are horrified by what they discover: not only has the entire forest grown sick, but The Mothers, an old, respected pack of *Meninna* and *Hirafahra Hissu*, have succumbed to it themselves. For six years they hid in the Teutoburg, awaiting Rome's inevitable return, and the place changed them.

When the legionaries approach the old battlefield, they are greeted by a sickening sight: a sea of severed heads nailed to old trees. This is no mere warning, but an alarm system; as if on cue, rotted eyelids flutter open and dead mouths scream in chorus. Wound-tainted spirits drop from the trees and slither out from amongst piles of bleached bones.

It is a gruesome fight, but the legions emerge bloody but victorious. They slay the Mothers and send their aberrant children back to the *Hisil*, but the taint lingers. The Romans bury the bones of all the fallen. Though it doesn't destroy the Wound — great bloodshed is not wiped away so easily, after all — it does weaken it. The contaminated Locus falls dormant. For once, Germanicus's armies leave a place in Germania in a better state than that in which they found it.

16-17 CE — THE BITTER END

By 16 CE, the beleaguered Germani fear Rome's onslaught will never end. Reinforcements sail from Rome, and Arminius is determined to cut them off at the Weser River. The rest of the alliance is not so sure; after clinging to the shadows for years, attacking the legions head on seems like madness. Perhaps it is.

Arminius does manage to gather another army, but 10 legions descend on them as soon as they reveal themselves. They are massacred, and Arminius barely escapes with his life. Two Roman packs take advantage of the chaos to seek the *Aquila* of Legio XVIII among the Cherusci. While the Saturi Sanguinum Hereditatem returns triumphant, their rivals the Velox Interfectores are never seen again.

GERMANICUS'S "TRIUMPH"

As 16 CE draws to a close, Germanicus is poised to strike; with Arminius on the run, total victory is finally in his grasp. In a few more months, the barbarians will be too cowed to ever raise their fist to Rome again. Alas, Tiberius forbids it. The harsh northern winter fast approaches, and the emperor has done the math; as rewarding as crushing Germania Magna would be, it would be too costly. Keeping the legions stationed in hostile territory just isn't worth the risk and the resources. He calls Germanicus home.

Though Rome greets its beloved general with a Triumph, Germanicus's unfinished work dogs him. Worse, he shortly comes to realize that it was not logistical concerns that prompted his recall, but a tactical one: Tiberius feared that too much success abroad would put lofty ideas into his nephew's head. Soon Germanicus is sent to Asia as a diplomat. He dies of a mysterious illness before the year is out.

ONE AGAINST ALL

Without an enemy to unite against, the Germani's old tribal divisions — along with grudges seven years in the making — tear the alliance apart. Not even The Thunder's Sons, the Protectorate's self-styled alphas, can stop the mass exodus of man and wolf. Arminius can't let it end like that, though. He bribes, threatens, and calls in every favor he has, but it only makes it worse. Disillusioned Cherusci call him arrogant and grasping, just like the Romans, and one night in 21 CE they murder him. His dream of a unified Germania goes unfulfilled.

When the Uratha return to their territories, they are shocked by what they find. The *Hisil* churns under the weight of rapid, violent change. Old allies are dead or driven off, and new and strange spirits — or stranger things still — squat in their places. Some packs find that their entire family of human kin have been wiped out while they've been away.

The news breaks many *Iminir*, who were initially so eager for the alliance. One such wolf is Irmgard the Stricken, who

STORY SEEDS: WAR JOURNAL

The war informs every story in this timeframe: from the strategic duels of generals, to the soldiers in muddy trenches, to the desperate innocents caught in the crossfire:

VINDICTAE

The characters have come from all over the world for one reason — vengeance. They will burn cities, massacre hundreds, and tear gods from their shrines. They will show all of Germania what Rome can do when she is threatened...unless their own divisions tear them apart first.

HUNTING THE WOLF-EAGLES

The characters are after more than mere revenge; they are on a mission to retrieve the lost Aquilae of the Varian Legions. Abandoning the safety of the main force, they must infiltrate the Germani to hunt down their prize...but when they find it, will they be able to liberate it? And will they be willing to do what must be done to reawaken it?

THE HOME FRONT

Someone has to keep the hearth fire burning while the soldiers are away. The characters — younger Uratha, perhaps even Wolf-Blooded — must tend their territory while their packmates fight alongside Arminius's rebellion. But can they keep the spirits in line? Can neighboring packs be trusted while the alpha is away? And when the legions pass by, with foreign Uratha lurking among them, can mere whelps fight them off?

is haunted by dreams of divine judgement. He renounces pack and tribe, declaring that *Skolis-Ur* has called him to bring judgement on the children that forsook him. He brutally murders more than eight Storm Lords before he is stopped.

GERMANIA'S LEGACY

The Battle of Teutoburg Forest and the rebellion it ignited forever stands as Rome's greatest defeat. The Germani are the first people to beat back a Roman invasion, but not the last. Though the tribes quickly fall again to factionalism, that moment of unity is never forgotten. In many, many years, Arminius will stand as a symbol of national pride and inspiration to a whole new nation — a unified Germany.

And what of Rome? The empire gives up on the land beyond the Rhine; though the legions occasionally return over the centuries, even managing to retrieve the final *Aquila* in 41 CE (although questions persist as to its authenticity), it is never with the same zeal. Emperors explain it away as "useless land" that "isn't worth the resources," but the truth is that some places just can't be conquered.

The Uratha do not easily forget Germania, either, or the clash of so many mighty Protectorates. Although the Germanic alliance only lasted a handful of years, it taught a valuable lesson: The wolf must hunt, not fight the wars of men. While the Romulan Protectorate lasts longer, the bitterness and mistrust sown by the Varian Disaster grows and grows. Rhetoric turns into mindless rage; disagreement becomes insurrection. Eventually, at the height of the empire's might, the *Urdeshga* families tear their Protectorate apart in a rain of blood and fury.

Cahalith sing of the doomed alliance for many years, remembering a time when all the Uratha came together as one. The Ivory Claws double down on their hatred, striking any mention of the Forsaken from Roman history wherever they can. To the *Tzuumfin* of later generations, Rome was a marvel of the Pure's making alone.

THE SUPERNATURAL

The rise and fall of the Roman Republic was busy time for supernatural activity. Superstitions were widespread, with vast pantheons of gods the norm for most human worship. Throughout the empire and much of the lands beyond, families worshipped household gods and prayed to their ancestors to help keep the living safe. The spirits lapped up this worship as much as they could, and sometimes even returned the easy Essence with small miracles to ease human life.

These supplications weren't performed without cause; the darkness held many threats beyond mortal understanding. Creatures hungering for human warmth thrived within the growing cities, while monsters jealous of their privacy and territory hunted the wilderness beyond. Wise humans didn't venture far from the safety of others unless skilled or desperate, and everyone whispered tales of the predators lurking in the shadows just outside the torchlight.

Intangible spirits with a keen interest in the activities of werewolves were the primary spectators and agitators of the conflicts, but they weren't alone in their interest. Though human need for conquest and power drove the wars, the creatures living on the periphery of human groups or hiding among humanity had their own reasons for being involved.

Human wars often spell opportunity for the various supernatural denizens of the world. The human conflict displaces territorial owners and leaves their resources free for enterprising competitors to claim. The spilled blood and spiritual turmoil are rich feeding grounds for predators, who may also take the opportunity to spread their seed and boost their supernatural populations.

Even with these enticements, few monsters are willing to involve themselves in the Roman war with Germani tribes. The presence of werewolves is keenly felt by the other predators, who recognize the risk they take by interfering with the conflicts of the Uratha. Even powerful entities who



YOU KNOW WHO LOVED THIS STUFF?

Hitler, that's who. And it isn't surprising when you think about it; by the early 20th Century, "Herr mann" was the symbol of the modern German nation — wise, noble and untamable, Germany's answer to Uncle Sam or George Washington. Hitler took it even further; in his mind, Germany was in the same situation as the Germania of 9 CE: ground down by decadent, over-civilized aliens, yet destined to attain greatness under a strong and cunning leader. His Nazi party appropriated the iconography and mysticism of ancient Germania, twisting them into symbols of hatred and oppression. However, the Third Reich also incorporated many of the trappings of Imperial Rome — the lightning bolt, the Roman salute, and of course the eagle.

It's enough to make you wonder, really; why would the descendants of the Germanic people adopt the symbolism of Germania's greatest enemy? Perhaps the apocryphal tale of the Aquila hidden in a bog was not so far off the mark? Perhaps the standard of Legio XIX recovered in 41 CE was a fake? What could Hitler's Germany do with a mighty relic like that?

view individual packs as nuisances to be eradicated shy away from engaging so many at once. Even allies of the *Anshega* or *Urdaga* are scarce, as they know choosing sides while the alliance stands is dangerous. The fallout will be immense when the pressure finally becomes too much for Uratha passions.

SHADOW DWELLERS

The ebb and flow of the supernatural world closely follows the patterns of human advancement. In areas of sparse human habitation, the spirit world is wild and untamed. Spirits of nature and the elements move between each other in complex webs of predators who are simultaneously prey. These spirits hunt and consume others of the appropriate Essence and ignore those incompatible to their needs. With a lack of humans outside of settlements, the loci in this area are sparse and fiercely fought over. The physical and spiritual worlds rarely interact, as spirits are reluctant to stray into areas lacking Essence for food.

In contrast, the spiritual reflections of human settlements are confusing affairs. Spirits of construction, habitation, and tools fight for supremacy as the villages grow in size, and displace the former inhabitants of the land. Slipping between these battles for territory, spirits of emotion swarm around the humans, tracking their movements from the trails of anger, love, laughter, and fear they leak across the Gauntlet. As new spirits constantly spawn and grow with human activity, the *Hisil* becomes more crowded and incompatible spirits prey on one another. Muddled, hungry *magath* are more common than ever before — thanks to the humans who are completely ignorant of their influence.

GLORIOUS ROME

Rome's city spirits were focused on the settlement that was their domain and only peripherally aware of everything else. The various *Maters* of Rome vaguely knew of the expansionist aspirations of the humans who lived in the city, but were disinterested in the details, apart from how they helped the city itself grow. As Roman rule spread, the *Maters* grew in power and influence. When belligerent tribes and nations fought back, the city shrank and the spirits resentfully lost importance and fell to cannibalism between themselves for survival.

Everything changed with Hannibal. The threat of Roman annihilation was keenly felt by the nation, and the omens suggested likewise. Meteor showers filled the skies and famines swept across the land. The Romans believed they were doomed by Hannibal's forces, until they consulted the Sibylline Books and learned that The Great Mother could prevent disaster. The Oracle at Delphi led the Romans to a statue made of a stone of the deepest black, supposedly a star fallen from the realm of the gods. She told the Romans this was the embodiment of the Phrygian goddess Cybele, who was the great mother prophesized.

The Romans took the statue back to the capital and called it the *Magna Mater*. She was the symbol of empire, of the triumph of Roman rule over those who would resist. She would bless the Republic, who would look beyond the capital to guide Romans everywhere. The humans had no idea the change they unleashed upon their growing nation.

With their powers already weakened from impending defeat, Rome's remaining *Maters* were quickly perverted by *Shar-Z'ghub* with barely any resistance. The *idigam* was cunning — it feared the wolves it sensed all around it and still couldn't completely escape the bindings of the stone. It accepted the Roman's gift of naming it the *Magna Mater*, and twisted or devoured every spirit close enough to the former city spirits to be able to alert the Uratha. Fortuitously, the Romans defeated Hannibal; *Shar-Z'ghub* hid from the Uratha beneath the *Magna Mater* role, and the werewolves accepted the new order, including the city spirit's shift in behavior — they believed this was a necessary part of its near-demise and reformation. With the werewolves distracted by success and the city feeling safe under its revitalized protector, the Earth-Bound *idigam* gleefully exerted its influence over its new playground.

Since the city's founding, the spirits of Rome had consumed each other and taken strange new forms, to the point that the Uratha now viewed this as normal evolution of the *Hisil* with the rise of civilization. Under *Shar-Z'ghub*'s influence, this feeding grew with careless abandon, twisting the spirits further into strange *magath*, which the *idigam* tested

Sic Mundus Tenebrarum Vivit

The population of Chronicles of Darkness consists of more than just werewolves, and ancient Rome is no exception. **Vampires** in *Forsaken by Rome* are considered to be the "descendants" of Remus, and largely have an agreement with the Wolf-Blooded to police their own, keep to themselves, and not endanger the common good. For more information, the **Vampire: The Requiem** sourcebook **Requiem for Rome** contains more information about *mortis in Roma*.

Those who return from death in the ancient world are few and far between, but not unheard of. In an age that looks for signs and portents in everything, wonders such as the dead returning to life are considered rare and dangerous, but far from impossible. While vampires are harder to spot given their talent and motivation to blend into cities and towns, others who come back tend to stand out. Both Roman and Germani cultures have heard of the *immortui* **(p. 74)**, those who arise from where they fell on the battlefield or the sickbed. What they don't know, however, is the difference between a **Sin-Eater** and a **Promethean,** calling both by the same title. Both have their wounds healed, both have a strange zeal for life, both may be confused, and both can have interactions with ghosts or spirits. The most common types of Promethean for *Forsaken by Rome* are Extempore or Ulgan, though others are not impossible. Galateids in particular are likely within Rome and Greece, while Osirans could have traveled from the east, and Amirani **(p. 98)** are found wherever battlegrounds and spiritual epiphanies are common. The Torn are the most common type of Bound *immortui* found in the Germanic Wars, followed by the Lost.

The land of Egypt is not far at all from Rome; it is a Roman protectorate, and its queen, Cleopatra, was Julius Caesar's lover and allegedly the mother of his illegitimate child, Caesarion. Travel is simple and while Romans view it as a decadent, worthless culture, they are seduced by it nonetheless. **Mummies** who traveled to Rome would find a welcome, however lukewarm in some corners and, depending on how kind they were to the poor or how much money they lent, they could in short order have a gang to fight for them and no shortage of young, penniless men who owed them favors, money, or both.

In violent times such as the early Empire, deaths were commonplace. It was still technically illegal for one Roman citizen to kill another, though exceptions were made in the case of the state ordering executions and fathers having the right to kill members of their households, at least until they reached their majority and were citizens in their own rights, assuming they were male and not slaves. While **hunters** as they're known in the modern day do not yet exist, the Termini Caeli does its best to protect Romans against the strange creatures of the dark, but it's a dangerous game they play, and the odds are not in their favor.

The spiritual auguries in Rome are truer than they would otherwise be, and the rites and observances of the city and empire work like a well-oiled machine to keep the whole organization running in sync with itself, no matter how far from Rome you actually are. To **demons**, who can see the cogs and wheels beneath the surface, this is hardly surprising. While Rome is a huge city for the time, providing myriad hiding places and opportunities, the rumor is that Carthage, or what's left of it, holds the secret to Hell on Earth — the secret that had to be destroyed at all costs. *Carthago delenda est,* indeed.

The Roman Emperors are beast enough for Rome, as the rest of the Julian line will prove. Being more powerful, more charismatic, or more dangerous than the Emperor is likely to get you sent into exile, if not killed. More than one **Beast** has learned this the hard way, spilling their blood on the stones of the Forum. Most Beasts give the city itself a wide berth, preferring to set up isolated Lairs that have chambers near roads and rivers, the better to find their prey and yet not be found themselves.

for usefulness. It twisted their Essence to serve its needs and abandoned those too weak to be of use, while installing those it favored into positions of influence and power. When the Romans reformed the legions under *Aquilae*, *Shar-Z'ghub* saw its chance to expand its appetite across the world with the march of its armies. All it needed were the perfect servants to capture the hearts of humans and channel the Essence of conquest back to the still-trapped *idigam*.

Shar-Z'ghub's Intentions

Shar-Z'ghub seeks to twist and consume the essential qualities of everything within its domain. Like a cancer destroying

from within, *Shar-Z'ghub*'s nature is to feed and expand, lest it be forced to consume itself. *Shar-Z'ghub* already endured millennia of self-consumption in its rock prison, and the *idigam* has no desire to experience that again.

After perverting the spiritual population to its will, *Shar-Z'ghub* turns its attention to the humans. Its alterations are subtle enough that they go unnoticed by the Uratha. This lack of attention is aided by *Shar-Z'ghub*'s expansionist designs being aligned with Roman interests. The Roman people become more interested in exerting their interests over others, to control and command.

Once *Shar-Z'ghub* has claimed enough humans to anchor itself to the physical world outside its rock, it moves on to subverting the Wolf-Blooded and most other supernatural creatures. It avoids coming too close to actual werewolves; its last memories of the Uratha are of *Urfarah* and the First Pack; it doesn't realise that current shapeshifters are a far cry from the Pangaean apex predators. When the environment is shaped to its satisfaction, *Shar-Z'ghub* will strike at its greatest prey, but this is likely far in the future, and *Shar-Z'ghub* is a patient ambush hunter.

The Army Advances

The advancing legions bring the confusion of the cities to the wilderness' natural order. The Roman occupation that enforced peace and a measure of stability on the human world sows chaos and unrest through the *Hisil*. Spirits leech Essence from the inevitable changes the legions bring. Spirits of violence and pain mingle among those of joy and elation. In the Shadow where the legions march and camp, spirits of mud, steel, and fire displace the indigenous *umia* of tree, grass, and animals. On the battlefields, spirits of fear, pain, and death devour everything before them in their own orgy of violence, aping the humans as these spirits feast on the Essence spreading across the Gauntlet.

The turmoil in the Shadow isn't just limited to spiritual displacement. *Magath* appear frequently, as the spirits' excitement and their predatory natures overwhelm their normal instincts. They devour any sources of Essence they find — including spiritual competitors, regardless of compatibility of *umia*. Those individuals familiar with Rome and blessed with the gifts to see into the spirit world (or Twilight) know that the regional *Hisil's* desecration mirrors the spawning of new spirits in the capital, as they devour incorrect prey.

The *Urdeshga* view the strange creations with an intrigued patience: as an important and unavoidable byproduct of such a glorious nation. The *Farsil Luhal* watch to see if the *magath* are a new and stable adaptation of the spirit world, and are particularly intrigued by how the spirits adapt to technological innovation and urbanization. The Ivory Claws see the spirits as the pure products of Rome and don't regard them as hybrids. Each is as it is meant to be. The Pure's powerful and alien spirit patrons appear to be bemused by the new spirits, and this endorsement is sufficient for most *Tzuumfin*.

Aquilae

The *Aquilae* accompany their legions wherever they go. In the physical world, these representations of eagles are army standards: a focal point around which soldiers can rally. The Saturi and Marisi instilled the importance of the symbol to their forces, and each legion idolized its *Aquila* to the point of worship. Losing an *Aquila* was an ill omen at the very least. The legions fought with unmatched vigor to protect the standard or recover it if lost.

The *Aquilae* were more than just physical symbols. Each eagle standard was represented spiritually by a *magath Urnzudh*. These wolf-eagles of storm and lightning fight amongst themselves to become *Aquila*. The *Urnzudh* are held in high esteem by Roman Uratha. Each individual uniquely combines aspects of eagle and wolf. One may be wholly wolf with a pair of eagle's wings, while another appears as an eagle with a set of snapping wolf jaws. Others were even stranger combinations, but all were favored representatives of the *Magna Mater*.

The *Urnzudh* acted according to the Roman spirit's will. Each competed for position and power to be installed as the *Aquila* when a new legion was formed. By tying its fate to that of the legion, it guaranteed itself power and prestige for so long as the legion conquered and endured. The *Urnzudh* don't know the change each *Aquila* undergoes once selected for service. They don't know of the corruption of *Magna Mater*, and the threat she poses to the Empire and the entire world.

Wolf-Brothers

Where the Uratha go, the *Uralath* are never far behind, but right now these lupine spirits are worried. The tribes war with each other in ways never before experienced. The Firstborn and *Uralath* understand the ever-seething anger between the Forsaken and Pure. As far as the Uratha can tell, their patrons endorse the creed and similarly view their cousins as misguided foes. What their singular natures can't understand is the human capacity to put aside instinct and forge alliances with those normally called enemies. The union of Iron Masters and Ivory Claws against the world threatens the balance between tribes, and could conceivably result in the destruction of one or more tribes — and the death of their patron.

The Firstborn haven't contemplated such destruction since the death of *Urfarah* and the fall of Pangaea, and as much as these creatures are capable of it, they are scared. The Firstborn struggle with what to do about the threat; they don't meet and discuss issues or work to come to a consensus on events, but they feel each other's fear through ancient bonds still tying them to the undying conceptual parts of Father Wolf's spirit. Even *Sagrim-Ur* and *Hathis-Ur* share this concern. Although they benefit from their tribes' strength and increase their influence and standing among their peers, they understand that their natures form only part of the hunt; the world needs other aspects to protect it as well, now that *Urfarah* is no more.

The Firstborn also know the rise and fall of ages. Several believe that the rise of this empire is merely a speck in the vicissitudes of human endeavor. To them, Rome is of no more worth than the passing of any other kingdom, and the imbalance will correct itself in time.

For now, the *Uralath* exist alongside their werewolf half-siblings, as they have since before the Uratha can remember. They hunt with like-minded packs, impart Gifts to the deserving, and fight alongside them in the hunt. Their Firstborn masters instill an additional purpose in these spirits: They function as watchers for their patrons, reporting what they see through alien channels unknown to the half-flesh Uratha. They stand ever ready to send a howl of alarm through the *Hisil* should it be needed.

Packs of *Uralath* serving different Firstborn hunt the Shadow near both sides of the human conflict. Uratha recognize differences between the Wolf-Brothers; learned werewolves know that the servants of the enemy move among them. Allied *Uralath* can barely be drawn in on the issue and refuse to act against these spirits on the Uratha's behalf, but neither do they stop the werewolves hunting the wolf-spirits themselves. Wolf-Brothers refuse to fight the werewolves unless cornered. They will flee an area, only to return when the Uratha have calmed or lost interest. Most Uratha packs have grown accustomed to the presence of the foreign *Uralath* and now ignore them. This could be their downfall if the Firstborn howl a call to arms; even Wolf-Brothers of the same tribe as the targeted Uratha will turn on their physical cousins and kill or be killed.

Legion of the Damned

The spirits of the living world weren't the only peril brought by the Romans. Every battle carried the inevitability of violent death; the ghosts of the unburied and unfulfilled linger in Twilight, unwillingly fettered to their murderers. These *lemurs*, as the Romans know them, are vengeful shades, hungry for the blood of the living or, more specifically, the suffering and death of their killers. The needs of the battlefield afford little time to observe the proper funeral rites. The luckiest dead may receive a hasty burial, but few note their name or remember them beyond the next battle.

Most *lemurs* follow the legions blindly, lacking the spiritual strength and self-awareness to retain independent thought. Those with a stronger sense of identity watch their killers with obsessive hatred. They yearn to strike down the living with insubstantial weapons, but instead replay the moment of their death each night. The strongest — those of steel will, determined bloody-mindedness, or years of experience — break free of their shackles and plot to take control of the shadow legion.





BATTLE FOR CONTROL

Among the legions' specialists, the *haruspex* (soothsayers) read the tides of fate. They predict the best places to camp, the most auspicious times to engage in battle, and the routes that would be swiftest and trouble free. Though the legions have their share of charlatans, truly gifted individuals know of the dead army following the living. They also sense the powerful ghosts working to rally weaker shades to their banner.

The dead don't only consist of the remnants of simple warriors and soldiers. The legions slaughtered many warchiefs, tribal heroes, and officers. They watch their murderers with seething hatred and work to unite their fellow ghosts against the Romans. The ghostly commanders manage to build sufficient force to occasionally haunt the legionaries with translucent apparitions, or to confuse and irritate the soldiers with minor acts of moved, lost, or damaged equipment. Their own power wasn't sufficient to form a physical threat to the living.

The *haruspex* inform their commanders, who are simultaneously terrified and intrigued. They see the unholy potential of harnessing already-dead troops against the enemies of Rome. They also feel dread at the ghosts of their slaughtered enemies rising up and turning on the legions.

THE WALKING DEAD

Army campaigns also attract — or create — other unquiet dead. In Rome, the city-dwelling vampires are mostly immune to the war in the regions; apart from providing money and resources to ensure it stays far from the capital. These vampires can't help but encounter the Uratha of Rome in powerful social circles, which has seen limited clashes between packs and coteries, but nothing that would force tribes, clans or covenants to take united action. Both sides understand the need to progress their schemes and crush individual opposition as needed. This suits everyone; both werewolves and vampires are prepared to police their own rather than risk nightly war against powerful supernatural foes.

The more feral vampires shadowing the legions have developed a somewhat symbiotic relationship with the army and werewolves. Uratha senses are difficult to fool, and the werewolves know the predators stalk the night. As long as the vampires limit their predations and their feeding doesn't weaken the legions, the (mostly Iron Masters) Uratha turn a blind eye. In return, the vampires pass on whispers and snippets of information on where the enemy is weakest, and give advice on how to best prosecute the war. The bloodshed of the injured and dying makes easy meals for the night dwellers, whose interests for the moment are best served by keeping the legions strong.

Vampires aren't the only people to rise from the grave. In the wake of war's chaos, sometimes the dead walk again. These *immortui*, as the Romans call them, return from death's cold grasp. They stand from where they fell on the battlefield, clawing their way free of the many rotting corpses or digging out from shallow graves. Each *immortui*'s wounds are healed, and even in their confusion they have an unnatural zeal for their regained life.

The legionaries whisper that the *immortui* return tolife is a curse, not a blessing. The *immortui* are forced back into their flesh by the crush of so many ghosts haunting the sites of war, the restless souls crying out for vengeance they can never have. The *immortui* are champions of these dead, returned to appease the ghosts and finish whatever they've left undone. These battlefield undead can't help but hear the constant demands of the dead, and their curse cannot be lifted until every spirit is appeased.

Campfire tales say an *immortui* can't be killed, and he will rise again if struck down, more powerful and angrier than before. Few *immortui* can withstand the constant demands of their intangible comrades. Most flee from the legions and want nothing more than to be away from any place where the dead linger. Unfortunately for these cursed souls, the dead always seem to be able to find them to demand their service.

GERMANIA

Though the legions march closer every day, the wilds of Magna Germania are a far cry from Rome. The blood of valiant, defiant Germani stains the borders to the south and west of the Rhine River. Roman blood spills just as easily once across the waterway.

The tribal Germani don't stand alone against the Romans — the land, water, and skies seem to unite to repel the invaders. Harsh, freezing winters chill the ill-prepared legionaries, turning swiftly to burning summers that bake the armored Romans and blister their exposed skin. The citizens of Rome hear tales of the inhospitable nature of the Germani wilderness and thank their house gods that unlike legionaries, they never have to experience it for themselves.

Beyond the Rhine, impenetrable forest dares invaders to enter. Instead, the legions make camp in hardened forts on the western and southern riverbanks. Their task is to repel Germani tribes from reclaiming Roman territory. Tribal warriors make many attempts to destroy the Romans in brutal clashes. A new class of Rhine spirit spawns in the conflict, reflecting icy, watery death. These spirits grow fat on the dying struggles of both Roman and Germani.

Eventually the legions do cross into Magna Germania, facing increasing calamity as they push towards Teutoburg Forest. Here they experience bloody, demoralizing defeat at the hands of tribes loosely united under the Roman hostage and traitor, Arminius.

THE RIVER'S CURSE

Throughout the struggles of the Germanic wars, few regional features had as great an impact as the Rhine River (known as Rhenus to the Romans). This broad waterway marked what would become the northeastern limit of Roman expansion. No matter what tactics or strategies the invaders used, they all seemed doomed once across the river. Maneuvers used to devastating effect on the western riverbank couldn't come together on the opposite shore. The Legions were at a loss to explain the Rhine's curse, but the Ithaeur of the Iron Masters eventually worked out the cause.

FATAL ALLIES

The Romans occasionally used the Damned Legions for psychological warfare — terrifying their enemies with ghostly figures fading in and out of Twilight. Even with the covert help of *Urdeshga*, the shades were never powerful enough to cross into the material world and supplement the strength of living soldiers. Nor did the dead Germani commanders prove strong enough to marshal their fellows and turn against their hated killers.

This changed as the Germani Uratha united against the Roman tribes. Once the Bone Shadows joined the fight with a united front, their Gifts, rites, and other secrets empowered the ghosts beyond anything the legions expected. The shades dragged hundreds of screaming Romans to their deaths, severing their anchors to the world and releasing them to whatever comes next.

If the Bone Shadows can be neutralized, or the Roman Uratha discover their own power to command the dead, these battles could end very differently. The elimination of the damned, and the breaking of the Rhine's curse, could see the Roman forces move across the river and conquer the troublesome Germani regions.

As the Legions pushed harder into Germani territories, the Uratha tribes grew desperate. They witnessed the fall of their fellows — both in tribe and lodge — and absorbed those few refugees who fled slaughter and valued survival over prideful final stands. The Bone Shadows of the *Namla Umunamush*, the Lodge of Final Breath, took action on behalf of all Germani Uratha. They called forth all members and their totem — *Larhndur*, the half-born cub — to enact a great rite along the shores of the Rhine, to bring forth a barrier preventing the invaders from crossing the river, thereby protecting their people from Roman aggression.

By sunrise the next morning, every member of the lodge was dead. Forces and events unknown overwhelmed the Uratha and twisted the rite. A half-formed curse settled over the watercourse, but it didn't just foul Roman attempts to conquer the rest of Germania, it confounded all attempts from the Germani people and Uratha to reclaim the lands they'd lost.

The river remained fresh and untainted as a source of drinking water and food, or a means of travel up and down the region, but anyone from one shore who crossed to the other side found fate twisted against him. Close to the shores, this effect was so subtle as to be unnoticeable. The further an individual (or army) traveled from the river, the more it seemed that success slipped through the trespasser's grasp, as even simple tasks became impossible to achieve.

The River's Curse Effect: Characters crossing the Rhine immediately suffer the Spooked Condition. One days' march beyond the river they gain the Shaken Condition, and after three days' march they gain the Demoralized Condition. (The Spooked and Shaken Conditions are on p. 310 of **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, whereas Demoralized is on p. 307.) The Conditions resolve at the same rate by returning to the Rhine — remove the Demoralized Condition within three days' march of the Rhine, and the Shaken Condition within one days' march. Characters remove the Spooked Condition when they return to their usual side of the river.

THE LORELEI AND THE RHINE

What the Lodge of Final Breath didn't consider was the impact its changes would have on the spirits of the river. The *umia* of the Rhine and its shores formed a thriving spiritual ecology before the curse, surviving and preying on each other according to the dictates of the seasons and their own predatory natures. The spirits had little interest in the comings and goings of humans except as sources of essence and the occasional predation of settlements near the river, or hunters coming too close to the waters.

The lodge's failure threw the spirits into turmoil. Whereas before they were free to move as they desired, in the *Hisil* an impenetrable ribbon of nothingness had appeared, slicing through the exact center of the waterway. No spirit could pass this barrier — even Uratha and other visitors to the Shadow were blocked. The only way to cross the river was to cross the gauntlet into the physical world, thereby invoking the curse. Very quickly, the river that had been neutral towards humanity became a dangerous zone of spiritual predation. Spirits rode or claimed hapless villagers from nearby settlements. Once-normal villages became home to strange, spirit-ridden people, watching outsiders with wary eyes, ever paranoid that werewolves will return to inflict more suffering on the Rhine's brood.

The soldiers from units encamped too close to the river for the dependable water supply were mostly resistant to this possession. The *Aquila* and *lares* — spiritual protectors that followed them from Rome —kept the unsettled *ilthum* of the Rhine at bay.

The most powerful of the water spirits are the *Lun'sha*, whom the humans call Lorelei. This brood of wickedly playful sirens prowls the river, using their songs and illusions to draw hapless victims into the water. Before the Romans arrived, these spirits were confined to the *Hisil* and sang across the Gauntlet. As the conflict crossed the Rhine, they developed a hunger for cold, waterlogged flesh and a talent for slipping from the Shadow to the physical world. Their ease of movement and plentiful food supplies gave the *Lun'sha* power to displace the previous Rhine broodlords and force the other *ilthum* to pledge their allegiance.

The only river spirit the *Lun'sha* still bow to is the majestic *Dihar* of the Rhine itself, as this powerful entity gains



WHAT HAPPENED TO THE LODGE?

The demise of the *Namla Umunamush* is a mystery for the Storyteller to answer according to the needs of her chronicle. Some groups may just accept the cursed barrier as a fact of life. Others may try to break the curse, to either help the Romans finally conquer the rest of Germania, or for the Germani to push the Romans back and reclaim territory. The Germani could possibly seek conquest of their own, all the way to Rome.

sustenance and strength from everything involving the river. Even combined, the Lorelei have failed to displace or devour the Rhine spirit, and it has consumed many of their number to prove its supremacy. For now, the Rhine gives the *Lun'sha* near complete autonomy as long as they obey its rare commands, and the Lorelei plot to find the Rhine's bane, or recruit allies who can fatally weaken or destroy the spirit.

THE FORESTS

The thick, foreboding forests to the east of the Rhine are deadly to solitary explorers and only marginally safer for those who travel with armies. The forests of the expanding Roman republic were felled and cleared over 700 years, and the endless mass of thick oak, beech, and yew trees was alien to the legionaries.

Dozens of Uratha packs call these forests home, with members drawn from every tribe — including the Ivory Claws and Iron Masters. The Germani *Tzuumfin* and *Farsil Luhal* suffer suspicion and mistrust from Uratha who don't know them. Though they don't share human cultural heritage with their Roman tribemates, and are generally hostile to the legions, too many Germani werewolves are quick to judge them with animosity because of hatred towards the Romans.

Besides the Uratha, the Germanic forests are home to other great predators. Savage feral vampires lurk in the utter darkness where thick foliage blocks stars and moonlight from shining through. Tales speak of blood-drinkers who walk the daylight hours, protected from ever feeling sunlight by the impenetrable treetop canopies. Faeries skitter between shadows on the edge of vision, laughing at the human confusion and misery. Roman scouts tell of other, stranger monsters who call the forests home: beings made of metal and cogs who watch nightmarish mechanical towers that disappear when viewed directly, giants standing as tall as trees, or men with mismatched arms and legs.

Teutoburg Forest itself is the domain of three great hunters. Packs of Bone Shadows dominate the northern reaches of the forest, where human tribes drown their own kind in bogs as sacrifice to the gods. The *Hirfathra Hissu* ensure that the spirits meet the obligations of these ancient pacts. The southern territories and the thickest, deepest parts of the forest are the domains of the Predator Kings, who mercilessly hunt all non-Wolf-Blooded humans in their lands.

Wedged between the two tribal claims are the demesnes of the Fae. Though rarely seen, their presence within the shifting boundaries of their land is keenly felt. Here, senses are twisted; sounds of plots between unseen stalkers could be the rustling of leaves, or the echoing of faraway merriment and delight could be birdsong bouncing between thick tree trunks.

The humans of Teutoburg Forest live fearful lives, always wary of the rustling in the darkness and the soft footfalls that are deliberately not quite silent. When people disappear, their kin search briefly but don't hold much hope. If lucky, they find shredded, bloody remains scattered somewhere in the woods. If unlucky, they find nothing. Fear lingers with absent remains. Finding nothing means that someday the lost kin could return, forcing the village to decide how to act. Most returnees are regarded with suspicion and barely-veiled hostility, and are usually killed or driven out to meet their fate in the forest.

PLAYING THE GAME

Werewolf: The Forsaken provides an outline for using the Pure as antagonists, but *Forsaken by Rome* goes further and positions the *Anshega* as possible allies. The alliances between tribes on both the Germanic and Roman fronts even open the possibility of Forsaken and Pure existing in the same pack. This unlikely scenario is made more common with the attrition both sides face as war grinds on, and werewolves of whatever creed band together for survival against a common foe.

The rules presented here give guidance on creating Pure characters, either for packs comprised entirely of *Anshega*, or for mixed Forsaken-Pure matchups. These rules are not exhaustive, but are intended to provide sufficient detail to play the Pure alongside their Forsaken counterparts.

THE PURE MONSTER

Players should follow the character creation rules in **Werewolf: The Forsaken Second Edition** (pages 81-93), with the changes below. Steps One to Four, Seven and Afterwards: The Pack are unchanged.

STEP FIVE: ADD PURE TEMPLATE

Up to this point, the character is practically identical to a Forsaken character. The Pure template applied here is the key difference that separates *Anshega* from *Urdaga*.

AUSPICE

Unlike the Forsaken moon-slaves, the Pure have no Auspice. The luckiest *Anshega* are discovered just prior to their first change or immediately after, before Luna can lay her claim. These Pure need never feel the shame of the moon's touch. Others aren't quite as fortunate. While they have broken Luna's chains, it was not before she could brand them with

Pure Character Creation Quick Reference

STEP ONE: CONCEPT

Choose your character's concept. Determine three Aspirations.

STEP TWO: ATTRIBUTES

Prioritize categories. Spend 5/4/3 dots by category.

STEP THREE: SKILLS

Prioritize categories. Spend 11/7/4 dots by category.

STEP FOUR: SKILL SPECIALTIES

Choose three Skill Specialties.

STEP FIVE: PURE TRAITS

Choose tribe, tribe Skills, Blood, Bone, Touchstones, Gifts, rites, and Renown.

STEP SIX: MERITS

Add 10 dots of Merits. Merit dots also can be spent on extra dots of rites, or on increasing Primal Urge

STEP SEVEN: ADVANTAGES

Willpower is equal to Resolve + Composure. Harmony is 7. Size is 5. Health is Size + Stamina. Speed is Size + Strength + Dexterity. Defense is the lower of Dexterity and Wits, plus Athletics. Primal Urge is 1, plus any bought with Merits.

Pure Template

Tribe	Renown	Skills	Gifts
Fire-Touched	*Wisdom*, Cunning, Glory	Expression, Occult, Subterfuge	Elemental, Insight, Inspiration, Rage
Ivory Claws	*Purity*, Glory, Honor	Intimidation, Persuasion, Politics	Death, Dominance, Knowledge, Warding
Predator Kings	*Glory*, Purity, Wisdom	Animal Ken, Crafts, Survival	Nature, Rage, Stealth, Strength

Primal Urge

Primal Urge starts at 1 dot. Additional dots may be purchased with five Merit dots each. A character cannot start with Primal Urge higher than 3.

Gifts and Rites

Start with two Facets from Shadow Gifts from your tribe. Choose one Facet from any Shadow Gift. Choose one facet of a Wolf Gift. You cannot choose a Facet in which your character has no dots of Renown.

Experience Costs

Trait	Experience
Attribute	4
Skill	2
Merit	1
Affinity Gift	3
Non-Affinity Gift	5
Additional Facet	2
Wolf Gift Facet	1
Renown	3
Rites	1
Primal Urge	5



Auspice, which must be carefully, ritualistically — and excruciatingly — carved from the flesh and souls of these Uratha.

Tribe

Lacking an Auspice, tribe becomes so much more for Pure. From a character creation standpoint, the *Anshega*'s tribe offers a free dot in two Skills, and two starting Renown dots.

Each tribe has an associated primary Renown that every member must take. Each character also receives a second dot that can be applied to the tribe's primary or secondary Renown.

Fire-Touched are inspired zealots, filled with mad creativity, fervor, and faith. They serve as prophets and priests for the Shadow, and invent new ways for creatures of the *Hisil* to access the physical world. Their Gifts are Elemental, Insight, Inspiration, and Rage. Their primary Renown is *Wisdom*, their secondary Renowns are *Cunning* and *Glory*. Their skills are Expression, Occult, and Subterfuge.

Ivory Claws are obsessed with purity of lineage. They believe that *Urfarah*'s heritage is passed on in the blood, and through purity they may rebuild Pangaea. They move among the wealthy and powerful. Their Gifts are Death, Dominance, Knowledge, and Warding. Their primary Renown is *Purity*, their secondary Renowns are *Honor* and *Glory*. Their skills are Intimidation, Persuasion, and Politics.

Predator Kings are bestial savagery and strength personified. They care only for the Hunt and view humanity as an affront to the once-and-future paradise of Pangaea. They discard human trappings and embrace the predator within. Their Gifts are Nature, Rage, Stealth, and Strength. Their primary Renown is *Glory*, their secondary Renowns are *Purity* and *Wisdom*. Their skills are Animal Ken, Crafts, and Survival.

Renown

By this stage, Pure characters have two dots of Renown from their tribe. Choose another dot in a Renown of your choice, but note that you cannot take a third dot in a single Renown at this point.

Blood & Bone

Like all Uratha, your character possesses traits called Blood and Bone. Select one of each as per standard character creation rules (p. 83).

Touchstones

Every Uratha possesses two Touchstones, including the Pure. Select these as per standard character creation rules (p. 83).

Gifts and Rites

Just as they do for the Forsaken, the spirits give Gifts to the Pure. Your character receives two Facets from Shadow Gifts available to her tribe. She also gains a Facet from any Gift in which she has the appropriate Renown, and a Facet from one Wolf Gift. Your character can't take a Facet of a Gift in which she has no dots of Renown. Note that Pure characters do not gain (and cannot select) Moon Gifts.

Your character also begins play with two dots in rites, as per p. 83.

Step Six: Add Merits

Your Pure character receives 10 dots of Merits. She can choose from any of the General Werewolf Merits (starting on p. 105) that don't require a Forsaken tribe as a prerequisite, or from the general Merits starting on p. 110.

Pure characters can also use starting Merit dots to raise Primal Urge, at a cost of five Merit dots per dot of Primal Urge. You can also trade up to five starting Merit dots for extra dots of rites, with one dot of rites costing one Merit dot.

Additionally, Pure characters receive two dots of Totem and the Language (First Tongue) Merit.

Sacred Prey and the Hunt

The Pure tribes each have their sacred prey, much like the Forsaken. The Pure have broad definitions for their sacred prey, and the *Anshega* themselves are usually the ones who decide if prey meets the criteria. Players are encouraged to use this to their Pure characters' advantage, but should be aware that trying to name someone who clearly doesn't fall under the sacred prey definition will cause the rite to automatically fail. A failed ritemaster's tribe is likely to view her foolishness as being disrespectful to the tribe, and may decide to include her in their list of sacred prey.

The Fire-Touched hunt those who dishonor and disrespect the Shadow. Anyone who harms or tyrannizes a spirit without provocation, or who attempts to seal away the Hisil, such as by thickening the Gauntlet or closing a locus, gains the zealous hatred of the *Izidakh*. This may include unwitting humans who disrespect icons or idols representing spirits. Disrespect to Luna and her servants doesn't earn the Fire-Touched's enmity, of course.

The Ivory Claws hunt those who dishonor their lineage. Those who break family traditions, or who defy their elders without pure reason, are targets of the *Tzuumfin*. This runs both ways. The Ivory Claws won't tolerate parents who weaken the bloodline by blocking strong mates for their offspring, or who heap scorn and degradation on their children and manipulate them into failing their lineage. The *Tzuumfin* consider all Forsaken to have dishonored their obligations to Urfarah, and are all valid prey for their hunts.

The Predator Kings hunt those who fail to honor the hunt. Humans who don't hunt at least once per season, or those who try to end hunting, are the Predator Kings' prey, as are werewolves who break off the Sacred Hunt. The *Ninna Farakh* don't automatically target those who kill for sport instead of sustenance, but there must be purpose behind a hunt for it to have honor. Feeding, honing or teaching skills, or culling an overgrown population are valid reasons. Killing for simple fun is not. The Predator Kings sometimes forgive questionable hunts that use primitive or natural weaponry, but disrespectful hunts conducted with modern, high-powered weapons are never tolerated.

The Siskur-Dah

The *Siskur-Dah* Condition presented here supplements that in **Werewolf: The Forsaken Second Edition** (p. 310). It lists the effects of the Condition on characters when the rite is led by a member of a Pure tribe.

Siskur-Dah (Persistent)

Your character is on the *Siskur-Dah*, the Sacred Hunt. She gains a specific benefit depending on the ritemaster's tribe.

The Fire-Touched Sacred Hunt grants your character increased influence over creatures of the *Hisil*. Spirits gain a bonus equal to the Uratha's effective spirit Rank whenever they follow the werewolf's direct instructions, or when they target the prey in combat or with their powers.

The Ivory Claws Sacred Hunt grants your character the ability to sense the familial or community relationships anyone he encounters has with his prey. The direct blood relations of the prey have difficulty protecting the prey from the Uratha. Any attempts to block or hinder the werewolf, or to refuse to provide information, suffer a penalty equal to the Uratha's Primal Urge.

The Predator Kings Sacred Hunt grants your character Influence over the natural world equal to her effective spirit Rank. She may twist and control animals and plants to aid the hunt. The Uratha spends Essence to use Influence Effects as if she were a spirit **(Werewolf: The Forsaken**, p. 186–187), rolling Strength + Primal Urge in place of Power + Finesse.

Possible Sources: The Sacred Hunt rite, or being personally blessed by a Firstborn.

Resolution: The prey is brought down (a kill is not necessary) or the pack breaks off the *Siskur-Dah* by taking any significant actions towards ends other than the hunt.

Beat: Your character achieves an exceptional success on an action involving the prey.

Running With the Legions

The legions are the mailed fist of an empire the likes of which the world has never seen — an empire that grows with every battle, every new road and every toppled altar. Both the Ivory Claws and the Iron Masters lurk among them, but for very different reasons.

Iron Masters

The Wardens hunt on the empire's frontiers. Many hail from plebeian stock, and the Saturi regard even highborn Marisi as inferiors. With the capital a hotbed of political intrigue — and firmly in the grip of their treacherous rivals — many Marisi leave in search of greener pastures.

Outsiders, including other Iron Masters, accuse the Marisi of forsaking their territory and their Ban. Certainly, many packs travel nomadically, only staying in one place long enough to aid in a campaign or quell an insurrection. But what outsiders fail to understand (according to Marisi Elodoth rhetoricians) is that *all of Rome is their territory*. If you truly honor your territory in all things, they say, you will go wherever the Great Mother needs you.

Playing Marisi

You are the Venator, scouting ahead of the caravan. You are the Speculator, a spymaster and assassin. You are the heart of the legion, binding brothers together in rituals of mud and sweat.

In the eyes of many, the Marisi are the legion. Weapons are sharper in their presence, torches burn brighter, and the Marisian Rites free the herd from the curse of Lunacy. Still, they must keep a safe distance from their human brothers, for the sake of Harmony as much as safety. The *Farsil Luhal* know how easy it is to tip too close to the Flesh, as well as the danger it invites when you live shoulder to shoulder with the herd.

Common Traits: Many Marisi favor Skills and Merits tied to their military service — physical Merits and Fighting Styles, Status (Legion), and Inspiring are very common. A number of Marisi rise to become officers, too, and leverage their military success into Resources, Allies, and Contacts.

Ivory Claws

The hidden hand of the Ivory Claws is at work in every legion, if their propaganda is to be believed. Though such widespread influence is impossible to prove, the fact remains that only a highborn patrician is allowed to rise to a leadership position within a legion — and Rome's noble families are riddled with the Saturi. They could have their claws in anyone.

Luckily for their enemies, many *Tzuumfin* are too busy cultivating political influence and serving family interests in Rome to exert much power abroad. Those that do, however — those young and eager to prove themselves, or those especially zealous — are a sight to behold. Whether whispering in generals' ears or butchering the impure on the front lines, they always, always lead.

Playing Saturi

You are the might and pride of Rome, bringing man and god alike to heel. You lead the rites of blood and pain as Centurion, Standard Bearer, and — to all who disobey your command — Tribune and Interfector.

If the Marisi are the legions' heart, the Saturi are its cold, hard will. As the "true" descendants of Romulus, only they have the right and the wisdom to guide the empire's armies. The Purest of the Pure bear the highest calling - and to accompany it, a crushing sense of responsibility and obligation. Every Saturi — especially an Ivory Claw — is expected to be courageous, honorable, and successful in all things.

This attitude pleases the *Magna Mater*. Many Saturi aspire to become Standard Bearers, and those that attain the honor enjoy an enviable closeness with their Totem. Sometimes, on a night of the new moon, the wolf-eagles summon them to a secret audience. If they return, they return changed.

Common Traits: A Saturi without Status, Allies, and Resources is a Saturi that shames their family. They strive to excel with all the tools of leadership, both in word (Expression and Politics) and deed (Weaponry and Intimidation).

Outsiders

Not all who hunt for Rome are Roman. The *Auxilia* transforms Rome's vanquished enemies into loyal soldiers, and both



human and Uratha flock to it. Some packs join out of desperation, while others chase political power or follow human allies.

While human foederati may dream of one day attaining Roman citizenship, their Uratha comrades do not. The *Urdeshga* call them weak-blooded and barbarian — inferior, if they could defeat them — and will *never* accept them. For them, keeping their territory and their life is enough.

Playing Foederati

You are bowed, but you are not broken. You are foederatus, serving in the Auxilia, *the Cavalry, or alongside the poor, doomed boys on the front lines. You serve — whether for gold, blood, or merely for survival — but you will never be Roman.*

Foederati hail from all over the known world and serve with every legion. Members of all tribes turn foederatus, but a number of Blood Talons accept with surprising eagerness. Do the Destroyers see in them a way to hunt new and glorious foes...or to learn their masters' weaknesses?

Common Traits: All foederati are warriors and many rely on physical Skills and Merits to survive a life of endless war. Still, others make themselves useful by embracing what the *Urdeshga* lack, such as Gifts of Rage, Inspiration, and Death, or by mastering rare and powerful rites.

Roman Rites

The Romans treat religion with characteristic pragmatism. Deities control almost every aspect of life, and correctly-applied observances keep them content. Romans will adopt new gods and cults without question if they see a benefit in doing so.

The *Evocatio* is the legions' central rite. The idols and shrines of defeated enemies are brought to the legion's own shrine and ritually destroyed. Their Essence feeds the *Aquilae* — and through them the *Magna Mater*.

The *Rite of Shackled Lightning* is the legions' other major observance. It is also a potent weapon, transforming a collection of troops into an unshakeable, irresistible war-machine. However, its use risks releasing an uncontrollable rage within human and Uratha alike.

New Pack Rite — Shackled Lightning (• •)

Adapted from the ancient Teresh Rite, the ritemaster summons *Sangghullu* to contain his fury. These ethereal lightning spirits manifest around the legion's *Aquila*.

Symbols: *Aquilae*, Mars, thunder, spears

Sample Rite: On the night before a battle, Marisi centurions anoint their faces in wolf-fat and lead their troops in a chant to Mars and their *Aquila*. As the soldiers beat their spears on their shields they are filled with supernatural calm and unshakable will. (Presence + Occult)

Cost: 1 Essence per 10 warded men.

Action: Extended (10 successes; one roll per five minutes)

Success: The ritemaster is unable to enter Rage or spend Essence. While they remain silent and work together, all troops gain the Indomitable Merit. When he releases the *Sangghallu*, the troops suffer the Berserk Condition (**Werewolf: The Forsaken Second Edition** p. 306), and the ritemaster immediately enters *Basu-Im*.

Dea Lupa

Though citizenship is a right all Romans share, voting and public office are strictly men-only affairs. This is not to say that Roman women don't have power, however — just that they wield it discreetly. Indeed, Roman historians tell of many influential women (of prominent patrician families, of course) but they are rarely kind in their depictions.

The Uratha are rarely content to be ruled by the herd's social conventions, and a surprising number of Saturi and Marisi families are ruled by proud, powerful matriarchs. Finding power difficult to wield in the hidebound, male-centric cities, many choose to rule over farms, villas, and secluded temples, or serve the legions as *sybilae*.

The Free Tribes

To the Roman mind, Germania Magna is at the very edge of the world, and it shows in its people. Scattered tribes — some numbering in the thousands, some only in the dozens — roam the land like animals. Their communal homes are no more than tents and huts. All that is changing, however. Roman influence creeps inexorably from the west, and Germanic attitudes toward that fact are (unsurprisingly) divided. For every tribe that calls for war, another is swayed by the promise of roads, wealth, and military support.

The Chatti dwell at the mouth of the Rhine and have borne the brunt of Roman aggression for years. Still, they are proud and strong, and eager to rally an alliance.

The Cherusci are essentially a vassal state. Rome has propped up Segestes as their chieftain for years, but now his power wanes. His son-in-law is Arminius, the would-be revolutionary, whose popularity grows by the day.

The Chauci have given many of their sons to the Auxilia and have been handsomely rewarded. Rich in gold, silver, and well-forged iron, the coastal tribe could be a major asset to Arminius' rebellion...or a tempting target to plunder.

The **Marsi**, **Sicambri** and **Bructeri** are some of the many tribes forced into conflict with each other. The Marsi once claimed the area around the Rhine, but fled the war-torn frontier — right into their neighbor's territories.

The Night-Tribes

The Herd Must Not Know. Elsewhere in the world, perhaps, Uratha can take this oath with confidence. But among the closely-knit Germani, the truth is impossible to hide. The herd know and they fear. Marsi mothers smear burnt wolfsbane on their children's heads when they're born, praying that it will ward away the curse that plagues them. The Bructeri check all whom they cross for bite or blemish.

Chatti chieftains honor the beasts among them with offerings of meat and drink.

Others try to entreat with the so-called "Night-tribes." They offer service — even worship — in exchange for aid. While many help, others refuse; they remember being cast into the night after their First Change. To them, the herd's squabbles are their own.

WAGING WAR

Long-term exposure to Lunacy damages even the strongest minds. The ever-present threat of Kuruth turns comrades into prey without warning. In all but the most desperate of circumstances, the Uratha hunt alone.

The legions have conquered this hurdle, to a degree. With the Marisian Rites, human and Uratha march side by side without fearing murder and madness. There is still danger, but Rome's armies refuse to shrink in fear. The Germani do not have this luxury, but desperate times make for dangerous bedfellows.

ON THE FRONT LINES

The front lines are deadly, even for werewolves. A sword swung in the depths of Lunacy is just as deadly, and fighting in the open only magnifies the risk. Kuruth is no guarantee of victory, either — many have ended a glorious rampage by collapsing, exhausted, at an enemy's feet.

Even more terrifying is the *Hisil* — here, Uratha dodge feeding frenzies and colossal war-spirits in search of their enemies' spirit allies. Roman ritemasters target rival Totems, binding them in ephemeral chains. When the battle is won, they feed them to their *Aquilae* in bloody *Evocatio*.

ROMAN MANEUVERS

The legions train extensively to dominate the battlefield. Each battle formation is designed for a specific purpose. Together they are a toolkit for victory.

TESTUDO FORMATE

All legionaries overlap and raise their shields. Each soldier gains +2 Defense but may not attack. Speed is reduced by half.

CIRINGITE FRONTEM

Trained to hold position, a legionary rebuffs enemy attacks. The player rolls Strength + Weaponry + 2 against each attacker in a turn. Success applies the Knocked Down Tilt (**Werewolf: The Forsaken** p.313). The character loses his Defense when performing this maneuver.

CUNEUM FORMATE

This fast-moving wedge breaks enemy lines. The character's attacks suffer a -2 penalty, but damage adds +2L. In addition, the enemy suffers the Cowed Condition (**Werewolf: The Forsaken** p.307) against every soldier in the formation until resolved.

NEW WEAPONS

Type	Damage	Initiative	Strength	Size	Notes
Gladius	+2	-2	1	2	
Pilum	+2	-2	2	4	Reach, Throw
Scutum	+1	-4	3	4	Concealed
Speri (Spear)	+2	-2	2	4	Reach, Throw, Two-handed
Swerdam (Sword)	+3	-3	2	3	

Concealed: If not used to attack the shield adds its Size to the bearer's Defense; ranged attacks use its Size as a concealment modifier.
Reach: Grants +1 Defense against opponents using weapons of smaller Size (including unarmed attacks).
Two-Handed: This weapon requires two hands. It can be used one-handed, but doing so increases the Strength requirement by 1.
Throw: The weapon can be used as a projectile with a medium range of (the thrower's Strength) multiplied by five.

NEW ARMOR

Type	Rating	Strength	Defense	Speed	Coverage
Lorica Segmentata	2/2	3	-2	-3	Torso
Chainmail	3/1	3	-2	-2	Torso, arms
Leather (hard)	2/0	2	-1	0	Torso, arms

IN THE SHADOWS

The Uratha have many gifts (and Gifts) that allow them to go where others cannot. Scouting through dense, unfamiliar forests, they detect and eliminate threats away from human eyes. They slip behind enemy lines to distract or terrify their foes, or to take protected targets unawares.

Others *lead* from the shadows, terrifying fractious human allies into obeying orders, commanding broods of spirit spies and messengers, and sharing the secrets of the hunt with generals and conspirators.

MAN AGAINST WOLF

Even with Uratha allies, the bulk of Roman and Germani forces are only human. Without the heavy weaponry of future generations, their only hope for success against Uratha lies in numbers, training, and preparation.

Competent leaders provide the benefits of the Small-Unit Tactics Merit (**God-Machine Chronicle** rules update p.170) and Professional Training (Soldier) (**God-Machine Chronicle** rules update p. 163). Especially cunning tacticians distract Uratha with less-valuable troops — foederati, or those from rival tribes — then attack in force when their enemies are weakened.

Germani warlords make full use of their greater local knowledge, staging lightning-fast ambushes and hoping to kill Uratha before they have time to react. Canny Roman centurions send out their *Speculatores*, hoping to harness all the local knowledge they can; for the right price, enemy placements, important Loci, and even spirit Bans can be bought.

NEW FETISH

The Ivory Claws

The Ivory Claws were crafted from the tusks of King Pyrrhus' slain war elephants. Every Saturi family has at least one pair of these potent weapons. Each ornately engraved tusk has a war spirit *magath* bound within and fits snugly over the bearer's forearm; once affixed, the character's Brawl attacks do +2L damage. These add +1 to all Brawl dice pools for each level of Size the target is larger than the wearer.

SAMPLE CHARACTERS

Below are two soldiers that may be found on the battlefields of Germania.

SERVIUS RABIREUS

"Join the army, they said. See the world, they said."

Background: Servius was born into the stinking filth of Rome's tenements. As a child, he learned to be fast on his feet and faster with his hands. When he turned 16, he volunteered for the legions. After a year at half pay, he'd already made more money than ever before. He and his cohort have been sent to replenish the ranks of the Legio XVII at Castra Vetera on the Rhenus.

Description: A short young man with cropped dark hair and serious brown eyes, Servius laughs rarely, but genuinely. After two years in the military, he is in peak physical condition. Mentally, he fears the vast, thick forests of Germania.



By day he keeps his equipment clean; by night he huddles close to his comrades.

Storytelling Hints: Servius is disciplined and hardworking. He will not shy from performing his duty to the gods, Rome, and his legion. Privately, he trembles at the thought of being alone in this cursed, barbaric land. He prays to the gods to keep him safe every night and hold him firm in formation.

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

Skills: Crafts (Weapons) 1, Athletics (Marching) 3, Brawl 2, Weaponry (Spear) 3, Intimidation 1, Persuasion 2, Socialize 2

Merits: Allies (His Cohort) 2, Fleet of Foot 2, Strong Back, Professional Development 3, Contacts (Chatti sympathizers, Roman black marketeers)

Willpower: 5

Health: 8

Initiative: 4

Defense: 5

Speed: 10

GIFUGELD

"Tiwaz bless my swerdam, my speri make fly true, my enemies be slain, I send them all to you."

Background: Growing to manhood among the trees of the Hercynian forest was hard. As his tribe migrated from hunting ground to hunting ground, Gifugeld honored the gods and trod warily around the strange things that lurked there. Then the Romans came. They took his sister, killed his friends, and gave no respect to the inhabitants of the ancient woods. Now Erminaz will make them pay! It will be a glorious day.

Description: Gifugeld is tall and lean. Brown braids hang from a wide chin and the warrior's knot coils upon his head. Sparkling green eyes belie the violence he is capable of. His swerdam hangs over animal skins, and he carries his speri lightly, ready for attack from any quarter.

Storytelling Hints: Gifugeld is honest, pious, and open... among his tribe. To his enemies, Roman and Suebi, he's a belligerent braggart, ready to lie, steal, and kill over the smallest offenses. He is brave, but not foolhardy. Uneducated, but not stupid.

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

Skills: Crafts 2, Athletics (Climbing) 4, Brawl 2, Weaponry (Speri) 4, Survival 3, Animal Ken 1, Intimidation (Staring) 2, Persuasion 1

Merits: Allies (Suebi) 2, Indomitable, Direction Sense

Willpower: 4

Health: 8

Initiative: 5

Defense: 6

Speed: 10

INSPIRATIONS

Roman civilization has no shortage of media dedicated to it, particularly relating to the Roman war with the Germani tribes. Storytellers delving into this treasure trove are warned — this fascinating history can steal away hours and leave little time for actually playing the game.

BOOKS

Requiem for Rome. Focuses on vampires and the city, whereas *Forsaken by Rome* focuses on werewolves and the farthest borders. Regardless, the detail of the Roman civilization and history from a Chronicles of Darkness perspective is a treasure trove of ideas for this Dark Era.

Masters of Rome, by Colleen McCullough. The series examines the increasing difficulty of keeping competing interests satisfied and preserving traditional practices in a growing Republic. As Rome expands, the old ways are incapable of meeting the needs of the nation. The challenges faced here wouldn't be unfamiliar to the Roman Ivory Claws and Iron Masters.

The Godfather, by Mario Puzo (film directed by Francis Ford Coppola). Both the book and the film are excellent. This story of the machinations of a 20th century crime family may not sound directly applicable to ancient Rome, but the building and use of power — and the fear this creates in others —parallels the political existence of the Roman Uratha.

De Bello Gallico (*The Gallic Wars*), by Julius Caesar. While not speaking directly of many of the Germani tribes fought by later generals, this description of the Gauls, their culture, and their manner of fighting can add an air of authenticity to a chronicle focused on Magna Germania.

FILM AND TELEVISION

Rome. The series is set approximately 50 years before the events of *Forsaken by Rome*, but the show should be a key reference to imagining how the city and people appeared, and the kinds of interactions they could have with the characters.

Centurion (2010, dir. Neil Marshall). Set far from Rome itself in the Scottish Highlands, where the Ninth Legion fought the Picts. This film shows the conflict from both perspectives, and demonstrates the effectiveness of the Picts' use of guerrilla tactics against a foe with superior fortifications and resources; useful inspiration for a pack of Germani Uratha fighting the Roman aggressors.



Egidio sluggishly opened his eyes to a room heaped in finery. A pile of silks, taken out of the wrapping and folded, lay neatly at his feet. A crate of peppercorns, each round seed worth its weight in gold, spilled on the floor. The scent of myrrh mingled in the air with the scent of pine tar and rot. *A funeral?* his torpid mind thought. *My funeral?* Then he saw her.

He felt his blood surge within him in a moment of panic and hunger. She was kneeling next to him, unmoving. He'd been sleeping in this crate for the last eight weeks, not seen by anyone but the ghoul who had smuggled him onto the ship, or so he thought.

The woman regarded him with eyes like dull stone cabochons. Not the blank terror of a frightened doe, or the studied lack of regard that an ancilla affects when trying to intimidate someone. It wasn't the glassy-eyed enchantment of the seduced mortal, or the awe of the worshipper before his sublime darkness. No matter, he thought. He needed to feed.

"Can I have your box?" the woman said.

Egidio almost jumped. It was then that he realized how silent it was. There were no voices, no footsteps. Not even the scurrying of rats. There was only the creaking of wood, the susurrus of the ocean, and the wind flapping in the sails. He could not even hear the woman's heartbeat.

He heard the Darkness laughing. It always did, whenever he was afraid.

"No," said Egidio. He stood up. He couldn't stand straight when he was below decks but he certainly wasn't staying in that goddamned box any longer than he had to. The room was a mess. "Who are you?" he said. *Who is she?* he asked the Darkness.

The woman squirmed. She wringed her massive, blocky hands. "I don't," she said. She looked at him as if she wanted to say something, but couldn't find the words. "I'm on pilgrimage," she said, finally.

The Darkness was more forthcoming: the smell of earth, dust, and ink; a dryness in his mouth, and a taste like folded parchment under his tongue; the fleeting image of a broken chain dragging on the ground. An escaped slave, hiding in the cargo? Maybe. Then: clay smoothed over a cold corpse. He felt clay being slapped on his body, pouring into his nose and mouth, while a hellishly hot oven awaited him. It reminded him of the years he'd spent sleeping under a monastery in Konitsa, and of the agonizing days it took him to dig out of his grave with his bare hands, half-mad with hunger.

He stopped for a moment to imitate taking a deep breath.

"If you want to see the Holy Land, you're going the wrong way," he said, smiling.

"I don't," she said. "It's not." She stared at him with a desperate sort of look.

"It's not...?" he said.

"It's not," she started. "I'm not." Was the woman simple? Could she complete a sentence?

"It's all right," said Egidio. "Tell me what's happened here."

"All right," she said.



The Soulless and the Dead

(1346 – 1353)

O happy posterity, who will not experience such abysmal woe and will look upon our testimony as a fable.

–Petrarch

The old chestnut among historians is that one third of Europe died during the mid-14th century epidemic of bubonic plague. It's probably what you learned in high school or college, if you ever learned about it at all.

Recent research shows that those estimates were far too low.

Modern historians say it is more likely that between one half and two thirds of the entire continent died in the plague. In some areas, *80 percent of the population died.* Villages were abandoned. The dead went unburied. Fields went fallow. "There was no one who wept for any death," said Agnolo di Tura of Siena, "for all awaited death. And so many died that all believed it was the end of the world."

Between the years of 1346 to 1353, the plague's devastation raged across Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East from Lisbon to Moscow, from Alexandria to the Faroe Islands. The plague confounded all explanations or treatment. Medieval science could not explain it. Even the most learned and skilled medieval doctors had no hopes of treating it, and were often the first to die in any outbreak.

The supernatural denizens of the world fared no better. For all of any vampire's magnetism, influence, and raw brutality, he still needs humanity to sustain himself. If he has no connection to the world of humans, he risks succumbing fully to the Beast. His magic and his power can preserve his trusted retainers, of course, but he risks turning them into the same kind of monster that he is – and if that happens, he's no better off than if they were dead.

The Black Death finds the nigh-invulnerable Promethean halted in her Pilgrimage. She watches humanity from a distance, powerless to help them. She fears that she will become the target of witch hunts if she gets too close, as the panicked populace searches for someone to blame for their troubles. She sees their misery and their deaths, and wonders why she wants to bother becoming human after all.

Theme: Apocalypse

The medieval imagination, already rife with apocalyptic imagery, was set ablaze by the Black Death. The plague confounded medieval medicine. It was an untreatable death sentence that spared no one – man or woman, rich or poor, priest or sinner, infidel or Christian. The plague was only the beginning of the tribulations that would herald the end of the world. As the plague wreaked havoc on Europe, reports flooded in from the east, where the plague originated. Serpents and toads were raining from the sky in Cathay. India was razed by earthquakes, and blood and fire rained from the heavens. Monstrous creatures appear in the streets of Paris. Baleful stars gleam in the heavens. Various Antichrists appear, heralding the end of days. Every person of education and learning knew the signs: this is the end.

The Damned of the 14th century are seeing the world change fast. Though many true believers of the Lancea et Sanctum believe that the end times are upon them, all European vampires are watching a Malthusian crisis emerge: the plague has wiped out two thirds of their feeding supply, and the hungry vampires remaining are quickly losing their connections to humanity and succumbing to the Beast.

Panic and terror reign as the society of the Damned is shaken to its foundations, and the Strix wait in the wings, sinister and inscrutable.

For the Created, a different kind of crisis occurs. They have seen the horrors and wonders of the *qashmallim*, the avenging angels of God. Deep in their Azoth, they know that an apocalypse could happen. They may even think that they, as soulless abominations, are to blame. Regardless, they know that if every human being on earth dies, they may be the only things close to human that are left. What would a world populated by Prometheans, or post-Promethean humans, look like? Is it a paradise, or is it hell?

Mood: Existential

What does it mean to be human?

The question has a different meaning for the Created and the Damned. The Damned are monsters who need humanity in a very direct and instrumental way. They need to feed, obviously — they are ultimately appetitive creatures — but they also need humanity to keep them away from the Beast. When humans begin to die off in droves, and the vampire's connection to humanity erodes, he finds himself wondering: is it worth it? Is it worth the bother of keeping a sense of human mundanity, or of grieving over the dead? If the world is ending, and apocalyptic beasts emerge from the shadows, why not let slip the Beast? Tear out the throats of your enemies with your teeth, and know only with the dimly-glimpsed impulses of your body. What is the worth of being human?

For the Created, the ages-old question changes. The answer of what it means to be human is all too apparent for them: being human means agony and death. Perhaps even worse, the Promethean sees humanity turning upon itself in the throes of its pain. Outsiders — the congenitally abnormal, the un-Christian, the suspected heretics — are blamed for the epidemic and murdered by their brethren in attempts to stop the plague. Even the most dedicated Pilgrim is taken aback after she sees four men in five die in anguish within the span of a few months. She could stay forever in her Created body, maybe. Is the Pilgrimage even worth it, if she only gets to live as a real human for a week before the plague takes her?

Sources and Inspiration

The Black Death has captured the imagination of storytellers since the Renaissance. Below are listed a few works surrounding the Black Death that touch on the themes explored in this chapter.

Fiction

The Seventh Seal (1957, dir. Ingmar Bergman) is the story of a knight returning from the Crusades to find his homeland consumed by the plague. Antonius Block could be an excellent Promethean struggling with the final step of his Great Work: accepting the frailty and uncertainty of human existence. Alternatively, the character can be read more abstractly as a Mekhet pondering the ultimate secrets of existence, and making a losing bargain with one of the Strix.

The glossy HBO penny dreadful *Game of Thrones* shows a world on the brink of apocalypse. But while the forces of darkness gather to destroy humanity and the world teeters on the brink of endless winter, the ruling class ignores the imminent calamities in favor of their own petty schemes and bloody feuds. The world is inspired the politics of 14th century Europe, which saw all forms of disasters such as climate change, wars, and famines in addition to the terrible destruction of the Black Death. The ruthless scheming of Isabella "the She-Wolf" of France or the execution of Roger Mortimer could both have occurred in a world like Westeros, and the work may inspire a politically-minded **Vampire: The Requiem** chronicle.

Boccaccio's *Decameron* is a classic text about a group of young Florentine nobles who flee to the countryside to escape the plague, and would be excellent inspiration for a vampire-focused chronicle. The characters tell bawdy tales in order to keep their minds occupied as they stay in the shadows of the monastery Santa Maria Novella. Many people would use sex and phallic and/or vaginal symbols as both a distraction and as an apotropaic charm to keep the horrors of the plague at bay. But the *Decameron* is a classic example of the effectiveness of that approach: although his "merry company" survives the titular ten days of the story, the setting of the story was chosen by Boccaccio to instill dread in his readers: over two thirds of the monks of Santa Maria Novella were killed by the plague. The interplay of the themes of primal instinct and high philosophical debate could be at home in any Chronicles of Darkness game.

The *Divine Comedy* is an entertaining and readable guide to both medieval cosmology and Florentine politics (albeit through Dante's eyes). If you're looking for what people believed about life after death, and what it means to live a good life in contemporary terms, this is an excellent place to start.

Though the film *A Field in England* (2013, dir. Ben Wheatley) is not set during the era of the plague, it could be excellent inspiration for a chronicle set in a rural area. The story of two army deserters abducted and forced to work for a mad alchemist could be the start of a surreal Promethean campaign.

Non-Fiction

The Black Death, 1346-1353: The Complete History by Ole J. Benedictow is a thorough review of historical and scientific literature regarding the plague. It's written in scholarly language, but it gives many in-depth accounts of how particular cities and regions fared during the plague. It is used as the primary historical and scientific resource for this chapter.

In the Wake of the Plague: The Black Death and the World is Made by Norman Cantor is a more accessible read than Benedictow's work, but it goes into less detail and Cantor's theories (specifically regarding epidemiology) are less well-regarded than Benedictow's. Still, Cantor is perhaps the most popular medieval historian in English for good reason: he's an excellent writer, and his work is highly engaging.



What Has Come Before

In modern times, the medieval era is largely remembered as a barbaric time when ignorance and cruelty reigned across Europe. The peasantry was ignorant, oppressed, and superstitious. No one could read. The clergy were corrupt and motivated solely by greed. Feudal warlords held power over barely the area they could reach by horseback in a day, and they were wantonly cruel, bloodthirsty, and stupid.

This picture — largely the product of anti-Catholic sentiment in historians — is inaccurate. Europe was a complex, diverse, and sophisticated place in the 14th century. While it is difficult to draw generalities for an entire continent, here are a few relevant trends that shaped the region during this tumultuous century.

The Land

At the dawn of the 14th century, the population of Western Europe was at an all-time high. It had roughly quadrupled over the last 400 years. A shift in global climate occurred during that time, and the areas bordering the northern Atlantic Ocean grew warmer than in the previous millennium. Agricultural productivity soared in previously marginal areas, and places in Northern Europe that were previously unable to be cultivated due to glaciation or cold weather could produce crops.

Things would take a drastic turn for the worse in the 1300s. The unusually warm weather, known to meteorologists as the Medieval Warm Period, comes to an end. Colder, rainier weather predominates. A series of famines strike Britain and France between 1315 and 1322 as the cool, wet weather leads to two years of harvest failures in a row. Grain production fails in Iceland, and diminishes in Scandinavia. The Baltic Sea freezes for the first time in living memory, then freezes again and again in subsequent winters. When the Bishop of Bergen visits the Western Settlement of Greenland in 1341, he finds only empty farms and fallow fields.

The people of Europe find their options for outward expansion limited at the same time that the population grew and agricultural production declined. Domestic tensions heighten. The years of warmth and plenty are at an end.

War

Before the 14th century, the armored knight reigned supreme on the battlefield. The fate of a battle depended upon having a well-trained, well-equipped group of professional soldiers. These knights and their footmen were enormously expensive to train and outfit, but they were worth their weight in gold. Sometimes this statement was more literal than figurative. During battle, a knight could reasonably expect to be taken captive rather than killed outright, and his ransom could command a hefty sum. The rise of chivalry and the glorification of "honorable" combat occurred in part due to the enormous cost of knighthood. Chivalry was, in some respects, a social agreement designed to protect expensive assets during warfare.

Things change at the end of the 13th century. Though the infamous Battle of Agincourt would not occur until 1415, a new style of warfare emerges in the early 1300s. Peasant infantry using guerilla tactics, longbows, and spears routs heavier cavalry in battles like Courtrai and Bannockburn. A yeoman archer with a longbow is cheaper to equip than a knight, after all, and he can be trained in a matter of weeks. The Scots win independence from the larger, better-equipped English armies due to their embrace of guerilla tactics. The Almogavars, lightly-armed guerilla fighters of Iberia, wreaked havoc on their enemies from Portugal to the Levant. The knight is no longer seen as invincible, and an arrow fired from a longbow can't take captives.

The holdings gained by Western Europe during the Crusades have been lost. As zeal for fighting in Asia Minor and the Middle East dwindles, ambitious warlords turn their gaze towards their neighbors in search of land and plunder. The first nationalistic propaganda tracts appear, inciting common Englishmen to take up arms against the French in their name of their king.

The Nobility

Popular culture often portrays the nobility as delusional, self-important fops, or as bloodthirsty marauders and tyrants. While it's quite true the nobility had little to no regard for the peasantry that supported their lifestyles, they differ little from the modern Westerner, who has little to no regard for the factory worker who assembles their new smart phones, or the child laborer who glues their shoes together. No, the misery of the masses who produce goods or harvest the lord's wheat, the nobility argue, is the natural way of things. God has ordained that some should rule and others should serve. The only real alternative is anarchy, they say.

The early 14th century was a strong time for chivalry. Poets and entertainers tell tales of King Arthur and his knights across the continent, emphasizing the romantic elements (largely introduced through into Europe via Muslim and Jewish love poetry). The agency of female nobles becomes more important. A nobleman needed legitimate children, and marital rape was frowned upon. Women's consent matters in marriage, and men are expected to be seductive and romantic. Fashion emphasizes eroticism more: men wear tight hose and prominent codpieces, and women's necklines plunge to reveal cleavage-creating bodices. But while nobles dream of the romance of Guinevere and Lancelot, adultery is still as illegal as ever. The most infamous case of the century demonstrates the consequences for extramarital affairs: In a stunning intrigue orchestrated by Isabelle of France, two of the wives of the then-princes of France and their lovers were all convicted of adultery. The men were castrated and executed gruesomely, and the women were imprisoned for life. Who knows? They may have even been guilty.

The Middle Class

Travel and trade flourish. Pilgrims and traders travel throughout the continent and beyond. The crucial task of keeping track of goods and property (and therefore taxes) requires a class of dedicated intellectuals and bookkeepers. Though books were still rare and valuable, many people could read. While the upper echelons of society remain unattainable to commoners, mobility between the peasantry and the lower middle class is possible. The increased agricultural production of the last four centuries had opened up new opportunities for skilled tradesmen to acquire wealth. Indeed, this potential for mobility leads to bitter competition amongst the lower (but not the very lowest) echelons of society that led to strife. Persecution of gays, Jews, Muslims, and heretics increases throughout the century. Though the best-documented cases are of the actions of the nobility, the working classes embrace prejudice as well. The nobility encourages it: it's best for them if the working classes squabble over scraps rather than question their leadership. It's a bad time to be an outsider.

The Peasantry

Life for the lower classes is difficult, just as it always is. Their lot has improved over the years: slavery is no longer legal in most of Europe, and serfdom is on its way out. Most peasants live in largely self-governing collectives, with centrally appointed authority figures few and far between. The constant warfare of the period demands that those who work the land give up the lion's share of their grain in taxes, however, and if the local aristocrats were never keen on enforcing the law, they never missed an opportunity to collect taxes.

The peasantry does not take tyranny lying down. A peasant insurrection in Flanders in the 1320s lasted five years before the King of France finally repressed it. This is the time period that gives rise to the myths of Robin Hood, as the lower classes began to imagine a life free from the privations of constant warfare.

The Church

In the West, the Church is undergoing massive upheaval. Political conflicts, rather than doctrinal conflicts, were at the heart of the matter. At the turn of the century, Pope Boniface VIII reigned in the Rome, and was at the center of many conflicts. The Church had always quarreled with the Holy Roman Empire for who would be the leader of Christendom, but after the failures of the Crusaders, the Church saw its power waning. Boniface VIII refused to go down without a fight. He was ruthlessly political, and declared the Pope's office as superior to that of any king's. The crowned heads of Europe were displeased with that — particularly Phillip IV, the King of France — the most powerful and populous nation in Europe. After years of fighting over who had the authority to levy taxes upon whom, and accusations of simony, sorcery, heresy, and sodomy flying back and forth, Boniface excommunicated Phillip, who responded by sending an army and capturing Boniface in a surprise attack. Though he was beaten and tortured, Boniface refused to resign from his post as pope, and was eventually released by the French army. He died in Rome soon afterward.

After his death, a hotly contested enclave elected a French pope, Clement IV, who moved the papal curiae from Rome to Avignon where it would remain during the next 67 years. The Avignon Papacy is notoriously corrupt and quite willing to exercise its temporal power. The Avignon Popes are well known for lavish living, simony, and decidedly unchaste behavior. (Clement was rumored to have moved the papacy to Avignon in order to be closer to his mistress). Petrarch bemoaned the "Babylonian captivity" of the papacy.

For most people, though, the Church has nothing to do with national conflicts, minutiae of doctrine, or the doings of popes or bishops. The Church is represented by their parish priest, and by the community that organizes around him. A priest administers the Mass, baptizes children, and is the intellectual center of his community. He is a path to social mobility for lowborn people, and the key to salvation for the highborn.

Most importantly, he administers last rites to the dying. In the modern world, much is made of the proper way to live; in the medieval mind, the proper way to die was just as important. Dying without receiving last rites could consign a soul to eternal torment. The deathbed is a common motif in medieval art for good reason: it is the place of a dramatic struggle between good and evil. It was also a common practice for priests to urge a wealthy parishioner to donate more of his wealth or land to the Church, often to the chagrin of the heirs of the dying. What's a few acres or a small percentage of coin when one's eternal soul is at risk, after all?

The Supernatural

The bodies were laid out in neat rows on the deck, arms crossed over the chests. Torchlight glistened off their bloated bodies. All of them looked the same: black splotches and red lesions oozed on their skin. Some had bloody, foaming spittle dried against their cheeks.

Plague.

They'd left Caffa only a few weeks before. Miserable, doomed Caffa, under siege by the Khan for two years. It was a good opportunity for Egidio – the nobility, desperate for food and supplies, were willing to part with their treasures for a pittance. Egidio had heard the rumors of the plague, but he hadn't cared. A city under siege was bound to be rife with pestilence, and he had nothing to fear from illness.

But the illness was on the other side of the wall, as they found when they came to Caffa. The Khan's infidel armies were decimated by the plague. God's punishment, they'd said. There were a few cases arising in the city, but no need for panic, they'd said. They left port quickly anyway. A foulness hung in the air, and Egidio could hear the Darkness laughing.



Looking over the dead men, Egidio knew the answer, but asked anyway: "All of them?"

"All of them," the woman said.

"Well," he said. "Then it's just the two of us." He grabbed the woman by the wrist and pulled her body against his in a single movement that he'd had decades to perfect. She stared at him soundlessly. He grinned, baring his fangs, and leaned down toward her throat for the Kiss.

A fist like granite met his face. In an instant, the Beast rose in him. Wild with hunger and rage, he leapt at the woman again only to be met with the same numbing force. His teeth rasped against her raised forearm as he fell. He heard a sound like scraping parchment and came away with an oozing mouthful of something that definitely wasn't flesh. What was she?

Curiosity. It was what led him to the crypt where he met his sire as a man. It broke him from his frenzy now. He turned his mind away from the Beast, the screaming voice who told him there was nothing in this world but hammer and anvil, that further inquiry was unnecessary.

"You're one of them," the woman said. The Beast lunged again at the accusation, but it didn't break its chains.

"Don't be ridiculous," said Egidio, unsure if he whether he was lying. Does she know?

She stared at him a moment longer. He knew that look from other Mekhet – the direct but vague gaze of someone who can see things that other people can't. He turned his palms out and ducked his head a little in a gesture that he'd hoped would communicate honesty.

"No," she said, "You're not." A beat. "What are you?"

Curiosity. Good. He could work with that. "I'm hungry," said Egidio, and he walked toward the corpses. One of the corpses stood out. Arnau, his name had been. Egidio had preferred better-groomed men for his servants, but Arnau was from the Catalan Company, and he would be hard-pressed to find a hardier man in all Christendom. He had no lesions on his skin, there was a neat set of bruises on his throat, just visible beneath his thick beard.

"Sorry."

Egidio looked back up at the woman. "You killed him?"

"I," she began. "It wasn't my fault. He said it was my fault. They always say it's my fault and I didn't do anything."

Egidio looked back down at Arnau. Still warmish. He leant down and forced himself to drink as much as he could from the dead man. Disgusting, but sufficient. Ships' rations were no more appetizing for the living than the dead, he reflected.

The woman was staring at him. "He was your friend," she said. "And you just. You."

"Well," said Egidio, "You killed him. I didn't."

She shuffled and looked down at her feet like a child. Egidio picked up Arnau's body – now a bit lighter – and threw it over the side of the ship.

"Wait!" said the woman. "You just threw him. You threw him in the water."

Egidio made a small dismissive gesture. He looked up at the stars, trying to get his bearings. They'd certainly drifted off course by now.

"You should say something," she said. "For your friend."

Egidio crossed himself without taking his eyes off the stars. "In manus tuas," he said.

• • •

Of course, what few of the era's mortals, whether peasant or king, realize is that another world exists just out of sight of theirs.

The Damned in the 14th Century

In the 14th century, the Lancea et Sanctum and the Invictus maintain a stranglehold over Europe. Often, the two cooperate, moving in concert to enforce their vision of the Kindred social order. Other times, they fight bloody feuds over territory and ideology. It's often difficult for an outsider to tell which is the case in any given region. However, the Sanctified are the ideological and intellectual masters of the continent, even as the Invictus quietly gain more and more temporal power for themselves.

No organized political unit exists that can challenge the hegemony of the Church Eternal. Modern covenants like the Carthian Movement and the Ordo Dracul will not exist for centuries. Formerly, the strongest competition to the Invictus and the Sanctified was the Legion of the Dead, and it has been decidedly broken for two centuries. Once a force to be reckoned with, the remnants of the enforcement arm of the old Roman Camarilla degenerated into a pack of assassins and mercenaries that outlived their usefulness. Their lack of subtlety and disregard for the Masquerade had no place in a civilized Europe, their enemies argued.

Still, heretics, pagans, and infidels hide themselves in shadowy forests and on distant shores. Rumors abound of a sect in the Pyrenees who offer their own communion to villages of loyal ghouls. They style themselves as saints who have damned themselves to wander the Earth eternally so that they might bring salvation to the world. Their followers are loyal not only because of the vinculum, but also because of the miraculous powers conferred to them by their communion.

Tales of witches and idolaters in Ireland who worship a god called Crom Cruach are whispered in London and beyond. The pagans beat their heads against his stone idols

Feeding During the Plague

Feeding on a plague victim, even an asymptomatic one, requires a reflexive Stamina + Resolve roll. If the roll fails, the vampire becomes a carrier of the plague, though he does not suffer any symptoms. He will, however, expose anyone he bites for the next week. Due to the direct nature of the infection, any mortals who are infected via bite develop the septicemic plague, and are treated as if they had suffered a dramatic failure rather than a normal one on a typical exposure check **(see p. 101)**.

Touchstones and Death

The relationship between the Man and the Beast is a central theme of **Vampire: The Requiem**. Touchstones are a crucial part of any game. In any chronicle set in this era, mortal Touchstones risk death from the plague. Given the virulent nature of the plague, it is a not-too-distant possibility that a player's Touchstones may be entirely wiped out if they are not careful.

It's tempting, of course, to confer supernatural protection on one's mortal friends. A ghoul has a hardier constitution than a mortal, and every one of the Kindred who has watched their mortal loved ones grow old and die has considered Embracing them.

Even if a vampire has lived 50 years pretending to be mortal around his mortal friends or family who begin to suspect that something is strange about their seemingly unaging uncle, the relationship changes when he openly acknowledges his true supernatural nature. Even if the footman he's used as a Touchstone for 30 years knows that something is probably wrong with his eternally youthful, never-married liege who only appears at night, he can still function as his master's Touchstone as long as he doesn't ask questions, or allow himself to believe that his master might be something other than human. A magician, perhaps, or an alchemist, but still fundamentally a man.

The crux of a Touchstone is the relationship between the character and their mortal world. When your Touchstone starts to treat you as if you are something other than human, you risk detachment. Embracing a touchstone or turning them into a ghoul is an undeniable sign of one's supernatural nature, and it should not be possible to retain a Touchstone afterward.

If a vampire wants to protect her Touchstones, she needs to do so without compromising her relationships with them.

in praise of their false god, and his priests lap up the blood from their profane altars. They work Blood Sorcery to enthrall their audiences and bring disaster upon their enemies.

Blood Sorcery, of course, is forbidden by the Church Eternal. In an area controlled by the Lancea et Sanctum, the practice is punishable by death. The Invictus toe the line of the Lancea et Sanctum, but are less diligent in enforcement. Sorcerers have their uses, after all — particularly if they owe you a favor.

Like the rest of Europe, the Kindred still dream of Rome. Unlike the mortals who proclaim themselves Holy Roman Emperors or Popes, or the Byzantine Emperors who struggle to hold onto the wreckage of Constantinople, the dead still hold the glories and atrocities of the Roman Empire in (un) living memory. Elders awaken from their dreams and murmur of the splendor and terror of the Eternal City, ruled by the Julii and their Camarilla. Some, barely coherent in their dotage, utter dire warnings against betrayals that happened a millennium ago, or mistake their servants for a rivals who died before Charlemagne was crowned. Their nostalgia and lust for power are a potent and heady combination, capable of intoxicating even jaded ancillae into pursuing dreams of conquest and glory.

Al-Hamasoun

As Christianity is not the only religion in Europe, so too are the Lancea et Sanctum not the only religious among the Kindred. While most Jewish vampires keep their religious unlives (if any) separate from their Requiems, many Muslims among the Kindred have sought a mystical path framework. The Al-Hamasoun consider themselves to be fulfilling the role of Iblis, a Jinni so proud that he would not prostrate himself before Adam, even though God commanded it. Iblis himself was made of fire, he said, and Adam was made of earth. Why should he obey him?

In response, the Al-Hamasoun say, God cursed Iblis, consigning him to a prison of inanimate flesh and making him vulnerable to fire. Iblis, however, still believed that he was right, and made it his mission to prove to God the debased and unworthy nature of man. The Al-Hamasoun, therefore, see it as their spiritual duty to corrupt, degrade, and tempt man into turning away from God and toward sin.

Despite their similarities, the Al-Hamasoun conflict frequently with the Lancea et Sanctum, though both sides are frequently more motivated by selfish power jockeying and greed, and later justified with religious rhetoric, than the reverse.

The Gallows Post

The Hangmen

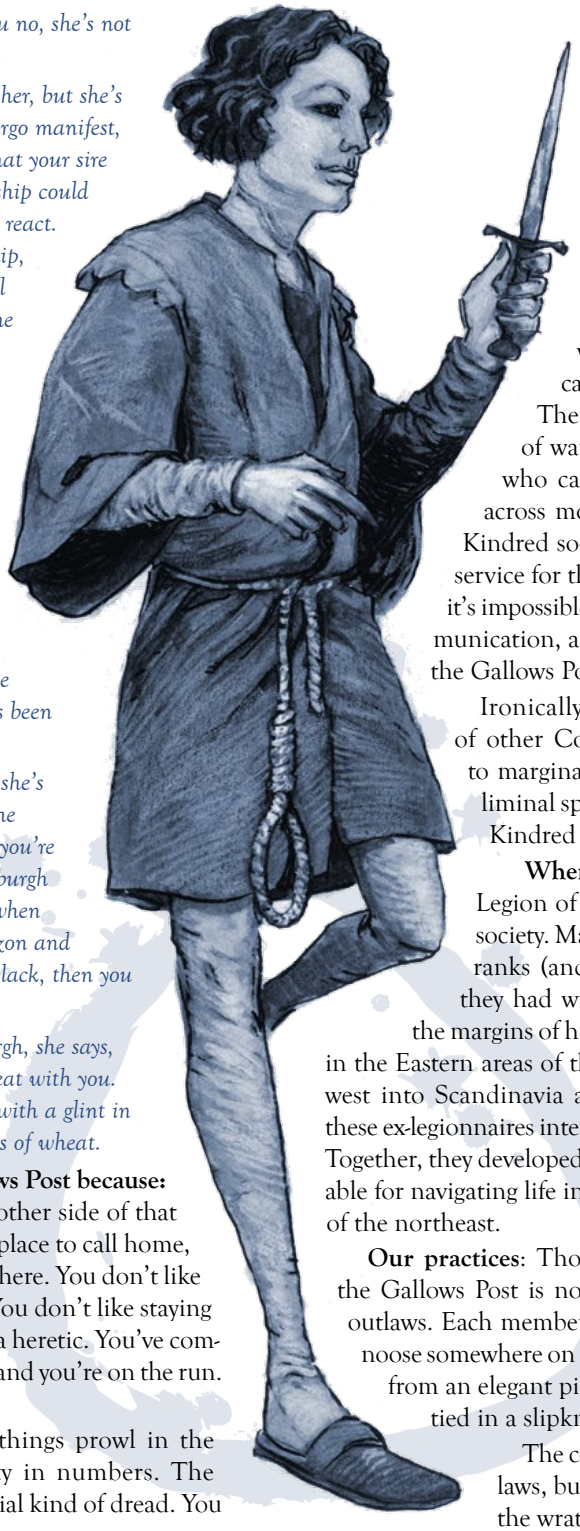
She looks you over, and tells you no, she's not going to Edinburgh.

Nobody tells you "no," you tell her, but she's already moved on. Checking her cargo manifest, or pretending to. You remind her that your sire owns this city, and how easily her ship could get impounded. You wait for her to react. You know what she's got on this ship, and you've got her in a corner. Will she lash out like the dumb Beast she is, or will she whimper for mercy like a whipped dog?

Instead, she cackles. She says you can impound her ship. Hell, you can burn the whole harbor down. By the time you've got your maggot flunkies moving, she'll be long gone, and the next time you leave your miserable shithole of a city you'll be buried up to your neck in churchyard to see your first sunrise since the pope has been in Avignon.

She knows that you know that she's the only Post captain in town for the next six weeks at least, and that if you're desperate enough to arrive in Edinburgh this close to the Feast of St. John, when the sun barely sinks below the horizon and the night sky is more orange than black, then you aren't going to wait that long.

If you're going to go to Edinburgh, she says, you're bringing a ship's load of wheat with you. Last year's harvest failed, she says with a glint in her eye, and there's a great dearness of wheat.



You want to join the Gallows Post because: You want to see what's on the other side of that mountain. You want your own place to call home, even if it's in the middle of nowhere. You don't like people telling you what to do. You don't like staying in one place. You're a pagan or a heretic. You've committed a crime somewhere else, and you're on the run. You prefer to be left alone.

The big picture: Strange things prowl in the woods at night. There's safety in numbers. The countryside carries its own special kind of dread. You can't know every road, and being caught exposed in the wilderness when dawn comes is a death sentence for the Kindred.

That's where the Gallows Post comes in.

While the Lancea et Sanctum and the Invictus have the money and the power to protect themselves on overseas voyages, or along well-traveled routes, not everyone can march with an army at their side. The Gallows Post is a hardy covenant of warriors, merchants, and adventurers who carry messages and provide passage across mountains, seas, and forests to keep Kindred society alive. They provide a valuable service for the rest of Kindred society. After all, it's impossible to consolidate power without communication, and reliable communication is what the Gallows Post is best at.

Ironically, their role in the consolidation of other Covenants' power bases only serves to marginalize them further. They live in the liminal spaces between cities, where no other Kindred survive.

Where we came from: The fall of the Legion of the Dead left a lacuna in Kindred society. Many who fled the Legion's dissolving ranks (and the potential vendettas of those they had wronged) found a new existence on the margins of human and Kindred society. Starting in the Eastern areas of the Baltic, and eventually spreading west into Scandinavia and south towards the Black Sea, these ex-legionnaires intermingled with indigenous vampires. Together, they developed a code and a law of their own, suitable for navigating life in the dark forests and harsh winters of the northeast.

Our practices: Though they are perpetual outsiders, the Gallows Post is not a lawless group of brigands and outlaws. Each member of the Post wears a symbol of the noose somewhere on their person. Representations range from an elegant piece of gold knotwork to a rope belt tied in a slipknot.

The covenant observes only a few definite laws, but anyone who breaks them will face the wrath of his fellows as surely as any city

If your payment's in the gibbet at the crossroads by nightfall, I'll see you on your way. If not, then you'd best find your own way out of here. Fast.

dweller. These simple laws ensure the integrity of the Post without interfering in the day-to-day lives of its members. After being declared an outlaw by the Gallows Post, a poor fool has nowhere to hide.

Honor your brother's hospitality. Do not cause trouble in another Brigand's territory; allow any other Brigand to pass through your territory so long as he does no harm. Depending on any particular Brigand's temperament, their definition of "harm" may not be very generous, so travelers are advised to tread lightly.

Honor your contracts. You can equivocate, you can scheme, but you can't fundamentally go back on your word. The reputation of the Post rests on each of its members.

Do not scheme against your brothers. If you want to kill another member of the Post, you should openly proclaim your intent to kill him before doing so.

The Crossroads Cant. The Gallows Post has its own secret language used to communicate with other members. Through various signs and symbols, the Code is used to mark territory and warn other Brigands of potential dangers.

Nicknames: Brigands

Concepts: Blood-sucking Robin Hood, sharp-eyed doxy, feral poet, dread pirate and occasional legitimate businessman, professional pilgrim

Merits: The Hangman's Code

Members of the Gallows Post may purchase Carthian Law merits. Any references to the Carthian Movement are replaced with the Gallows Post.

When we are in power: Though generally democratic, the Brigands inevitably squabble when too many are together for long. If bordering territories are contested, it's almost unavoidable that one will claim that the other has insulted or injured him in an inexcusable way. When that happens, a feud erupts, and it does not end until one party is staked out for the rising sun.

When we are in trouble: The Gallows Post is arguably better at going to ground than any other covenant. Many have close relationships with mortals, as they're crucial for protection and information on the open road.



MORBUS

THE ONES WHO INFECT YOU

Everyone knew that the youngest Barbarigo son had a mistress who visited him at night. During the day, he was pale and listless, or else burning with a fever – the symptoms of young love, no doubt. But his condition grew worse and worse, and soon it was clear that he was wasting away for want of his love. He never said her name, but in the height of his fever, he called her his "angel" and begged to be returned to her side.

She did visit him again, after midnight, when Father Arrighno came. She stood in the corner, unseen by mortal eyes, watching. When Arrighno asked him for his final confession, he called weakly for his angel again. Barbarigo's son was too weak to take the Eucharist, and he choked and spat out the wine.

Father Arrighno sucked loudly on his teeth and shook his head. He turned to Barbarigo and said, "Without a confession, his soul is in great jeopardy."

Gray-faced Barbarigo said nothing.

"If we had a suitable endowment with which to build a chapel, we could pray for his soul every day," Father Arrighno trailed off.

"You'll have it," said Barbarigo, not taking his eyes off his son.

All in all, the angel thought, it was an evening well spent: seeing her Venetian rival's mortal fortunes dwindle, seeing a wealthy man humbled, and enriching her own allies in one stroke. Not a bad evening at all.



Few forces are as mysterious and terrifying to the medieval word than that of disease. The Morbus bloodline is accordingly shrouded in mystery, and that suits them just fine. Like most Mekhet, they make their home in the shadows. They are a bloodline that is defined by their Discipline – Cachexy, which can inflict terrible diseases even on other supernatural creatures – and their clan curse, which makes them unable to gain sustenance from anything but the blood of creatures infected with an illness.

The Morbus have never been particularly welcome among the Kindred. They are banned outright from many places, and barely tolerated in others. Spreading disease among the herd is a bad practice. When disease breaks out among any population, they are often blamed for it, regardless of whether they are the cause. Still, they are useful enough – and good enough at hiding – that they are tolerated in some areas. For now, anyway.

Why You Want to Be Us

Like their parent clan, the Morbus know everything, and they are unknowable. They live in the shadows, and they know what the Daeva want, who the Ventrue obey, and what the Nosferatu fear. But beyond just commanding the shadows, the Morbus also command disease: an unknowable, terrifying force in medieval life. They can start epidemics that bring cities to their knees; they can kill their rivals' loved ones with impunity, if they're careful. They have access to mysteries and weapons that no other group can understand.

Why You Fear Us

Knowledge is dangerous. The Morbus know who their Kindred feed on. An archivist watches cancer bloom in the lungs of his Prince's most trusted retainer, and waits for the moment when the weak man will strike a deal with anyone to save his own skin. An Invictus angers the Lancea et Sanctum for the last time. A week later, the beloved nephew who manages her mortal fortune has a tickle in the back of his throat. Two weeks later, her entire family is dead. It might have been natural causes, but the Bishop makes an unusual reference to the plagues of Egypt in her next sermon.

Why We Should Fear Ourselves

The Morbus like to think that they can act from the shadows with impunity, but it's not always the case. Inflicting plagues upon an entire population creates a lot of

enemies, and the rest of the Kindred population hates and fears them. There is a reason why most Morbus attempt to pass themselves off as Mekhet, and are mostly successful.

The bloodline's progenitor gave his childer a mission, though. For some, it puts a fire in their blood. Sometimes that fire consumes them.

Bloodline Origins

- This is the version told by Morbus elders of the Lancea et Sanctum to their childer: In ancient Rome, before the days of the Black Abbey, Christian vampires were forbidden by the pagan authorities from feeding on anyone but the most wretched of the poor. When plague swept through the cities, the Christians became carriers of the plague. This was all God's plan, for feeding on the worst of the afflicted gave the Christians the powers to inflict God's plagues upon anyone — rich or poor — and test their commitment to Him.

- The famine came first. They ate up all of the grain, even the grain they would need for next year's seed. Then, they slaughtered all of the animals, even the horses, even the white calf that was sacred to the gods. The calf spoke in a man's voice as they brought the knife to its throat, begging them to spare it and keep it for the gods.
  They ate it anyway. Then, they ate the dead. No sense in letting meat go to waste, they told themselves. Then they ate the sick. They would have died soon, anyway. Then it was the children. There can always be more children.

  Then, one day, in the foul spring air, when the ground was warm and muddy, and all that was frozen by winter has begun to rot again, a miracle. A massive dead creature washed upon the flooded riverbank. It was putrid and foul, and even the starving villagers would not dare come near it. Its body swelled in the growing heat, and eventually, it burst.

  The things that came out of it looked just like the ones who'd been eaten — the sick, the old, the children — but they were pale, and fanged, and very hungry.

- Once upon a midnight darkly, there were two sisters, both enslaved by the same cruel mistress. One was obsequious and demure, the other was proud and stubborn. The demure sister did exactly as she was told without complaining, and was given a position of favor and luxury. Though she ate scraps, they were fine scraps from the master's table. Though she slept on the floor, she a velvet cushion to rest her head on. Though her mistress made her crawl on all fours naked in front of her party guests, her collar was studded with diamonds, and her leash was made of silk.

  The proud sister refused this life. She would not submit to her mistress' demands. She worked in the scullery, eating from the refuse pile and sleeping in the stables. One winter, she fell ill with a terrible withering disease. She coughed black blood, and her skin was covered in boils. She begged her sister for help. "This is your own doing," said the demure sister, and sent her away. She drew her last breath that night.

  The proud one rose again the following night, her skin smooth and ashen. She visited her sister that night, and thanked her for her advice. The next morning, the demure sister found the first of the boils rising on her skin. In the following night, the rest of the household succumbed to their fate, and the proud sister laughed into the night, living righteously ever after.

Parent Clan: Mekhet

Nickname: The Afflicted

Bloodline Bane (The Unclean Curse): The Morbus are unable to sustain themselves on the blood of healthy mortals. They must feed solely from the blood of diseased mortals, though Kindred blood is as nourishing as it would be to any other vampire. In addition to their bloodline bane, they also suffer from their original clan weakness.

Disciplines: *Auspex*, Celerity, *Cachexy*, Obfuscate

In the Covenants

For over a millennium, the Morbus have made the Lancea et Sanctum their home. Many Morbus are devout believers. They haven't forgotten their place among the Christians of Rome. They accept the Church Eternal's mission of bringing suffering and misery to the masses with gusto, and gladly unleash their powers upon the unworthy or the wicked.

If the Morbus have ever served the Invictus, they certainly have been quiet about it. The more businesslike members of the Covenant would be hard pressed to deny the utility of Cachexy, and if one of the Afflicted got on the wrong side of his mother church, he may need to offer his services to the Invictus in exchange for protection.

Of course, heretics, apostates, and misfits of all kinds are welcome in the Gallows Post as long as they behave themselves. A Morbus could easily present himself as just another Mekhet to anyone who didn't look too closely, and the Gallows Post prides itself on selective myopia.

Concepts: Biological warfare mercenary, methodical physician, vindictive former peasant, mad hermit, slumming nobleman, wandering fugitive.

The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Oh, so very weak.



The Promethean Soul

Humanism, the broad set of beliefs that place value on the inherent dignity, worth, and reason of mankind, is the guiding principle of any **Promethean** chronicle. **Promethean: The Created** does not justify why Prometheans would want to be human, and it doesn't need to. The conceit of the game is that humanity is inherently special and desirable, and our culture supports this viewpoint. The book is written for modern people who live in a post-humanist world, a world where "inhuman" is an insult.

The medieval world is different. Before the beginnings of humanism (broadly speaking: the Renaissance), the consensus among Christian thinkers was that the nature of humanity was inherently flawed and wicked. Humanity was not a goal to be aspired to, but an earthly prison to be transcended. Jewish and Muslim thinkers have a dualistic view of an earthly body and a godly soul, but they don't view humanity as essentially wicked in the same manner that Christians do. However, in Europe, Christian worldviews dominate culturally and politically.

As the plague strikes, the weakness of humanity becomes impossible to ignore. Why would a Promethean, with his nigh-invulnerable body and his durable constitution, want to become a human? The obvious answer of course, is "to gain a soul."

The importance of salvation and the immortal soul in medieval life is different from how it is viewed in the modern, Western religious context. In the modern mindset, being in a state of grace is a more about a personal relationship with God and less about a very specific need to avoid eternal damnation. In the medieval world, the nature of life after death and the eternal soul eclipses almost everything else in import. Immortality is a more pressing psychological need if your life expectancy is 35, and you can expect to bury at least one of your children.

Gaining a soul means to live as something greater than an animal. It means being able to approach God. It means being able to feel true fellowship with the divine spark in every other human. It means mutuality, ecstasy, and death. It means whatever the Created understand it to mean at the end of their Great Work.

Of course, this text can't tell you what it means to be human, or to have a soul. It's something the characters (and sometimes the players) in the game need to discover for themselves.

Lineages in the 14th Century

The science of alchemy sank into obscurity in Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire, and has only been re-introduced to Europe from the Muslim world in the 12th century. Literacy is uncommon, and the invention of the printing press is 100 years away. Medieval Prometheans who want to understand their nature start from a world that does not understand them even in metaphor. They do not have the same collection of human myths as a lens through which to interpret their experiences.

Of course, they are not completely without help. While they don't have longstanding institutions or texts of their own to guide them, Prometheans have their own oral traditions and the memories inherent in their Azoth. Azothic memory is not a neatly-indexed encyclopedia, though. It is a collection of intuition, impulses, and half-remembered names. Not every Progenitor gives her progeny a proper education, and she herself only knows the disjointed or even contradictory fragments of knowledge passed.

As such, here are some of the bits and pieces of Promethean lore that circulate in this era.

Amirani

In the European imagination, the progenitor of the Prophets is frequently conflated with Prometheus, the fallen Titan who captured the minds of scholars, artists, and priests in Europe since antiquity. He is a metaphor in the minds of medieval scholars. Some use him as a familiar object lesson in the dangers of pride and ambition — an idolater who was punished by the gods for creating false life. But a new tradition is emerging in the mid-14th century. Scholars are beginning to reckon Prometheus as a hero who gifted humanity with the superb faculty of reason. As such, some Amirani feel a sense of righteousness about their existence. They see themselves as misunderstood geniuses, or disregarded Cassandras in a world that is mired in ignorance. Their Pyros is the torch that lights the world, they say, while understanding that they, like Prometheus, may pay the ultimate price for it.

Others conflate the Prophets with folklore regarding blacksmiths. A gifted smith is a vital part of a community in the medieval era, and his role is regarded with awe, mysticism, and suspicion. Tales of smiths receiving the power to smelt metal from deals with the Devil are commonplace. In Ethiopia, blacksmithing is regarded as a hereditary trait: all blacksmiths are considered to also be witches who can turn into hyenas and rob graves in the night.

Galatea

The Ancient Greeks told tales of animate statues; the stories told today are much the same. In the medieval era, the subjects of statuary have changed. Gods, goddesses, and celebrities are less likely to be commemorated in statuary, and saints and other religious figures predominate. Though their subject matter may be chaster, the essence of the Galateid retains its erotic character: Disquieted mortals may find that their erotic fixations also include a religious element.

Osiris

In the 14th century, Egypt is the land of the Abbasid Caliphate. The old gods of Egypt are a vague memory,

though some survive through assimilation with the Greek gods in the Greco-Roman period. Mortals conflated Osiris with Dionysus, and the legends of the two gods are similarly murky in the eyes of the Created.

Dionysian-inspired Osirans speak of their languorous progenitor, created when Zeus made a sacred oath upon the river of the dead and showed his true face to his lover, a mortal Theban priestess, killing her instantly. She was pregnant at the time, and the baby died in utero. Zeus took the dead child's heart and crafted a new body for him. Dionysus became known as the twice born, and was fostered by water nymphs. He would return to the underworld (typically via the ocean) several times in the myths. He is always a liminal figure, and though he is associated with wild maenads and satyrs, he is the eye of the storm: calm amidst chaos.

Other Nepri find images of Christian saints compelling. A French Osiran dreams of walking through a reedy river, carrying his severed head in his hands, and thinks it a vision of Saint Denis. Another hears a legend of Saint Adrian, a martyr whose body was hacked to pieces and set aflame. But a sudden downpour fell upon his burning body, and his wife rescued most of the pieces, assembling them again in a reliquary.

The myths have changed, but the Lineage remains alive. The rituals used to create an Osiran are still in practice even if the cosmos that inspired them is forgotten to medieval Europe, though many have substituted holy water for the traditional river water.

Tammuz

The Tammuz are denied the power of words, the power of names. The name "Tammuz" may ring in the Azothic memories of the Called, but to the rest of the world, it has little or no meaning. The name of Tammuz, the Semitic deity, is all but forgotten. A brief reference to him survives in the medieval mind in the fourth month of the Hebrew calendar, or in Ezekiel 8, when God grants a vision of idolatry in the Temple: *Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the* LORD*'s house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz. Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these.* A Tammuz who seeks his answers in Christian legend may consider himself a false man, unworthy of love or pity.

The Tammuz are known by another name: the golems. Jewish lore has written of golems for over a millennium, and stories abound of rabbis creating golems for a variety of purposes. The word *golem* itself is used in the Talmud and the Tanakh to refer to humans in their unfinished forms. Adam, when he is being formed by God from earth, is referred to as a golem. Psalms 139 refers to a fetus *in utero* as a golem. Rather than seeing himself as fundamentally flawed or inhuman, a Tammuz who understands his Great Work as part of an Adamic process that human beings themselves undergo may find his journey easier.

Ulgan

Unlike the other pagan religions that shaped the myths of the Lineages, Altaic paganism is a living religion in the 14th century, and as such the legend of the Lineage's Progenitor is well-known. Though Islam is displacing it in its native territories, the shamans of the Golden Horde still perform their rites. A curious Riven could learn about mortal views of Ulgan and see mortal shamanic praxis if she were in Crimea or Turkey — and find a suitable body for creating a new Promethean if she desired it.

Unfleshed

Though robotics and electronics are centuries away, the Unfleshed still make their Pilgrimages across the medieval world. Those made of clay and earth may think of themselves as golems, but they are not the only type of Unfleshed Prometheans that exist in this era. Tales of automata abound in the Middle Ages, particularly in the Christian and Muslim worlds. Virtually every man regarded as a sage or an alchemist, from Virgil to Albertus Magnus is rumored to have had in his possession a brass automaton of some kind, typically in the shape of a human head. These brazen heads are regarded as a source of wisdom, able to answer any question posed to them. Some are used as oracles. An Unfleshed may try to seek one of these wise men out. He should take heed: Although these sages are often spoke of in breathless wonder, they are just as often spoken of as unlawful magicians who practice forbidden arts.

AMIRANI

The Prophets

"Anathema," you call me.

Do you know what that word means? It was used to talk about gifts to the gods in a time long ago. It was used to describe the things that have been set apart from human life. Gifts, not to be touched by man.

You can see now that I am not like you. You can see how my body has been dismembered, severed from its life, severed from mankind, and put together again for the sake of the gods.

"Anathema," you call me, and you are right.

Somewhere in a place beyond our sight, beyond our reason, a higher reality exists. The Azoth, the philosopher's stone, the anima mundi, the prima materia, God, heaven, Paradise, the Divine Fire — and each of us gets a glimpse of it at death. At least, that's what the Amirani say. They remember their bodies' final visions: glimpses of hope, renewal, and rebirth. The instinct to spread the story of their vision and to call on its power to change the world is at the heart of every Amirani, no matter where their Rambles take them.

Their vision of paradise comes at a price. Each Amirani is made of the body of someone who died in agony. A crucified criminal, who watched helplessly as passersby ignored him on their way to market. A plague victim who died alone, without even a priest brave enough to perform the last rites. An untrained peasant-soldier left on the battlefield for days with an arrow in his gut.

Beyond finding a suitably tortured body, the creation of an Amirani is a demanding task. The bodies of the Amirani are so broken that they must be reinforced physically — and alchemically — with metal. A Progenitor must spend hours at the forge, creating prosthetics, grafting them onto the flesh, and infusing the body with Pyros. A Prophet is forged just as surely as she is Created.



A Prophet's Pilgrimage is defined by her relationship to her visions. Fire is an element of change, creation, and destruction. Acceptance and compromise do not come easy to the choleric temperament. What needs to change in the world before the Amirani will agree to join it? What does she need to change in herself before she can join the world?

History

In days long past, long before Nestor was king in Pylos, when Troy was a handful of huts, an alchemist discovered the secret of refining metals from base stone. Some say the gods punished him for his hubris, other say that he was murdered by a rival. Everyone says that he died horribly after his entrails were torn from his body.

His wife and fellow alchemist (who is in some iterations his murderer) dug his body out of the earth and brought him back to life. She restored his broken body with alchemy and with metals, pouring the molten stuff down his throat and burning away his ruined flesh.

When he awoke, he remembered nothing of his wife or of his previous life. He remembered only his vision of the Divine Fire, and felt only the need to spread its power to the rest of the world.

Creations

Just being human isn't enough for Fra Sebastian. He wants to be the best kind of human possible, which is, according to his calculations, Thomas Aquinas. He has been driven out of every monastery he joined — either due to Disquiet, his self-righteous temperament, or his rigid insistence upon upholding all of the monastery's rules to the letter. Living as a mendicant friar with his throng has helped him become less rigid, but he still comes into conflict with the more outspoken members of his group.

New Bestowment: Crucible of Anguish

The Prophets glimpse the Divine Fire only once in their lives, but they never forget it. By meditating upon its mysteries and by communing with the element of fire, they gain insights into their world and true nature of reality.

As always, their visions come at a price. To achieve insight, a Prophet must burn a part of his body enough to cause at least one level of aggravated damage and meditate upon his visions for at least a full minute. The Prophet is affected by Torment as normal.

The player rolls Azoth. Willpower may not be spent on this roll. If the roll succeeds, the player may add any successes on this roll to all rolls upon which Willpower could be spent for the next 24 hours. If the damage from this Bestowment is healed during that time, the bonus fades.

If the player rolls a dramatic failure, the Promethean suffers a -1 penalty on all rolls for the next 24 hours as his mind is assailed by horrific, incomprehensible visions.

When a smith's beloved wife died a terrible death at the hands of a cruel lodger, he gilded her body with silver and brought her to life again. She was different this time, though, with no memories of her old life, or love for her husband. In his despair, he forced her back into the forge. Sensing her own imperfection, she let him plate her in molten gold. Still she did not love him, and her heart was as cold to him as the metals that surrounded her body. He tried to melt her down into trinkets and baubles to win a new bride with, but the Kultamorsian refused to let him touch her again, and fled. Now she wanders the world, refusing to let anyone forge her body or soul but herself.

Gibrail is the quietest member of his throng. An outsider might think that he is quiet because is a Saracen and has poor command of the *lingua franca*, but he can speak and write Latin and French perfectly. Gibrail is quiet because his heart rages at the corruption of the world, and the only answer he has found is stillness and observation of its ways. When he is confronted with a danger to his throng, he unleashes all of his might against his enemies like an avenging angel.

For decades, Platina lived alone in the Iberian mountains, contemplating the perfection of the stars. Now that she's returned to humanity, she lives as an itinerant teacher, philosopher, and astronomer, eager to share her wisdom and visions with anyone who crosses her path — male or female, peasant or lord, Christian or Muslim.

Humour: Yellow bile. The fire of the forge is burned into the flesh of the Prophet as surely as his vision of the Divine Fire is burned into his soul. He has seen the perfection that lies beyond this world, and he sees the ways our world has fallen short. His inner fire drives him to create, inspire, and forge the world into a paradise, but it also drives him to terrible wrath.

The Prophets succumb to Torment when confronted with the base nature of the world. Human depravity and injustice anger them, but so too do apathy and entropy. The world *should* be different, it *should* be better, and the Prophet knows this. Of course, it is the nature of prophecy to be ignored, and when it inevitably happens, many Amirani become bitter and resentful.

Worse than being ignored, though, is when the Amirani is forced to confront his own inadequacy. Nothing infuriates him like seeing his own failures. The fire in his soul wants to move, to rise. If he is backed into a corner, and has no clear way to move forward, that fire consumes his own heart — or the people around him.

When in Torment, an Amirani's body shows signs of its painful history. The head of a hanged Prophet might jerk or loll in an unsettling way. A crucified one might manifest stigmata. A Prophet with less obvious injuries might smell strongly of brimstone, or a bystander might see strange visions reflected in her eyes.

Bestowment: Titan's Strength, Crucible of Anguish

Stereotypes

- **Galateids:** You can witness perfection, but you can't quite capture it yourself. I know what that's like.
- **Osirans:** I have heard that the Nepri can return themselves to life if killed. Frankly, I'm not sure how to tell the difference between a living one and a dead one, except that one might look a bit smugger than the other.
- **Tammuz:** You are the Word made flesh. I heard it once, and I long to hear it spoken again.
- **Ulgans:** Do not mistake your visions for mine. Yours are pale reflections of a world that is itself a cheap simulacrum of something greater.
- **Unfleshed:** I remember what it is to die. A vision of the glory that lies beyond this world seared itself into my flesh on that day. Our brothers and sisters knew it once, too, but their bodies have forgotten. But nothing about you bears a spark of the Divine, and for that, I pity you.
- **Extempore:** Even the very elements of the world aspire to become something greater. You are evidence of that. Come with me, and we'll find that greatness together.



The Plague

Modern researchers are not completely sure what caused the plague. Contemporary accounts are unreliable, and forensic evidence is virtually nonexistent. It is impossible to be certain about the ecology of Europe over six centuries ago, especially with regard to rats, fleas, and microorganisms. A commonly accepted account, based upon the work of Norwegian historian Ole Jørgen Benedictow as presented in *The Black Death 1346-1353: The Complete History*, is given below.

A summary of the prevailing theories of the Black Death is not presented for the sake of quibbling with one's players about whether the plague was spread by rats or marmots, or whether anthrax had a role in the plague in Northumberland, or whether it would be realistic for their character to be bitten by *Xenopsylla cheopis* instead of *Pulex irritans*. It is presented, rather, to give the Storyteller a framework for understanding contagion and the ecology of the world under siege. The information is here to give the Storyteller some purchase on how the world works, even as the characters are scrambling to find a way to keep themselves safe.

The Black Plague was caused by *Yersinia pestis*, a bacterium endemic to rodent populations in hot, dry areas around the world. Typically, the bacterium is not virulent enough to cause an epidemic, but occasionally, evolution produces a virulent form of *Y. pestis* that multiplies itself at astonishing rates.

The particular version that caused the plague likely originated among black rats in the steppes of central Asia, and was spread to humans by rat fleas. Rat fleas do not normally bite humans, but periodic plagues kill off the fleas' preferred hosts quickly enough that fleas have evolved to adapt to the occasional eradication of their host population. Fleas without rats to feed on can subsist on grain, and need fresh blood only to reproduce. Unfortunately for humanity, human blood is sufficient for this purpose.

When a rat flea bites a human, it regurgitates some of the contents of its stomach into the wound. The stomachs of fleas are so small, and the multiplication rate of *Y. pestis* is so rapid that the bacterium literally fills the flea's stomach to bursting. Fleas with plague in their stomach can be in a state of perpetual starvation, as their stomachs can hardly fit any nutrients inside due to the plague. Many fleas bite the same victim several times, or bite many victims in a short period in an attempt to feed themselves.

When a human is infected, two outcomes are possible. The first and most common outcome is that the bacteria is quickly intercepted by the lymph system before it enters the bloodstream. The immune system responds to the infection, and the characteristic bubo develops — a swollen lymph node, generally red or pale in color and typically located in the groin. Contrary to many popular depictions, only one bubo usually develops. (Depiction of massive clusters of black lumps are almost certainly fictitious and are a good indication of how grotesque and monstrous the plague seemed to those who lived the reality of it.) The immune system is quickly overwhelmed, and the plague ravages the body. A high fever and a red rash often follow, as the body struggles to fight the infection. If the plague reaches the lungs, the fragile tissues ulcerate, causing a bloody cough that can spread the plague to nearby humans. The bloody cough is an inevitable sign of impending death. Not all victims of the bubonic plague will die, however; about twenty percent of infected victims survive.

The second outcome of a bite from an infected flea is more serious. In the second form, the flea regurgitates the bacterium directly into the blood stream. The immune system response is too slow and weak to contain the rapidly-multiplying bacteria. Death from septicemia occurs within hours, often before the victim develops any serious symptoms. Victims often simply fell into a coma on the streets and died there. In all of recorded history, including modern victims, no one has survived the septicemic plague.

The Anatomy of a Pandemic

Though the medieval era is remembered as a dark period where populations were isolated from each other, the world of the mid-14th century was anything but. Multinational trade networks spanned the entire continent. Pilgrims traveled to distant monasteries and holy sites in remote areas. Armies traveled over land and sea to wage war, often hiring mercenaries from distant countries to aid them. Indeed, if Europe had been a place of darkness and isolation, the plague would not have been so deadly. It was seafaring traders who first brought the plague from Asia Minor to Sicily, where it spread to the rest of Europe.

Day 0: Arrival

The ragged sailors disembark. They look with hollow eyes upon the city. They've returned from a port where the dead outnumber the living, they say, and they didn't dare stay for long. One of the sailors absently scratches at his wrist. He's got more flea bites that usual. It's like they've been swarming him in the last few days.

Before it strikes the human population, the plague infects the rats of the city. The rats die off quickly. After about two weeks, the rat population is culled sufficiently that the rat flea starts to feed on its less-preferred host: humans.

Day 15: Incubation

The first to fall ill were the people who lived by the docks. Nobody notices it, of course. Illness is a part of life. People get sick, people die, especially in that part of town.

The first people infected by the plague are the poor, who, in this era, commonly live by the sea. After they are infected, plague victims are typically asymptomatic for a period of three days up to a week. Then they begin to fall ill, and then — in 80 percent of the cases — die.

These first deaths of the plague do not arouse suspicion or concern. After all, death from illness or famine is common in this era. Small-scale outbreaks of illnesses like smallpox or dysentery are not uncommon, and while they can be locally devastating, most people are emotionally, spiritually, and intellectually equipped to deal with it.

Day 24: Outbreak

Then, out of nowhere, the slums were full of the dead, and people were falling sick all over the city. The illnesses that usually stayed in the slums were reaching out into the rest of the population.

As more rats and humans die off, the plague spreads. It travels wherever a rat can enter — which is virtually anywhere. They're particularly fond of wooden buildings, and of areas where food or grain is stored.

Because they are culturally expected to prepare food and to provide care for the sick, women catch the plague more quickly than men. Priests, too, frequently fall ill, as they administer the last rites to a seemingly endless supply of sick and dying people.

And yet, even as the reality of the plague is more and more obvious, the ruling classes are reluctant to respond. If word got around that a city was suffering an epidemic, trade would be negatively impacted. That would hurt everyone, say the rich, not just the moneyed classes. The city needs supplies, after all.

Day 50: Pandemic

A few weeks ago, they stopped ringing the church bells for the dead. Corpses remain unburied, and more of them appear every day. Rich men and poor men alike rot in the streets in the blistering heat. A dog carries the hand of a dead noble lady through the streets, her fingers too swollen to remove the gem-encrusted rings on her fingers. Parents abandon their sick children for fear of contagion. Those priests who are still alive refuse to offer last rites to the dying. They say it is the end of the world.

At this point, death is happening on such a massive scale that rumors of plague cannot be denied or suppressed. Those who can, flee into the countryside, bringing disease and death with them. Processions of flagellants parade through the streets, begging for God's forgiveness. Merchants peddle cure-alls, potentially earning great profits at the risk of dying themselves.

Day 80: Oblivion

There was no harvest that year. The fields went fallow. Unmilked cows bellowed from their pens, the farmers long since gone or dead. No food came into the port: Everybody knew we were a plague city. The people starved. I heard that two noble brothers who were the last of their line killed each other over a loaf of bread. My mother's cousin, the only family I have left, says that his neighbor killed and ate his own children.

Even after the plague ran its course, people still died. Famine followed in the plague's wake, particularly since epidemics tended to be at their worst during the late summer and early autumn months when the harvest was coming in. The winters that followed were brutal. In a good year, a poor local harvest could be relieved by imported grain and foodstuffs, but the plague disrupted both maritime and overland commerce, resulting in deprivation on a truly devastating scale.

Exposure to the Plague

Exposure to the plague can occur through a variety of vectors. Any character exposed to plague-carrying fleas or persons risks infection. If a character is exposed to the plague, his player rolls Stamina + Resolve to resist infection. Due to the virulent nature of the plague, human characters suffer a -2 penalty to this roll. The Storyteller may impose penalties or bonuses based on the duration and severity of exposure at her discretion. The player should only roll once per every 24 hours of non-supernatural plague exposure. This once-daily limitation explicitly does not include supernatural exposure, such as via Cachexy.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character contracts the septicemic plague. This manifests as headache, fever, and coma. If the victim survives for more than twelve hours, he develops a bloody cough and bleeds from bodily orifices. Take 4L damage every six hours until dead.

Failure: The character contracts the bubonic plague. For three to five days, he exhibits no symptoms. Six hours after symptoms start, the player must roll Stamina + Resolve (again at the -2 penalty) or the character takes 2L damage. After four or five days of symptoms, the disease has run its course, and no more damage is taken. If the character survives, he is inoculated against the plague and will not contract it again for a number of years equal to his Stamina unless infected by supernatural means.

Success: The character successfully resists infection for this round of exposure.

Exceptional Success: The character successfully resists all attempts of infection for the next month.

In combat, characters with any symptomatic form of plague are considered to have the "grave" version of the Sick Tilt (**Chronicles of Darkness**, p. 286).

Reacting to the Plague

Mortals try to keep the plague away however they can. Some turn to religious explanations. God is punishing the wicked, and should be appeased by whatever means possible. Processions of flagellants parade from city to city, begging for God's mercy, and serving as unwitting plague vectors.

Others turn to less pious methods, descending into drunken revelry and sex. Some of this is simple nihilism, but others are using old folk magics to keep the plague spirits away, a sort of sympathetic magic wherein the generative act is used to drive away spirits of death.

A story comes out of Marseilles: Three thieves are caught burgling a wealthy estate. In order to avoid their execution, they promise to provide the cure for the plague: a mixture of herbs and garlic steeped in vinegar. The "Three Thieves' Vinegar" catches on in popularity, though it is ineffective, but perhaps the people are more ready to believe that the wicked can protect themselves better than that the holy can.



Because of their duties in administering to the dead and dying, and because monasteries and churches are traditional shelters for the dead and dying, the clergy dies in droves during the plague.

The overwhelming scientific consensus declares that the plague is caused by foul vapors, and is spread through vectors like unburied bodies, the evil eye, and a conjunction of Jupiter, Saturn, and Mars in the 14th degree of Aquarius in 1346. Pope Clement V sits between two fires at Avignon. The doctors say that the smoke from the sweet herbs and incense can keep the plague miasma away. It works, perhaps because the heavy smoke repels the fleas.

Not everyone is so scientific. The common people of Europe find scapegoats in the outsiders amongst them — the lepers, the beggars, and in the largest minority: the Jews. False stories of Jews poisoning wells and spreading disease spring up all across Western Europe. Jewish people are driven away from their homes and murdered. Pope Clement writes a papal bull explaining the cause of the plague and that the Jewish people are not to blame, to little effect; the papacy and its surgeons have little authority outside of their immediate influence. If godly men and wicked men, learned men and fools are all killed by the plague, then why should anyone listen to what the Pope has to say about protecting anyone?

The Plague and the Damned

At first, the plague is a sort of bacchanal for the more nihilistic among the Kindred. Lots of people are dying, after all. No one is going care about a few more bodies heaped on the plague cart, even if they died of exsanguination rather than the plague. The Damned need mortals, however, and they need mortal society, lest they succumb to the sleep of ages. It's a mad scramble to hold onto a world that is falling apart, and to protect the ones that they hold dear from the plague — and from themselves.

A village has heard of the plague. A gaggle of pale children approaches after dusk in the middle of winter. They've been orphaned, they say. Won't someone take them in? Some say it's a bad idea to take in survivors who might be infected. The miller's father, toothless and half blind in his dotage, says the children are followed by birds of ill omen.

The headman refuses the children, saying there's hardly enough to eat for his own children. A kindly woman on the edge of town invites them all to stay at her hearth. They can hardly fit in her home, and none of them eat the food she offers, but she's grateful for the company. Her only child died of the murrains in autumn, and her husband is fighting in Burgundy. She tells them this. She ends up telling them everything about herself. She doesn't know why. One of them crawls into her lap and starts suckling at her breast, even though she hasn't been nursing for years, and she hardly feels it when the last of her blood is drained from her body. The Children's Crusade only leaves one person alive in the town — the miller's father. But when the sun sets the next evening, the kindly widow rises again, and the miller's father is her first victim.

A chain of villages in the Black Forest succumbs to the plague. Overnight, six of the victims are arranged in a grim tableaux atop the tallest hill in the village: a Dance of Death. The seventh victim appears not to have suffered the plague at all, but has a stake driven through its heart: when the sun rises, the corpse bursts into flames. It's the work of the VII, some say.

During a full moon in Edinburgh, a host of revenants bursts from the ground from the bodies of plague victims. Some say that it's due to pagan blood sorcery. Could there be a group of heretics in the midst of the capital, or is it simply a coincidence?

The Plague and the Created

If anything could shake a Promethean's faith in his Great Work, it would be the Black Death. Not only does the frailty of human bodies become painfully clear but the fault lines in human souls begin to show as well. Many reject the Pilgrimage altogether, forsaking their path for the Refinement of Flux, and embracing inhumanity.

Outside Marseille, Phillippe comes across a party of revelers who've found a wine cellar in an abandoned estate. A half-dressed merchant woman pulls him into a ditch and begs him to make love to her. He can think of no reason to refuse. He likes making people happy. A procession of flagellants comes by, preaching of the evils of the flesh, and how it must be mortified to receive God's forgiveness. When he looks down again the woman is crying and saying another man's name over and over again. He reaches out to comfort her, and she shrieks and kicks at him. He wonders if all of the people who've told him he's a monster are right.

The bones of St. Ethelwith, encased in her stone likeness, comes to life one evening as a worshipper weeps at her feet, begging for a cure. An Extempore is born. She remembers another life: curing people at a touch, or at least tending to the wounded. Her memory isn't very clear. Could she simply be "remembering" prayers and stories as if they happened to her? Regardless, she's determined to help these people, even if they are only going to turn on her in the end.

Sten witnesses the massacres of Strasbourg, when Christians, in terror and ignorance, turn their hatred upon local Jews, even though both communities are dying in droves. It's not the first time he has seen a mob of humans turn violently against an innocent. He hates them, and he hates himself for not turning against them sooner. He embraces the path of the Centimanus, and he turns the bodies of plague victims into hideous Pandoran minions to send after any fools who interfere.

The March of Death

A comprehensive summary of every place visited by the Black Death — from Kazakhstan to Iceland, from Baghdad to the Shetland Islands — is outside of the scope of this chapter. Below, a few locations are described in detail.

Autumn 1346: Outbreak in Caffa

Caffa, a Genoan outpost on the Crimean peninsula, is the city first to be besieged by the plague. Though the plague likely originates in the steppes of central Asia, and travels west along the trade routes and armies of the Golden Horde, the events that took place in the city would precipitate the deaths of over half of Europe's population.

Though in the mid-14th century Caffa was under Genoan control, it had once belonged to Venice. Many Venetian merchants and nobles resided in the city and in nearby areas. It was a thriving, diverse city, bustling with energy and life. It was the Western center for trade on the Black Sea. Caffa was a dark place for many, though. The same papal decree that established a Roman Catholic diocese in Caffa also permitted Christians in Caffa to buy and sell enslaved people, a practice that had virtually disappeared in Europe but was common in the Muslim world. Ostensibly, this was to keep enslaved Christians out of the hands of Muslims, but the excuse sounded as flimsy to medieval ears as it does to ours.

Though the Genoans had purchased the city directly from the Khan in the 13th century, the residents still owed taxes to the Mongols, and often refused to pay them. Tensions between the Latin Christians and the Muslim Mongols and Tatars rose throughout the 14th century and finally came to a head in 1343 in an exurb called Tana.

In 1343, a Venetian nobleman named Andreolo Civran murdered a Tatar Muslim in an argument, precipitating a riot. The nobleman fled to Caffa. The Tatars demanded justice, and so Khan Janibeg marched on Caffa. When the Genoese refused to turn Civran over to the Khan, Janibeg and his armies lay siege to the city for three years.

In 1346, the plague reached the Khan's armies. The Latins in Caffa rejoiced. The infidel, chroniclers suggest, is suffering the wrath of God, and his miserable death was God's punishment for laying siege to a Christian city.

Then the people of Caffa begin to sicken and die.

The Genoans might have kept the Khan's armies outside of Caffa, but they could not keep the rats outside of their walls. Contemporary chroniclers, of course, know nothing of how the plague is spread, and find themselves trying to justify how the plague could be affecting good Christians after they had previously decided that it was a divine punishment for the infidel. They say that the Khan launches the corpses of plague victims over the walls as he departs the city, his armies broken by the plague. Whether or not this is true or an Islamophobic fiction invented to preserve the existing beliefs of the Christians, it is unlikely that the plague spreads to Caffa via dead bodies. It is virtually impossible to spread the plague from a corpse, particularly from one that had rotted enough to be considered a viable biological weapon in medieval reckoning. Medical science at the time believed that disease spread through miasma, or the foul air thought to emanate from putrefying corpses.

Regardless, the pattern of scapegoating outsiders for the plague would continue all over Europe.

March 1348: The Vultures of Florence

In the mid-14th century, Florence is a booming metropolis of nearly 100,000 people and has much to be proud of. Florence is the first European state to mint gold coins in centuries, rather than using silver marks. It was once the home of Durante degli Alighieri, commonly called Dante, the greatest poet of the middle ages, and arguably of all of Western civilization. It would become the Athens of Europe in the Renaissance, and lead its people into a new age of art, technology, and philosophy.

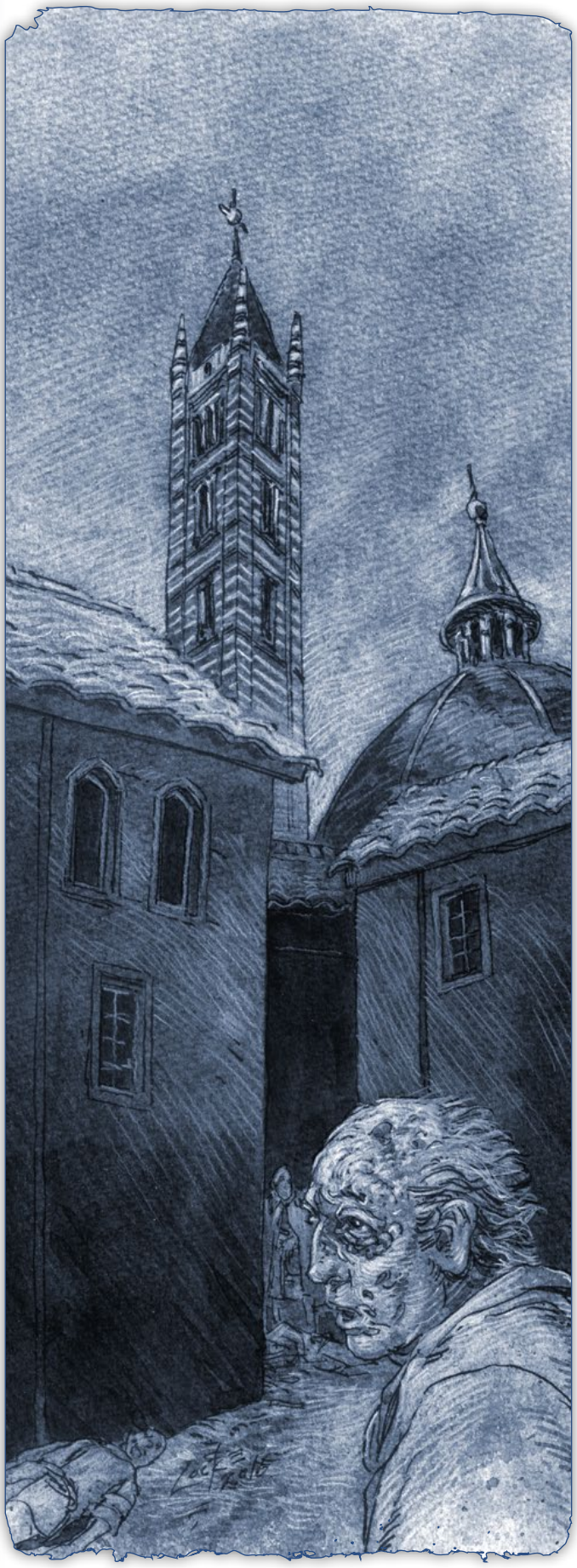
Of course, the city has a dark side. The banks of Florence prefigured the rise of mercantilism, but they also made disastrous investments by lending to monarchs who refused to repay their debts, leading to a mid-1340s financial crash. Florence exiled Dante, its most beloved son, after he ended up on the wrong end of a political struggle. The greatest patrons of the arts in Renaissance-era Florence would be the Medici family, a name now synonymous with corruption, violence, and crime for good reason.

Though early 14th-century Florence was a place of prosperity and splendor, it was also mired in centuries-old conflicts. The defining conflict of Italy was that of the Guelphs and the Ghibellines, two factions who had their origins in 12th-century territorial disputes in Lombardy. The agrarian Ghibellines supported the Holy Roman Emperor; the wealthy mercantile families of the Guelphs supported the Roman papacy. By the 1300s, however, the conflict had become divorced from its roots and evolved into a complex feud, with various families and political entities aligning themselves with different factions based more on local interest than on distant property disputes. Like modern gangs, the Guelphs and Ghibellines identified themselves by elaborate social performances: wearing a feather on the wrong side of one's cap, pinning the wrong color of rose to one's tunic, or even cutting one's fruit the wrong way to signify a political allegiance to one party of the other. The conflict was so bloody that the pope even forbade the use of the terms Guelph and Ghibelline in the 1330s.

Though Florence had always been a strong Guelph city, it is hardly free of inner conflict. Even by the early 14th century, the Guelphs had split into the White and the Black Guelphs. The Black Guelphs, who favored the pope at the time, seized power and exiled their opponents in a bloody coup. Several years later, they pardoned the exiled, save for Dante Alighieri, for his vicious rhetoric against the Blacks. Dante responded, of course, by immortalizing the Black Guelphs and Pope Boniface VIII in verse: They occupy the *malebolgias* of the eighth circle of Hell in his *Inferno*.

By the mid-14th century, the economy of Florence is stable enough that it takes in refugees and workers from other parts of Italy where war and chaos reigned. Even in times of war, Florence knows how to be a war profiteer. It's a bustling city where allegiances and fortunes change hands as readily as coins.

Like everyone, Florence is unprepared for the plague.



Traditional Florentine funerals are extravagant affairs. The body is splendidly dressed and perfumed and paraded through the streets, accompanied by a large crowd dressed in luxuriant funeral attire, each bearing a candle in honor of the deceased. If the family of the deceased can afford it, they will hire professional mourners. When the plague arrives, the economy of Florence is sent into a tailspin. The *beccamorti* (literally, "grave-diggers," but the term can be used in general to describe one who profits from another's misfortune, similar to the term "vultures" in English) make a fortune from selling biers, burial palls, and funerary cushions; they also drop dead in the streets, bitten by infected fleas. The *beccamorti* dig ditches down to the waterline and dump corpses in them. They throw a handful of dirt atop one layer of bodies before they add another layer. Soon the ditches are overflowing with the dead.

The local government places price caps on wax and wool, and forbids the local churches from ringing the bells for the dead, citing that the constant ringing of funeral bells is driving the population to despair. Only the churches and apothecaries keep their doors open. Priests charge exorbitant fees for their services. They feel justified in doing so — ministering to the dead and dying is risky business. The apothecaries sell poultices of mallow and mercury to draw away the sickness. They cure no one, but they line their pockets with florins.

The rest of the Florence flees to the countryside, carrying the plague with them. Others shut themselves away in common houses, drinking to forget. The healthy people dance, sing, and make love in an attempt to drive off the darkness. They do not succeed.

By October, eight Florentines in ten are dead. Those survivors who return to the city find an empty wasteland. Paupers wear the garments of noblemen and drink wine plundered from dead men's cellars. Florence, and the rest of Europe, will never be the same.

What Is to Come

After the Black Death, the world becomes a quieter, wilder place. The massive deforestation that had taken place during the Middle Ages halted, and quietly reversed. Rural areas become particularly depopulated, and cattle and other livestock graze where grains once grew. Meat and milk consumption grow, especially among the common folk. The standard of living rises for rural people. As labor shortages ensues, laborers demand higher wages and better conditions.

This worries the nobility. They respond in a variety of ways. Perhaps the pettiest of these are the sumptuary laws passed to ensure that only noble people could eat meat or wear fine clothes. Others had a more direct effect: the 1351 Statute of Labourers in England fixes wages at pre-plague levels, an attempt to ensure that the poor stay poor and the rich stay rich.

The common people are none too pleased. In response to the Statute of Labourers and other measures, the peasantry revolt in 1381, occupying Canterbury and rioting through the streets of London, threatening several members of the royal family. At nearly the same time in Florence, the Revolt of the Ciompi, a group of laborers who are unrepresented in civic government, violently overthrow civic authorities.

These commoner rebellions met with middling success at best. In England, the rioters went relatively unpunished, but saw few reforms from their government. In Florence, the Ciompi's removal from office was as violent as the coup they led to control the city. Indeed, tyrants in the years to come use the uprising as a justification for the autocratic rule that would keep Florence under their thumbs for centuries.

The priesthood takes a serious blow during the Black Death. Not only were priests disproportionately affected by the disease due to their role in providing aid the sick and last rites to the dying, but the unwillingness of many priests to perform their duties for fear of illness struck a serious blow to the credibility of the Church. Religion seemed to offer no help or salvation even to its most strident adherents.

This Is The End

"I leave parchment for continuing the work, in case anyone should still be alive in the future and any son of Adam can escape this pestilence and continue the work thus begun."

These were Irish chronicler John Clynn's final written words before he succumbed to the plague. To the sufferers of the Black Death, the end of the world seems imminent. The sheer scale of death across every population makes apocalypse seem inevitable. An epidemic on this scale has never been seen before in Europe. Dumbfounded by the plague, a question lingers on the lips of everyone who suffered through the plague: is this the end?

Of course, we all know what the answer to that is: the world does not end in 1356. Millions die, but life goes on.

But what if it didn't?

The world of Chronicles of Darkness is not the same as our own. In your game, the Black Death could be a mass extinction event, and there's no reason why your players should know whether or not mankind will survive. Don't let the characters be too secure in the future of their world.

Journey

The woman knew nothing about sailing, but she was strong and efficient, and she followed his orders to the letter without question. He ordered her to keep his coffin below decks and undisturbed in daylight hours; she obliged. If she had a name, she never offered it. He was grateful for her help. The waters of the Ionian Sea were treacherous, and running aground would be a disaster.

She seldom spoke, but she watched Egidio constantly, like an enormous wary child. It was easy to think of her as a tool, a mere extension of his own will, but the woman was clearly more than she seemed, and he kept reminding himself not to underestimate her.

"So, why did you want the box I was sleeping in?" he asked her one evening as they bailed water from the lower deck.

"I wanted a coffin," she said. "That box looked like one."

"Astutely observed," he said.

"I was going to give them a funeral," she said. "For their souls. It's important. Going to anoint them and say the words and wrap them in cloth," she added.

Egidio snorted. "That cloth is Tyrian purple damask. Do you know how rare that is?"

She shook her head.

"No one's made its like in 50 years," he said.

"I needed something," she said. "I couldn't use the sails."

"This is the sea," said Egidio. "There's no need to waste goods on a sailor's death. Those men knew the risks when they came aboard."

They continued to work in silence. Then, after several minutes, the woman spoke again. "What is it for, anyway?"

"What?"

"The. Uh. Tyrian purple damask," she said.

"I'm going to sell it, if we ever see land again, just like the rest of the cargo," said Egidio. "I'll make sure you get a decent share as well."

"Oh," said the woman.

A few more minutes passed.

"What are you?" she asked suddenly.

Egidio sighed. "I was a man once," he said. "Now I am not."

"Oh," she said. "I'm sorry."

"Don't be," he said.

She looked down at her bailing bucket. A dead rat floated in it. "Did you lose your soul?" she asked.

Egidio blinked.

"You don't have one," she said. "Do you?"

"No," he said. "I don't."

"Are you looking for it?" she said. "Is that why you're out here? I'm looking for my soul. Or a soul, anyway," she added.

"You're a very strange woman," Egidio said. "Keep bailing or we'll be underwater before we find harbor."

They kept bailing.

"Does all of this cargo, the silk, the peppercorns, does it make you feel more...?" she said.

Egidio arched an eyebrow. "More what?"

"More human," she said.

Egidio looked at the riches surrounding him. "There is nothing human about anyone who chooses this life," he said. "That's why I'm here."



Playing the Game

Below are three scenarios surrounding three different parts of Europe during the Black Death. "The Inquisition of Constantinople" follows Kindred politics in a dying city where shortsighted immortals squabble over temporal power in the face of the apocalypse. "The Alchemist's Gambit" details the difficult choices surrounding a ghoul alchemist who is searching for a cure for the plague — and for freedom from his domitor. Finally, "The Fisher King" follows a despairing Osiran who must choose to confront his own failures or resign himself to oblivion in a world seemingly without hope.

The Inquisition of Constantinople

The plague comes early to Constantinople.

At the time, it hardly seemed that the city could be in worse condition than it already was. The great Byzantine Empire was in tatters, a virtual rump state soon to be carved up by the Serbs and the Turks. Once the wealthiest, largest, and most intellectually advanced city in Europe with no rivals in sight, the sacking by the Latins in 1204 was a blow from which the city never recovered, even when the Byzantines retook the city in 1261.

In the decade leading up to the plague years, civil war ravages the Byzantine Empire. Two rival factions, one represented by the late Emperor's widow and young son, and the other by one of his chief administrators, each declared themselves the Emperor's rightful successors. During the infighting, the Byzantines rapidly lost territory to the Ottoman Turks, whose territories now surrounded them on both sides.

But in 1347, a glimmer of hope appears: the two factors had agreed to rule the Empire (such as it was) together in an uneasy truce.

The politics of the Byzantine Kindred are as volatile and shortsighted as those of their mortal counterparts. Before the siege of the Latins, the Kindred of Constantinople referred to their own government as the Camarilla. In their mind, the Roman Empire never fell, it just moved. The city was a de jure democracy led by a de facto oligarchy of ancillae and elders. Before the siege of 1204, the most powerful voice in the city was Euthimia Mystikos, Ventrue Matriarch of the Lancea et Sanctum. Euthimia had only recently reestablished herself as leader following a bloody political and doctrinal battle with an ambitious bishop, Nicetas Severus.

When the Kindred of the west learned of the Fourth Crusade's plans to crush the Byzantines, they saw no reason why they could not join in the plunder. While the mortal crusaders sacked the city after three years of siege, murdering civilians right and left, stealing everything that wasn't nailed down, and prying up everything that was, the Latin Damned saw their chance.

The frenzied Kindred among the conquerors staked and cannibalized the Greek Matriarch on the floor of Elysium. Nicetas gladly partook in the slaughter, welcoming a new chance for mobility. The old Camarilla members who didn't flee were forced to bow to their new masters or face the same fate. Most capitulated. All who didn't were mercilessly subjected to the amaranth. The elders of the west returned to their havens in Venice or Marseilles or Ghent wealthier than ever, leaving their ancilla protégés to rule in their absences, giving them pawns in the city and effectively ridding themselves of any annoyingly ambitious underlings at home.

Though the mortal Byzantines retook the city 60 years later, the Kindred leadership remained in power. Those Kindred installed by the Latin elders remained in charge, though the original Byzantines began to gain ground. Culturally speaking, they had a tremendous advantage. The mortal politics and administrata of Constantinople were complex and difficult to navigate for the Latin Kindred. ("Byzantine" is still used today to describe elaborate intrigues and opaque bureaucracy alike, and for good reason.)

Constantinople by Night

As it stands, the Camarilla of Constantinople have been replaced by a model based on Frankish feudalism. The King of Constantinople, Anastasius Invictus, mandates that all of the Kindred of the city swear an oath of fealty to him. The current church is headed by Nicetas Severus, now the Patriarch of the Byzantine Lancea et Sanctum. Nicetas serves as Anastasius' left hand, and occasionally demands that his flock take communion enhanced with his liege's (or his own) Vitae. But Anastasius is hardly unopposed. Quietly, old Byzantine forces amass support against him. Maria Eurphrosyne is an old lover and confidant of Euthymia Mystikos, and she has been waiting for her opportunity for revenge for over a century. Once a high-ranking oligarch of the Camarilla, Maria knows how to play the long game against newcomers like Anastasius.

Anastasius suspects that Maria and her associates are plotting against him, but he lacks any concrete proof. His impulse is to crush them with brute force and then convict them *post mortem*, but Nicetas Severus has so far convinced him to be more subtle. Maria is a Mekhet, as are many of her followers, and she would easily evade a direct attack. However, Nicetas is convinced he's found a way to turn Maria's own people against themselves.

The Plague Disembarks

The Genoan traders fleeing the plague in Caffa land in Constantinople first. It is the first metropolis of Europe to be devastated by the plague. If the sacking of Constantinople by the Latins was the mortal wound, then the Black Death is the city's deathblow. Constantinople had nearly 1 million inhabitants at its height in the 10th century; when the Ottomans come in 1453, there will be only 50,000. One of the Emperor's own two sons would be killed by the plague.

The Morbus Purge

Never a man to waste an opportunity, Patriarch Nicetas sees an opening when the plague arrives. The Morbus bloodline has long had a presence in Constantinople. 800 before, several of its members were formally censured on charges

of exacerbating the plague of Justinian; all were summarily executed. Nicetas sees no reason why that shouldn't happen again.

With the approval of King Anastasius, Nicetas demands a formal Inquisition against the Morbus in the city. He accuses Maria Eurphrosyne formally of being a Mekhet, which she denies. Two nights later, Anastasius is found bled dry and dismembered in his chambers, with the symbol "VII" written on the wall in his blood. Nicetas declares the Morbus responsible. He portrays the Morbus as enemies all of the Kindred of Constantinople. He claims that they are a radical element of the old, pre-Latin Lancea et Sanctum who seek to destroy the city. Not only are they intent on destroying all of your feeding grounds with the plague, he says, but they also wish to murder anyone who would stand in their way. Nicetas demands a purge. Maria sneers at him and calls his move a brazen political stunt, citing the convenience of Anastasius' demise.

Complications

While the situation is hardly straightforward as it stands, several complicating factors are at work in Constantinople.

- While the population of mortals in Constantinople has been in decline for centuries, the number of Damned residents has remained fairly steady. Complex feeding laws and rituals have ensured an adequate supply of mortals for all. While these policies don't prevent all territory struggles, they ensure that the city functions in an orderly fashion most of the time. The system has been in a state of steady decline for the last two centuries, as King Anastasius is not as capable an administrator as his forebears, but it still functions adequately until the plague arrives. When the healthy population of the city crashes, disaster ensues. The baroque system of feeding rights and carefully-drawn feeding territories dissolves under the weight of thousands of corpses as the Kindred scramble to stay fed.

- The Morbus have quietly lived in Constantinople for nearly a millennium. The Black Death ensures a steady supply of victims for them — which is both a blessing and a curse. Whether the Morbus actively spread plague, or whether they are purposefully exacerbating its effects, is debatable. The bloodline is reluctant to identify itself due to fears of persecution, but that may simply be making the problem worse. Then rumors arise that an ancient, nameless Morbus in the city has declared that this plague is the End of Days, and that his family should rise up and devour every mortal in sight, but they are thus far unsubstantiated.

- An ancient vampire stirs from his fitful dreams in the Constantinople nights. Acacius is a Daeva who recalls the plague of Justinian, and when he wakes, he moans about enemies in their midst and how the Morbus must be punished. He's absolutely mad, of course, and can no longer distinguish his dreams from reality, but he's still powerful enough to pull others into his reverie. He could be a useful pawn for either side, assuming one is willing to risk the dangers of interacting with him.

- A neonate childe of Nicetas reports a troubling sight: a shadowy figure hunkered over the body of a plague victim, sucking out its last, agonized breaths. One of the Strix is stalking the nights of Constantinople, he says. Both sides of the conflict immediately seize upon the sighting. Nicetas says that the sighting is proof of the depravity of the Morbus, who are clearly working in concert with the Owls. Maria states that the Strix, if they are present in the city, represent the greatest threat to Kindred existence in Constantinople rather than the supposed Morbus threat.

The Alchemist's Gambit

Among the *beccamorti* of Florence stands a physician who is not merely an opportunist, but also an alchemist who is genuinely convinced that he can find a cure for the plague. He may even be right.

Bastiano di Fiorenza is a former monk working as a family doctor and, more secretly, as a court magician for the wealthy del Buono family. Most of his simple nostrums are no more effective than any other folk remedies of the day, but occasionally he provides his patrons with some of the real fruits of his serious passion: black alchemy.

Mostly, the del Buonos are content to let his resident genius do his work and ask little of him. Poisoning a rival here, performing a quiet abortion there, but nothing too serious. Bastiano always thought the family was strange, but he never looked too hard. His work was more important than their eccentricities, and maintaining access to their funds was doubly so. He heard several of them speak quietly of Saint Veronica, and how she spoke to them and blessed their family, but he had just written it off as religious zeal.

When rumors of a plague in Sicily reached Florence, things changed. Late one night in the cool, damp winter of 1347, Saint Veronica appeared to him in the flesh in his laboratory. The intense, deathly pale woman told Bastiano that he must find a cure for the coming plague and administer it to his patron's family or else die a miserable death. She offered him a curious red tincture, and demanded that he drink it. He was hesitant at first, but like any mad alchemist, could not resist the opportunity to use himself as a test subject.

He found that the wondrous concoction invigorated his body and sharpened his senses. He returned to his studies and made fantastic progress. He discovered a hypothetical panacea, an alchemical potion that would cure all illness, and perhaps even prolong life indefinitely. The panacea is a simple recipe: it requires limbs of five Prometheans to be boiled into a sort of broth, then distilled into a pure essence.

He needs the head of an Ulgan, the left arm of a Galateid, the right arm of an Osiran, the left leg of a Tammuz, and the right leg of an Amirani.

But Bastiano soon felt the ill aftereffects of consuming Saint Veronica's tincture. He found his previous vigor gone, replaced with an insatiable craving to have more of the stuff. Surely enough, Saint Veronica visited him again, and it was only with superb force of will that he managed to avoid drinking the mixture in its entirety. He kept it for study, and has come to some fascinating conclusions about the substance.

The Decision

Bastiano now finds himself in a quandary. He knows nothing of the Kindred or the Danse Macabre, but he knows that something is wrong with "Saint" Veronica. He has figured out that she's not a Galateid — or a "demon of air," as he calls them — despite the miraculous properties of her blood. He resents his newfound dependence on her, and he isn't especially fond of death threats, so he is willing to find another way out of producing the panacea for his new mistress. (He's already begun researching some alchemical solutions to his problem, and has some promising results.) Though he doesn't feel the same Disquiet with Veronica that allows him to torture Prometheans without compunction, and the Vinculum pushes against it, he is fascinated with the idea of opening her up and discovering just what makes her tick. After all, there's more than one way to the *secretum secretorum*, and he might just find it in the saint's unbeating heart.

The Saint

Veronica del Buono has protected her family's interests for two centuries, and has no interest in stopping any time soon. While Veronica is human enough that she refuses to turn her family members into craven ghouls, she has no compunctions about doing so to Bastiano, whom she considers a gullible opportunist. He's a greedy obsessive, and in her mind there's no kind of person that's easier to lead around by the nose. Alternatively, del Buono could be substituted for any other prominent Kindred in your chronicle.

BASTIANO DI FIORENZA

For all of man's toil and good works, he reaps nothing but misery in this world. Is it wrong to want more?

Background: Though he calls himself di Fiorenza, Bastiano was born near Pisa in 1312, the son of a professional soldier. He was a bright, headstrong young man who was sought his future in the Church rather than in the military, however, and joined a monastery as a young man, disappointing his Ghibelline parents. Bastiano thinks he's the smartest person in the room, and he's usually right. Sometimes, however, he's just a little too clever for his own good.

He was never especially pious, but he was a voracious scholar, and always found himself getting into theological



arguments with his superiors. He preferred the works of Albertus Magnus and Roger Bacon to the works of mystics and saints.

In 1328, famine devastated Tuscany. At the time, a mendicant friar had taken refuge at Bastiano's small monastery. He noticed that the man never seemed to eat, which all of the other brothers took as a sign of great piety — the gift of inedia was rarely bestowed upon men. Bastiano, however, was suspicious. He knew that there was *something* wrong with the man, and his suspicions were confirmed when he caught the man hiding in a shed eating a tree branch. In that instant, he saw the man as he truly was: a monster with shriveled skin and twisted limbs. He killed the creature with a spade, but as soon as he struck its head from its body, it transformed back into a man before his very eyes.

He left the monastery that night, stealing as many of its books and materials as he could. He brought the creature's corpse with him and hid in a cave, stealing food from locals while he studied its bizarre anatomy. When the creature returned to life and begged Bastiano to let it go, he refused. He kept it alive for days, asking questions, running experiments, finding himself alternately fascinated and revolted by it. Bastiano learned many secrets in those days, and used them to great advantage when he needed patrons in Florence.

Description: Bastiano has the lean, distracted look of a man who occasionally forgets to eat. He dresses simply, often wearing monastic garments when it suits his purposes. He suffered from smallpox as a teenager, and still has some scars on his cheeks and nose — a reminder of what is at stake for him when the plague invades Florence.

Storyteller Hints: Bastiano is good at picking his targets. He generally looks for naive, good-natured Prometheans. He'll ask them earnestly if they want to help him discover a cure for the plague, and potentially save thousands of lives (like everyone, Bastiano has no idea how terrible the plague will become). It's not so bad, he says, to just lose your arm or your leg. Sacrificing

yourself for your fellow man is part of being human, he says. They will love you if they know that you can save them, he says. Of course, as soon as the Promethean is firmly secured into his alchemical restraints, he leeches as much Vitriol as he can from her body before harvesting it for spare parts.

Alternatively, Bastiano may decide that he's had enough of his mistress, and needs to be rid of her. He could manipulate a throng of Prometheans into the task — it's not hard to make a soulless, bloodsucking vampire look like a Pandoran — or he could reach out to hunters or other Kindred to finish the job. He'd make a useful asset or pawn in the Danse Macabre for any Florentine Kindred, or for one who has an interest in the other strange creatures inhabiting the world.

Virtue: Visionary

Vice: Ambitious

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 4, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics (Religion) 4*, Crafts (Alchemical Apparatus) 3*, Investigation 3, Medicine 3, Occult (Alchemy, Prometheans) 5*, Politics (Florence) 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Survival 1, Stealth 2, Weaponry 1

Social Skills: Empathy 3, Expression (Written) 3, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 3, Socialize (Nobility) 2, Subterfuge 4

Merits: Allies (del Buono Family and Friends 3), Contacts (Clergy 2), Fast-Talking 3, Indomitable, Language (Latin), Multilingual (Arabic, Greek), Profession (Alchemist, *denotes a Profession Skill), Resources 3

Health: 8

Regnant Clan: Mekhet

Disciplines: Auspex 1, Celerity 1

Vitae/Per Turn: 3/1

Magnitude: 3

Distillations: Alchemicus — Purification; Contamination — Guilt Trip; Mesmerism — Misdirect; Spiritus — Personal Shield; Vitality — Roar of the Defiant; Vulcanus — Steal Pyros

Pyros/Per Turn: 7/1

Willpower: 7

Size: 5

Speed: 10

Defense: 3

Initiative: 6

Armor: None

Bastiano awakens Pandorans as a Promethean with Azoth 3. These Pandorans can sense that Bastiano's body has only human essence and so is not an ideal target. They will only attack him in the absence of nearby Prometheans.

As a ghoul, Bastiano has the following abilities:

Physical Intensity: By spending a point of Vitae, Bastiano may add two dice to rolls involving his choice of Strength, Dexterity, or Stamina for one turn.

Healing: By spending 1 point of Vitae, Bastiano may heal one point of lethal damage or two points of bashing damage. By spending 5 Vitae over two consecutive nights, he may heal a point of aggravated damage.

Endurance: As long as he has at least 1 point of Vitae, Bastiano does not risk falling unconscious if his Health track is full of bashing damage.

A Taste of Blood: Bastiano can use the ability described on p. 91 of **Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition**.

The Fisher King

Even as the medieval era is in its death throes, the story of King Arthur is more popular than ever among European nobility. Not only are the English and French fond of the stories, but the tales of romance inspire poets in Italy like Boccaccio and Dante to write the stories of tragic, romantic heroes. Yet the nature of Arthurian stories is changing. The old Welsh stories of the heroic king who slew giants and went on fantastic adventures are being replaced by a different kind of story — a kind of story that centers on his court as much as him. The Arthurian romances begin to take the form that we are familiar with today: where Arthur is the tragic, noble, but ultimately passive figure cuckolded by his best friend and undone by his own adolescent sexual misadventures.

An Osiran Promethean has latched on to some of the legends surrounding the Knights of the Round Table and the quest for the Holy Grail. Seeking to understand his own existence and the Great Work, he has become engrossed with the legend, searching for the Holy Grail: the only thing that will make him whole again. He calls himself the Fisher King.

Cornwall, July 1349

In the marshes east of Morgenstow where the River Tamar begins, a 400-year-old Saxon church is sinking into the mire, its gradual decline hastened by the relentless rains that have assaulted the parish for two months. It's the home of the Fisher King, and no one goes near it.

Farmers sow seeds in the earth only to find them rotting in the soil. The ewes give birth to stillborn lambs. Midges and horseflies swarm around the cloudy eyes of humans and animals alike, and both are too listless to swat the pests away. Sailors drown in the treacherous seas along the coastline, but no one bothers to bury them. When the plague comes at Eastertime, the population does not panic. They only despair at what seems to the logical conclusion to their misery: death by the plague.

The Quest for the Grail

The Fisher King is aware of what is happening around him. He knows that he is at the epicenter of a terrible Wasteland, created during an failed attempt at *multiplicatio*. Like many alchemists throughout history, the Fisher King believes that the Holy Grail is a metaphor for his successful Pilgrimage. He is a mystic as well as a philosopher, and has tried to recreate the legends during his ramble.

Before he called himself the Fisher King, he was called Peredur. He traveled with his companion, a Galateid who called herself Perevida. After traveling from his native Wales to Brittany and back to Cornwall, Peredur decided it was time to create his own progeny. "Galahad," he would call him, after the purest of the Knights of the Round Table and the recipient of the Grail in legend. Perevida was reluctant: she thought they weren't ready to advance the Great Work.

Perevida was right. The creation that would have been called Galahad never came to be, and a cluster of hideous Pandorans was birthed from the bath of holy water and rose petals. It killed Perevida, and left Peredur broken. The monster dragged her body into the swamp to feed. Fattened on her Vitriol, it encapsulated into a chrysalis. Soon, it will emerge as a terrible *praecipitatus*, ready to feast on its creator and anyone else unlucky enough to come near it.



THE FISHER KING

This doomed castle is all that remains of my kingdom. I am not its keeper; it is mine.

Background: Like many Osirans, The Fisher King sees himself as a royal figure. His progenitor told him that he was of a great lineage of kings that was old when Rome was young, and he still believes it. The myths of kings and knights have given him a framework to live his life around, and with which to relate to humanity.

In Perevida, he found his lady — a beautiful, ideal woman that he could place on a pedestal. As a Galateid, she was accustomed to being worshipped, even though it made her uncomfortable. He styled her as a damsel in distress and himself as her lordly protector, and Perevida was, for the most part, happy to play along — even though she was as capable as he, if not more so. The two adventured across Europe, and they grew closer, though their relationship could never surmount the distance that the Fisher King had placed between them. He would allow no imperfections in himself, and would admit no imperfections in her, and Perevida didn't quite have the strength or the words to argue with him.

In truth, he was deeply in love with Perevida, and that frightened him. How could he be a proper man, he thought, when he was missing that body part which human men seem to think defines their relationship with women? How could she accept him as a man?

His answer to that, then, was to create progeny with her help. It would be the closest he could get to expressing his erotic desire for her. Surely, he thought, that would bring him closer to being a real man.

Description: The Fisher King looks like a storybook knight: curly black hair, a strong brow, an athletic build. In the past, he labored hard to present himself as such. But in his current state, cracks are beginning to show in his veneer of nobility. His mail shirt is rusting, and his clothing is muddy and falling apart. When his disfigurements show, he weeps mucosal tears that leave dark stains on his cheeks.

Like the first of his line, the Fisher King has been emasculated. In his Torment, he feels phantom pain at the wound that drives him to distraction, and can scarcely will himself to stand for the pain. His speech is slow and monotone. He moves slowly and with great effort, like a swimmer after returning to the shore.

Beneath the stench of swamp gas and mud, the Fisher King smells faintly of myrrh.

Storytelling Hints: For all of his lordly affectations, the Fisher King is ultimately a dependent person. Without his understanding of himself as a gallant savior, a knight on sacred quest, or the champion of a lady, he cannot function.

If he meets another throng, he is gracious, and resumes a kingly demeanor, even if his domain is a miserable ruin in a swamp. If left to his own devices, he likely becomes a Centimanus, as he cannot bear the thought of killing his own progeny (to him, it is all that remains of his beloved), and flees from it or attempts to control it.

Lineage: Osiris

Refinement: Stannum

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Crafts 1, Medicine 1, Occult (Prometheans) 3

Physical Skills: Athletics (Showing Off) 4, Brawl 2, Survival 3, Ride 2, Weaponry (Longsword) 5

Social Skills: Empathy 3, Expression (Lute) 3, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 3, Socialize 2

Merits: Azothic Object 2 (Carnwennan, a longsword), Fast Reflexes 2, Light Weapons 3, Language (English), Multilingual (Latin, French), Residual Memory (Persuasion, Weaponry) 2, Striking Looks 2

Willpower: 5

Pilgrimage: 3

Elpis: Idealism

Torment: Despair

Initiative: 9 (7 when using shield)

Defense: 3 (+1 with shield)

Armor: 3 (Chainmail, -2 to Defense and Speed when worn)

Size: 5

Speed: 11

Health: 7

Azoth: 3

Pyros/per Turn: 12/3

Bestowment: Revivification

Transmutations: Disquietism — Externalize, Weaponize; Electrification — Arc, Imperatus

THE LANCE

How many saints lost to Heaven, and how many saints on Earth?

Description: When Dormant, the Lance resembles nothing so much as a twisted, blackened tree branch, snaked with briars. They are as likely to be found standing upright like a tree as they are to be floating in the water, innocently drifting along a current towards prey.

When active, they appear as a vaguely human-shaped headless monstrosity. Their skin is like knotted rosewood, but their patterns suggest scales more than bark. Their arms and legs have a sort of sinister grace, and the long, delicate fingers terminate in deadly barbs. Their joints bleed bright red arterial blood when they move. Though they have no



head, one or more faces sometimes appear in their chest (or back, if they need to see what's behind them — or their hands, if they need to look around corners). To the Fisher King, the Lance's face looks a little like Perevida. When excited, they repeat a stanza from "The Spoils of Annwn," one of Peredur's favorite poems, over and over again: *How many saints lost to Heaven, and how many on Earth?*

Rank: 2

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 6, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 7, Stamina 5

Social Attributes: Presence 5, Manipulation 1, Composure 4

Skills: Athletics 5, Brawl 4, Stealth 5

Willpower: 8

Initiative: 11

Defense: 6

Armor: 2

Size: 4

Speed: 18

Health: 9

Pyros/per turn: 12/2

Dread Powers: Armor (2), Bizarre Weaponry (2), Camouflage (2), Consume Vitriol, Divide, Paralyze (2), Sense Vitriol, Track Pyros



Cachexy

Cachexy is the hallmark of the Morbus. Facility with the Discipline is enough to be considered a member of the bloodline, according to most authorities. Cachexy allows a wielder to selectively spread or worsen any one of the diseases that he has sampled throughout his unlife. They may choose to spread a truly vicious disease like the Black Death or smallpox, but they could also choose a less grave condition. For rules on disease in general see **Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition**, p. 183, or **Chronicles of Darkness**, p. 96.

Diagnose •

This power is crucial for the survival of any Morbus, for it allows them to identify suitable victims from which to feed. Even if a victim is asymptomatic, their malady calls out to the nearby Morbus like rotting meat attracts flies.

This power detects disease in any person or animal present. An infected flea or rat is visible; a smear of infected blood on a table is not. This power identifies any Kindred who are carrying a disease currently (see Feeding During the Plague, p. 91). If used against a vampire using Obfuscate, resolve the conflict using the rules for a Clash of Wills (**Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition**, p. 125).

Cost: None

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Medicine + Cachexy

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character receives a completely false or misleading impression of his surroundings.

Failure: The character receives no impression at all of the people around him.

Success: For one scene, the character can sense who in his line of sight harbors an infection.

Exceptional Success: As above, but the character can identify which diseases are present in his surroundings.

Contaminate ••

This power allows a user to supernaturally contaminate any surface. With Contaminate, a Morbus can make the most mundane-seeming object harbor a deadly illness, capable of infecting mortals and the Damned alike.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Requirement: The Morbus spills his blood on small object or area no greater than a square yard (included in cost).

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

Duration: One night

Effects: Anyone who touches the object or area with bare skin risks infection with the disease. Make a reflexive Stamina roll: failure indicates infection, success indicates resistance. Exceptional success renders the victim immune to any supernatural attempts to inflict the same disease.

The Damned suffer no symptoms, but can act as carriers of the disease if applicable.

Inflame •••

This power exacerbates an existing illness. This illness can be one that the Morbus has supernaturally inflicted with the use of his power of Contaminate, or it can be a pre-existing condition.

This power cannot be used on a single victim more than once at a time. It can be used repeatedly and serially to extend the duration of the effects. This power only affects mortals.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Wits + Survival + Cachexy – target's Stamina

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Morbus either cures the target's disease or sends it into remission for the rest of the story, whichever is applicable. The player cannot opt to intentionally turn a normal Failure in to a Dramatic Failure for the purposes of curing disease.

Failure: No effect.

Success: The target's illness flares up. His symptoms become unbearable. In addition to whatever Tilt he may be suffering from, he takes an additional -2 modifier to all rolls for a number of turns equal to the number of successes rolled.

Exceptional Success: As above, but the victim collapses in the first turn, unable to take any actions or defend himself.

Plague-Bearer ••••

Though it is the most indirect of the Cachexy powers, Plague-Bearer is the most feared. Strategic use of this power can bring a city to its knees.

Cost: 1 Vitae per turn

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Medicine + Cachexy

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character infects no one; he cannot use any Cachexy powers until the next sunset.

Failure: The character infects no one; he cannot use Plague-Bearer again until the next sunset.

Success: The character infects up to three mortals *or* one vampire with a chosen disease per success rolled. Targets must be within 10 yards per dot of Stamina that the character possesses.

On subsequent turns, the character can continue to infect the same number of new victims. He can walk up to his Speed per turn, but he cannot speak or take any kind of complex action while maintaining this power.

Exceptional Success: No additional effect beyond infecting a staggering number of targets.

Chronicles of Darkness and the Black Death

The Kindred and the Created aren't the only monsters affected by the Black Death. The other supernatural beings of Europe must also watch the world die around them.

Demons see the work of the God-Machine in the plague, especially those Inquisitors who delve into the disease's origins. An illness that can kill in hours, passed from fleas to rats to humans? Obviously Aetheric in nature. Of course, human beings see the plague and filter it through their own biases as well, so the Unchained aren't necessarily *correct* in their assumptions, but it has led to some demons trying to experiment — turning plague-carrying rats into cryptids, and so forth.

With so many dead, the **Sin-Eaters** are busy. The Underworld overflows with the souls of the dying, and the Stricken are unquestionably the most numerous and powerful of the Bound. Different factions disagree about how best to approach the plague, though. Some feel it is a natural disaster, and must be allowed to run its course. Others opine that, while it might be a natural occurrence, that doesn't matter — a fire can't be allowed to destroy cities even if it started "naturally." A Venetian Sin-Eater named Adolpho claims to have learned a Ceremony to restrict, if not cure, the plague, though other voices in the Bound community warn against trusting him.

Florence is a wasteland; 80% of the population died in the plague. This may not have been simply a confluence of opportunism and bad luck, though. An offshoot of the Black Guelphs, a nameless cult using a serpent as their symbol, draws its practices from ancient texts of the Middle East. Records are spotty — much of their membership is dead — but rumor states that they are attempting to revive a **mummy** of immense power. Other rumors state that they already have, and that the plague is the result.

Mages have much the same debate as Sin-Eaters — is it proper to intervene, and to what degree? As they discuss, though, they note that magic might be able to cure the plague in any given victim, but it is spreading far, far too quickly for the Awakened as a whole to make any difference. Many are the mages who find a bubo and reason that they can be magically cured, only to die, coughing up blood, miles from the nearest Thyrsus, cursing their own arrogance.

Finally, the **Beasts** despise the plague. A monster from the shadows is nothing compared to the monumental specter of the Black Death. Some of the Begotten have adopted infectious motifs or threats into their feeding practices, but many of them feel that it sours the meal, the terror of the feast tainted with the bitter, bleak *certainty* of painful death that the plague brings.

Accelerate Disease ●●●●●

The Morbus calls out to the infected blood of his victim and powers it with his own magic. This power can cause even a non-lethal disease to rage through the target's body, and possibly even kill him in minutes.

This power does not work on other Kindred.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Wits + Survival + Cachexy – target's Stamina

Action: Instant

Roll Results:

Dramatic Failure: The Morbus either cures the target's disease or sends it into remission for the rest of the story, whichever is applicable. The player cannot opt for a Failure instead of a Dramatic Failure with the intent of curing his target.

Failure: No effect.

Success: The victim takes a point of lethal damage per success rolled. This manifests in a manner appropriate to the disease: a bubonic plague victim erupts in bleeding rashes and his internal organs ulcerate, a smallpox victim's skin and eyes explode into oozing sores, an influenza victim's fever spikes as he chokes on bloody sputum, etc.

Exceptional Success: As above, but the victim collapses in the first turn, unable to take any actions or defend themselves.

Epilogue: Arrival

It was not unusual to see a ship run aground in these waters, but this ship's sails were intact. Not a single man was on board. The elders said it was a bad sign, and wouldn't go near it, but the young and the ambitious went to search the wreck. They found silk, and gold, and sweet and spicy smelling things that they couldn't identify. They brought them back to the village and celebrated. They opened the final box, and saw a corpse inside that burst into flame as soon as they opened it. They knew then that they'd made a terrible mistake.

The first of them died two weeks later, begging the forgiveness of God for their avarice. Their prayers went unanswered.



I'd spent four days following Portuguese sailors down the river. The boat was a launch from one of their ships, too heavy and wide for the reed-choked offshoots of the Zambezi. They groaned as they paddled, yet their strength never faltered, and I knew the reason for the big boat once they'd tied it to the shore beside another boat, steps from the cave. I saw a ragged edge that marked the cave's original wall, but worked stone and wooden beams bordered the other side, where they'd expanded the passage's width. The boatmen uncovered shovels, picks, and camping supplies and dragged them to sit beside a cluster of dirty, cream-colored tents.

This was Shava Clan land, but I saw a few broken rifles and a freshly-covered pit, and knew what the Portuguese had done. At first I thought they'd found gold, but their people and tools weren't right. I waited for night and asked Mutota to help me sneak past their fires.

Beyond the expanded cave lay other stonework, but it wasn't European, or anything like our own old ruins. Magic had worked rock like it was clay into a seamless underground house. Instead of a bed, there was a high, circular slab. I understood the marks along its edge. They were designed to contain evil. The thing that slept on it had features belonging to a bat, a snake, and some sort of skinless lion. Something about it twisted my sight.

I left before dawn. I asked the ancestors to make my voice a bird in the wind, and sing a message to Shingai.

• • •

"They'd call it a bargain with the Devil." Shingai gave me a deep look with a still, serious face. It made me uncomfortable. He was my elder and obviously trying to communicate with feeling, and I was fidgeting on a ridiculous gilt throne. I clutched the elephants on both arms to still myself.

"Is that the same as the Iblis Arabs talk about?"

"So they tell me." He let his left hand flutter a bit to emphasize the unclean subject of our conversation. "This is just poetic fancy, though. It's not as if an evil ancestor would guide this arrangement — well, not in the usual sense. Can I tell you what I think of the Devil?"

"I think you're going to tell me anyway."

"These people don't know who their forefathers were — I mean, they know the names of their old kings, but to them they're just paintings and marks on stones. Imagine if you suffered that predicament. What would you do?"

Shingai was always ready to share some notion about what Europeans were really like. He was an old man with plenty of insights but he had trouble with the modern way of thinking. I suppose when he was young the Portuguese were a novelty but nowadays you couldn't stroll around the palace (something I did to irritate the Serpent's Tongues whenever I was in the capital) without passing by a few red-faced men milling about.

"I suppose I'd look for guidance anywhere. I'd talk to God myself. Lots of people do that anyway."

"But you wouldn't have anyone who knows the secrets, and can turn your uneducated prayers into real action."

"I'd …*make* God listen. Somehow. Louder prayers. I suppose if I were desperate enough I'd call on ancestors I didn't know."

"You don't know about ancestors! When people die you think they go…well, who knows where? Some ridiculous place like 'Heaven.'"

"Ah! I'd make them up! Give them names!" I smiled weakly, waiting for Shingai to get to the point. He raised his hands; I guess I'd said the right thing.

"When you didn't get what you want, what then? You've already lied to yourself. Obviously, if you can make up ancestors, you can make up evil ghosts — perhaps even an enemy for God. That's the Devil: an explanation for why prayers fail." He straightened his robe with a quick snap, pleased with himself.

"I think it's a bit more sophisticated than that. It must be a way of looking at things that works well for them, or else they never would have made it here. I've talked to their priests and they make an excellent point, asking: How do witches keep coming back, no matter how often we defeat them? Maybe there really is some greater enemy. One Jesuit told me the Devil used to test people for God, but he tested us too much, and saw too many flaws. You know how people get set in their ways. Maybe this Iblis or Satan turned evil out of habit.

"You think I'm just talking about Europeans, though. I'm talking about *you*. So Prince, have your ancestors given you any advice about this idea, or are you deceiving yourself?"



Princes of the Conquered Land

Wakagarika ngewakafa; mupenyu pfumo riri mushure.

(The one at peace is the one who is dead; as for the living, a spear is poised behind him.)

– Shona Proverb

Beyond deserts, pyramids, mountains, and the princes of Kongo, the Mutapa Empire abides. The Shona built prior kingdoms out of flowing water, gold, and martial steel, but ambition always throws the mix of elements askew. Dominant clans reign until riverbeds run dry, miners deplete veins of gold, and warriors change sides. The Shona don't treat collapse as an apocalypse, but as a manifestation of natural law. The totems and other basic units of civilization endure, and will flower under kings once more. One's forebears die, but never abandon the people. They plant the seeds of greatness to come.

For Europeans, civilization is more fragile. They mix the evolving present with a mythic past. Christendom and Roman glory. Monasticism and Greek philosophy. This Fallen age and dreams of Atlantis. Mage and Sleeper alike dream of a new Rome, and new Atlantis. For them, every true civilization has world-conquering, thousand-year ambitions.

European Awakened believe in Atlantis, an empire of mages, and a Fall, when Exarchs cast the world into deception. Thus, to redeem humanity, mages must forge a new, world-spanning utopia. Many of them assume that the magi of any culture they encounter would believe the same thing. Magic is truth and truth is universal, so how could it be any other way? Shona mages defy these expectations by framing their Awakening in the context of legendary ancestors and thinking of culture as an eternally recurring phenomenon. The great ancestors, or *Mhondoros*, teach them through Awakened mediums.

While the Awakened debate Utopias, other, more toxic dreams lie beneath the sands of the Northern wastes, far from the Mutapa Empire. The Shan'iatu let the desert swallow Irem not to abandon rule, but to extend it eternally. Their Arisen servants snatch tribute from the world of the living and send it down to Duat, where doctrine says it goes to their Judges, but heresy suspects it maintains Shan'iatu power in that dread realm. Combined with the rise of the Old Kingdom, Irem's destruction ensured that the Deathless would crawl over the world, to seize mystic Vessels. They've come far — farther than they would have by going to Europe — to steal Mutapa's treasures, but must contend with the poor, ambitious Arisen who shadow Portuguese visitors.

Theme: A Clash of Ancestors

Shona traditions honor their ancestors, and the Awakened feel these most fiercely. The Mhondoros both speak to them and intercede with *Mwari*, the Shona concept of God, and bring them together in four clans to defend the eternal traditions of civilization. Their European counterparts also obey ancestral directives, framed by the legend of Atlantis and the Paths, gifts of the five kings called Oracles.

Ruled by the Judges of Duat, the Deathless obey the traditions their mage-kings set before humans learned to cast bronze. Yet, as they serve, they rule, playing the part of god-ruler for the cults they build. They masquerade as *Shavi*, foreign ghosts who watch over arts and crafts. The first Deathless visitors learned to disguise themselves within local tradition because otherwise, potential cultists would never

accept their strange and sometimes repellant customs. New arrivals operate with less subtlety, and like the Europeans they accompany, many see the Empire as a state they can exploit to death.

Mood: Anticipation and Instability

Like its predecessors, the Mutapa Empire weathers coups and civil strife, but everyone senses that the Portuguese have brought a new, potentially catastrophic factor into traditional politics. Great wealth awaits anyone who can adapt to the changes, but disaster awaits the timid. It's the same for the Awakened and Arisen, who must deal with both mundane political forces and foreign supernatural influence.

Foreigners bring new Mysteries, and like mages everywhere, Shona mediums seek out supernatural conundrums to better understand the magical cosmos. Portuguese belligerence provides the perfect way for European mages to seize artifacts and claim magical places, but a few imagine a better way, where they exchange knowledge with the Shona and form an alliance against the Seers of the Throne, who have not yet established themselves here. "Native" Arisen must decide whether they should respect the bonds of Guild affiliation when poor cousins arrive via European, Swahili, and Indian trade routes. These alliances and conflicts are destined to break the social equilibrium. Whom will it enrich, and whom will it damn?

The Mutapa Empire

The Mutapa Empire (also known as the Mutapa Kingdom, *Wene we Mutapa*, or Monomotapa to the Portuguese) occupied the region between the Zambezi and Limpopo Rivers in southern Africa during the 15th through 17th centuries, after which it fell under the control of the Portuguese. Much of what modern scholars know of the nation comes from a combination of accounts of Christian missionaries (never a reliable or neutral source), the study of its ruins by archaeologists (which can only reveal so much), and what anthropologists have been able to extrapolate from the cultural and religious traditions of its people's descendants centuries after colonial interests swallowed it up.

In short, the sum of modern knowledge about this once rich and influential empire is only a little greater than an Arisen's memories of Irem. The Awakened have more tales about Atlantis than they do about the Princes of the Conquered Land. To the Portuguese, Monomotapa was a wild, dangerous land full of great mysteries. They had no real idea of the history and traditions that gave it shape, and misunderstandings between the two cultures arose frequently.

We've broken the history in this chapter into three broad parts. "What Has Come Before" discusses the history leading up to the events of this era, including the Kingdom of Mapungubwe (1075-1220 CE), the Kingdom of Zimbabwe (1220-1450 CE), and the history of the Mutapa Empire prior to the arrival of the Portuguese (1430-1500 CE). "Where We Are Now" explores the events as they unfold within the era — from the first Portuguese ships that scouted the coast in 1501, up to the Accidental Crusade that began in 1568. "What is to Come" describes the events that follow the current era — from the failure of the Accidental Crusade until the death of the last prince of Mutapa in 1759.

The Shona and their Realm

This chapter uses the term "Shona" to refer to the people of the Mutapa Empire, but in the period it covers, they would not use this term to refer to themselves. Instead, they'd use particular geographical, linguistic, and totem affiliations. Some of these will change over the ages and eventually come to refer to different groups, so any attempt to sift a term out of these would be confusing. Historians refer to the Mutapa Empire as a Shona kingdom nonetheless, so we use this as a general demonym.

This issue emphasizes the Mutapa Empire's diversity and extent. Westerners are often used to talking about Africa as an undifferentiated place, and the projections used by many maps usually make it look smaller than it really is. In the 16th century, the Mutapa Empire is larger than modern France, encompassing a number of ethnicities and dependent realms. Remember, too, that despite trade and language ties, the realm is culturally distinct from other parts of Africa, including regions better known in the West, such as West Africa and Egypt.

What Has Come Before

Every culture owes many of its characteristics to those who came before. The Mutapa Empire is no exception.

Kingdom of Mapungubwe (1075–1220 CE)

The grandparent of the Mutapa Empire, the Kingdom of Mapungubwe, consisted of perhaps 5,000 people at its peak, but nevertheless had a significant impact on the nations that came after it. It was the first in the region to use stone walls to demarcate important areas — a tradition maintained by their descendants — and their characteristic ceramic techniques spread even after the kingdom was abandoned.

Its first settlers came to the region to take advantage of its agricultural possibilities. Cattle were especially important to them, as evidenced by the fact that they kept these in *kraals* very close to their homes. The Mapungubweans built special sites to fulfill both ritual and practical functions, but because they had no written language anthropologists and their descendants can only speculate on exactly what purpose these places served.



Mapungubwe gained prominence beyond its borders on the strength of its abundant exports of ivory and gold to African ports such as Rhapta and Kilwa Kisiwani, which had maintained connections to international markets since the time of Ancient Egypt. The rich gold mines and large population of elephants in southern Africa shaped the history of Mapungubwe as it eventually did its successor states. These provided the lifeblood of its economic power but also served as a source of conflict and interference by outsiders.

The exact reason the Mapungubweans abandoned their capital remains shrouded in mystery. Given the region's history, many possibilities exist — a long drought that forced inhabitants to seek greener pastures for their surviving cattle, decimation or conquest by neighboring nations, or economic disaster brought on by the rise of the Kingdom of Zimbabwe, which choked off trade with Mapungubwe. Despite the characterizations of the natives of southern Africa by European explorers as being essentially tribal, they in fact showed a willingness to make alliances with other tribes, or even to assimilate outright, if it would make the difference between dying out or surviving, and so it is likely that some Mapungubweans were ancestors of Mutapa's Shona.

The Kingdom of Zimbabwe (1220–1450 CE)

In truth, no one knows what this nation's people called it. The name "Zimbabwe" describes the stone structures they built — buildings surrounded by monumental stone walls built without mortar. The ancestors of the Shona who lived there constructed hundreds of zimbabwes, expanding on similar techniques employed by the Mapungubweans. Beginning in the 11th century, the Zimbabweans began construction on a great stone palace. They continued expanding it until the 15th century, refining their building techniques by degrees. By the time the builders abandoned it, this *Great Zimbabwe* stretched out over nearly 1,800 acres and featured walls up to 36 feet high. Early European visitors to the Great Zimbabwe were so impressed that they at first denied that native Africans could have constructed it, preferring instead to speculate on other potential builders: visitors from Egypt, the lost tribes of Israel, or King Solomon himself.

European mages were not immune to this skepticism, at first postulating that it was a ruin from the Time Before. For a time, the soapstone eagles that decorated the walls of Great Zimbabwe traded among European mages as Atlantean artifacts of unknown purpose, at least until the buyers realized the statues had origins in the Fallen World's timeline.

In fact, Sleeper conspiracy theories were closer the truth, for the Arisen came to the region during the rise of the Kingdom of Zimbabwe. The servants of Irem took full advantage of local religious beliefs to place themselves in positions of authority among the Shona. While the Arisen might have encouraged humans to build zimbabwes for use as tombs, the Shona used their own stoneworking techniques for this, not one imported from the north.

Great Zimbabwe was a center for trading that connected to a network of trade routes that stretched to Egypt, the Middle East, India, and even China. As in Mapungubwe, gold and ivory were major exports — so much so that rumors of King Solomon's fabled gold mines drew explorers to the region, searching for the biblical city of Ophir.

No one knows the root cause of Great Zimbabwe's decline, but a combination of factors likely contributed. The gold mines may have declined. Sites further north (including Mutapa) may have eclipsed Great Zimbabwe as trading centers. Climate change may have caused famine or water shortages. Political instability could also have contributed to the ultimate abandonment of the Kingdom of Zimbabwe by its people.

Rise of the Mutapa Empire (1430–1500 CE)

According to tradition, the kingdom of Mutapa (meaning "the conquered land") was founded by Nyatsimba Mutota, a warrior prince (a *Mwene*) from the Kingdom of Zimbabwe who traveled north in search of a new supply of salt — a precious economy as valuable as gold in the ancient world. Mutota found salt among the Tavara, a Shona people with a long tradition as elephant hunters. He conquered the Tavara and established a new capital city of Zvongombe on the Zambezi River, roughly 200 miles north of Great Zimbabwe.

Mutota's successor, Mwenemutapa Matope, expanded the kingdom into an empire that controlled most of the lands between Tavara and the Indian Ocean. Mutapa added to its wealth and prestige by exploiting the abundant supply of copper from Chidzurgwe and the ivory of the middle Zambezi. This expansion choked off trade to nearby nations, such as Torwa, which Mutota's descendants soon added to their empire. Nor were the Shona reluctant to employ violence to expand their holdings, as the people of Manyika, Kiteve, and Mandanda soon learned. By the time the Portuguese arrived on the coast of Mozambique, Mutapa was the most powerful state in the region — one that controlled valuable resources that Portuguese merchants and monarchs coveted sorely.

Where We Are

The Portuguese first identified Sofala, the chief seaport of Mutapa, as a gold emporium in 1489. Pêro da Covilhã, an explorer and spy, disguised himself as an Arab merchant and reached the city overland by the longstanding route from the Middle East. The Portuguese scouted the city by sea in 1501 and entered the harbor in 1502, which is when this era begins.

Exploration and Exploitation (1501–1561 CE)

The timing of the explorer's arrival proves exceptionally lucky, for the city's ruling sheikh happens to be embroiled in a complex political fight for Sofala's independence from the Sultan of Kilwa, whom he regards as an usurper. The powerful Portuguese ships seem to offer a means to that end, or at any rate it seems unwise to reject a commercial alliance when the city's situation is already unstable.



The Portuguese prove to be unreliable partners, and by 1515 they have conquered both Sofala and Kilwa in an effort to dominate trade between Mutapa, her tributary kingdoms, and India. They instead become an additional layer of middlemen, carrying luxury goods between Africa and India. This might satisfy the Portuguese were it not been for the spread of rumors back in Portugal that Mutapa is the mysterious location of Ophir, named in the Bible as a city which traded gold to King Solomon.

Portuguese explorers called *sertanejos* ("backwoodsmen") make their way into the empire's interior. They live among Swahili traders or take up service with Mwenemutapas as advisors and interpreters. These backwoodsmen act as spies for Portugal. They also frequently stir up disputes between factions within Mutapa's royal family. They encounter opposition in the form of the Muslim councilors who serve the empire in a similar capacity and with nearly identical motive — preserving the commercial interests of their merchant bosses and home sultanates.

The Jesuits and the Accidental Crusade (1561–1568 CE)

In 1561, the Jesuit missionary Gonçalo da Silveira makes successful contact with the Mwenemutapa and ultimately converts the king to Christianity. The Muslim merchants in Mutapa's capital take exception to this, fearing it will be the first step in Portugal's plan to establish a monopoly over trade in the region. Certainly, the Portuguese have not done much to befriend Muslim traders. Their treatment of Sofala and Kilwa suggest the opposite, and they are in a state of nearly constant war with the Ottoman Empire. However earnest this Jesuit's faith might be and however sincere the king's conversion, Mutapa's existing trade partners have a strong reason to fear that Portugal meant to supplant them. Within days of the Mwenemutapa's baptism, these merchants convince the king to execute da Silveira. The prince's warriors strangle the missionary in his hut and throw his body into the river to be devoured by crocodiles.

The Portuguese regard this as a sufficient excuse to send an army to seize control of Mutapa's gold mines and ivory routes in an incident that becomes known as the "Accidental Crusade." This event marks the end of this era.

What is to Come

Despite extensive preparations, the 1,000 soldiers who embark on the expedition in 1568 will ultimately fail in their mission. Disease will decimate the force, which will only get as far as the upper Zambezi before returning to its base in 1572. Unable to conquer the Mutapa Empire as originally planned, the Portuguese will instead slaughter innocent Swahili traders and supplant them as the intermediaries between Mutapa and India.

This won't weaken the hold of the Shona over trade, however. Mutapa will demand tribute from the captains of Sofala and other coastal cities dominated by the Portuguese. It will also levy a 50% duty on all imported trade goods. Portugal will find that it can neither disrupt the empire's control of its



mines and ivory routes by means of economic manipulation nor seize these assets by force.

Ultimately, Portugal will erode the empire's power by offering the internal Shona factions military aid against one another. By encouraging and enabling infighting, the Portuguese will facilitate Mutapa's collapse. Seeing the danger, the Shona will make a desperate effort to expel these outsiders in 1629, but this will fail. The Portuguese will overthrow the king and replace him with a puppet ruler who accedes to their demands, including handing over control of the mines and making the kingdom a vassal of Portugal.

While many of these concessions will never be put into effect, the mere fact that the empire allows itself to be dominated by a foreign power will embolden its tributary kingdoms, some of whom stop paying tribute, further eroding Mutapa's power. The emboldened Portuguese establish fortified settlements within the empire's borders, taking advantage of their agreements with the weak new king. By 1663, the settlers are so confident they openly depose a Mwenemutapa who displeases them.

By the end of the 17th century, a dynasty of Rozvi will arise from the Great Zimbabwe area and challenge Mutapa's power. Control of the Mutapa state will pass back and forth between the Rozvi and the Portuguese for the next century, until finally in 1720 Mutapa regains its independence, albeit with much-reduced holdings and a mere fraction of the empire's former power. Its Mwenemutapa will invite the Portuguese to place a garrison in the country in 1740, and the Shona will remain under Portugal's influence until the death of the last Mwenemutapa in 1759, which will spark a civil war from which the country will never recover.

Mwenemutapa

The Mutapa Empire stretches across southern Africa, between the Limpopo and Zambezi Rivers. It commands vast savannahs — both those of the high veld and of the low — as well as mountainous regions filled with spectacular waterfalls and coastal regions. The empire's tropical climate nourishes diverse wildlife from antelopes to zebras and from lions to crocodiles. The region has exported ivory to the Middle East and Asia for centuries on the strength of its large population of elephants. The Shona hold up the Bateleur eagle, whose likeness decorated the walls of Great Zimbabwe, as an emblem of their empire.

The region sees few strong storms, even during its rainy season from October to March. The long droughts to which it is prone have shaped its history, however. In many cases these dictate the rise and fall of tribes, villages, and entire civilizations.

Society and Politics

Mutapa is a conquered land before the Portuguese arrive — despite seeming homogenous to Europeans, the Shona still feel the tensions between the majority Tavara people and the Korekore clans who migrated north and conquered them four generations ago. Tavara and Korekore alike, Shona society revolves around "totems." Each family clan in Mutapa identifies with a totem called a *mutupo*. These are usually animals or body parts (leg, heart, etc.), but some clans take names from inanimate objects or materials (such as urns or iron). People of the same mutupo are descended from one common ancestor (the one who founded the totem), and so are not normally allowed to marry or become romantically involved with each other.

Each clan honors its mutupo by different means, including sacrifices and prayers, but a ritual dance is almost universal to all mutupos. The Mwenemutapa do not worship the totems that give their clan its name. The people of the crocodile might adopt costumes that refer to the reptile's physical qualities, and the people of the baboon might tell many jokes and fables involving that primate, but they no ascribe no religious significance to the animal itself. Rather, the totem is a kind of mascot for the family that has grown into a clan identity over the course of many generations.

When someone performs the dance of her totem, she is connected to all her ancestors stretching all the way back to the first founder of her family line — its *mhondoro*. She is her mother and father, her grandmothers and grandfathers, her great grandmothers and great grandfathers, and so forth into the mythic history of the first member of her clan. Anyone who wishes to take the extraordinary step of changing mutupos cannot do so until she has mastered the dance of her adoptive mutupo to the satisfaction of its mhondoro. Because these ancestral spirits so rarely speak directly through mediums, however, few can pass even this initial test.

Mutupos cut across settlements, tracing descent from famous individuals. The ruling family of a town almost always traces its lineage to the mhondoro who founded their community. This isn't necessarily genealogical, however, as it frequently reflects the clan's early political history. The inhabitants of two neighboring towns who have a longstanding and roughly equal alliance may claim to have been founded by twin brothers that they claim as ancestors, for example, while the citizens of a small settlement built in the shadow of a larger, more powerful town might claim a shared ancestry with these neighbors — such as that their founder was the child, grandchild, or younger brother of the larger town's founder. If one of the settlements meets with catastrophe, its people may then call upon their neighbors for aid not just as allies but as blood relations.

Despite the claims to shared lineage, these are not always true. The lesser town may represent survivors of a distant calamity who fled to the area, or they could be an offshoot of another settlement that had reached the limits of its resources. However great and proud they were in the land of their forefathers, they recognized that they could not hope to drive out the established inhabitants of their new homeland, and so they swallowed their pride, adopted the totem of the greater city, and established themselves as tributaries to reduce the likelihood that the larger, more powerful town would drive them off or annihilate them. As the saying goes on the high veld, "the elephant that crosses the river becomes a little elephant." If the greater town accepts the new arrivals' entreaty, the chiefs of the new allies fit their ruling houses

together and reckon their integration with the shared genealogy. Of course, in the fullness of time as the towns exist side by side, intermarriage ultimately joins their blood in truth and not just as an affectation to denote a political alliance.

This pattern manifests itself from the smallest villages to the most powerful groups in the Mutapa hierarchy. The royal clan, *Nzou Samanyanga* (literally Elephant, Keeper of Tusks) claims primacy over the other great lineages (or *dzinza*). Named after the Elephant in both the Tavara autocthonic tradition and in the tradition of the Korekore invaders, this lineage's mortal members grew wealthy from trade in ivory and gold to Portuguese merchants. Three of the mortal lineages of the Korekore, the Kasekete, Chitsungo and Chiweshe, claim descent from a great ancestor, Chiwawa, whose spirit is said to watch over his children. The fourth powerful lineage owes its fealty to the ancestor Nyamapfeka, and all four claim that they descend from the original conqueror, Mutota.

Two Elephant clans therefore claim primacy, one Korekore, one Tavara, and the two often come into conflict, with each claiming that they are the 'true' *Nzou Samanyanga*.

The royal lineage of the Dema people who entered into the Mutapa Kingdom is the *Mvura Tembo* (literally water zebras). A small population, little is known of their mortal lineages, but outsiders describe them as cannibals, and claim that their initiations into adulthood are bizarre and frightening.

A third great lineage claims its descent from the intermarriage of Portuguese traders and members of the Rozvi state. Their clan is the *Hangaiwa Marunga* (Pigeon), and they owed their strength to the absorption of coastal and riverine peoples into mighty slave armies which in time will herald the fall of the Mutapa itself.

Historical Figures

Mwenemutapa families frequently edit historical figures into their ancestral past. In some cases this combines the most interesting attributes of several people into a single figure who takes on a mythological quality. At other times several different families claim the same legendary person as an ancestor, often tracing this genealogy in a way that is wholly incompatible with that of other clans' account of his history.

For example, several different clans claim that the famed chieftainess Muhurutshe was born to the chief of another clan (never their own). In each story, the people can no longer survive in their homeland. Muhurutshe organizes a great alliance of minor clans and leads them to a land an ancestor showed her in dreams. When they get there, the alliance finds the land already settled by another clan. Many of the men with Muhurutshe suggest that they conquer the land, but the chieftainess refuses them.

Muhurutshe instead enters the largest town in the area alone. The chief comes out and demands that Muhurutshe explain her people's intentions toward his clan. Instead of answering him in words, she begins to dance. At first it is the dance of her family's totem, but it slowly changes from something unfamiliar and frightening to that of a lesser version of the chief's totem — a little elephant if the chief's totem is the elephant, for example, or the hand if the chief's totem is the arm. The people recognize Muhurutshe and her clan as distant relatives who were cut off from the rest of the mutupo by terrible misfortune. The chief immediately asks Muhurutshe to marry him, which she does, and the people of Muhurutshe found a town of their own. Muhurutshe soon gives birth to twin sons — Tulare and MmaThulare — each of whom comes to rule one of the towns.

The details of the story vary from mutupo to mutupo. In some accounts the chief is a famous ancestor. In others, Muhurutshe is a famous ancestor but her husband isn't even given a name. In still more, the twin sons quickly become the focus of the history. Sometimes they are rivals who want to marry the same woman, and one of them kills the other. Sometimes one offends the other so much that he founds a mutupo that opposes his brother's even in the present. Or maybe they remain allies, but one is killed by another clan that remains their mutupo's enemy even to this day.

In any case, one or both of the towns in the story eventually become a great city of the Mutapa Empire. The storyteller inevitably inserts his tribe into the history in some way.

Religion

The predominant religion in the Kingdom of Mutapa revolves around the ritual consultation of spirits, particularly ancestral ghosts. The Mwenemutapa don't believe that the dead go to another world upon death. Rather, they maintain that the dead are all around us, merely invisible. Moreover, the spirits are intimately involved in the material world of the living, and the well-being of mortals is heavily dependent on their connection with the spirit world.

Spirit Hierarchy

The most powerful of the spirits is **Mwari**, the all-powerful creator god. Missionaries to Mutapa frequently assume Mwari holds the same place as the Christian God (or Muslim Allah). Certainly they have some similarities, but whereas Christianity emphasizes God as a source of goodness, the Mutapa also acknowledge Mwari as the source of all evil. This lends him a more frightening aspect, and they do not address him directly. When the Shona invoke Mwari at all it is almost always in the context of tragedy or misfortune, as a demand for an explanation that they know is not forthcoming, for Mwari is indifferent to the concerns of mortals.

The second tier of spirits in this hierarchy is the **Mhondoro**, tutelary spirits devoted to the furtherance of an entire tribe or clan. These spirits can bring rain and bountiful harvests. Mhondoro also choose which person will be the next chieftain, who is as much a representative of the spirits in the physical world as he is the leader of the living members of his tribe or clan. Each mhondoro sets aside certain days of rest (called *chisi*) that those under its protection must observe. While chisi are usually based on the phases of the moon and take place twice per lunar month, their specifics vary from one spirit to the next.



Below the mhondoro in scope are **vadzimu**, the spirits of individual families within the larger clan. The vadzimu protect their living descendants and ensure the family's happiness and prosperity. In return, the spirits demand good behavior that does not demean the vadzimu's legacy in the living world. While the Mwenemutapa may invoke ancient ancestors or other vadzimu, most daily prayers address the **mudzimu** (grandfather spirit). In some cases the faithful ask the mudzimu to carry their prayer to the ears of more powerful mhondoro or even to Mwari himself on their behalf, a practice Catholic missionaries would liken to appealing to the saints for intercession.

The Mwenemutapa hold that it is particularly dangerous to be unkind to one's parents (and grandparents, if they are still alive). After all, if a living ancestor goes to her grave angry at her son, she does not simply vanish. She becomes a spirit as surely as did her parents and their parents before her, and so she haunts her son and all his descendants as a malevolent **ngozi**. It can take generations for an ngozi to spend its fury, and exorcizing one is extraordinarily difficult because its connection to its descendants is so strong. A family haunted by an ngozi must take measures to appease it, which can make friendlier vadzimu jealous. Even then, if the crime against the ngozi was terrible enough it might not be satisfied with anything less than the annihilation of all its descendants.

Equal in power to the vadzimu are the **shavi**, which are the spirits of talented foreigners who died and were not given a proper burial or else have no descendants to carry out their will in the material world. Ordinary folk do not communicate with shavi, but some mediums invite these spirits to possess them. In exchange for the medium's prayers and rituals of remembrance, the shavi grants her access to the knowledge it possessed in life. Not all shavi are benign, however. Some are also **varoyi** (literally "witches") — spirits that have human destruction or antisocial acts as their object. Arisen and other supernatural beings set themselves up as shavi among the Shona, but most shavi are simply ghosts.

Animals also possess spirit guardians that Mwenemutapa invoke before hunting animals of that species. A hunter who does not give proper acknowledgement to the appropriate spirit before hunting one of the animals under its protection only finds her prey with great difficulty, for the spirit will set its whole power against her to keep her from catching any of those animals it guards. A properly respectful hunter can convince the animal spirit to allow her to take what she needs to feed her family.

Shona Mediums

Most Mwenemutapa pray and perform rituals to honor and call upon the aid of the spirit world, but most do not receive any reply. However, Shona mediums (collectively known as *svikiro*) do, and most of these are neither Awakened nor Arisen. By engaging in ritual chants and dances while dressed in the costume of the spirit, the medium invites the spirit to enter him. At other times, the spirit chooses to possess the medium without warning, especially if the spirit is one that has possessed the medium before. When the medium is possessed, he speaks with the voice of the spirit, allowing the dead to communicate with the living.

Wamasikati: These mediums initially come to the attention of a spirit by chance. Benign and malevolent spirits both crave contact with the material world, but they cannot work their will in it except by possessing a suitable vessel. The Mwenemutapa have many stories that warn about which behaviors will invite varoyi. Incest and adultery are common taboos, for example, but even acts such as eating some of the meat from a hunt before bringing it home to one's family can invite a terrible varoyi. They likewise tell stories of the circumstances under which a person has drawn the interest of a helpful shavi — often by going to places that are dangerous to travelers or by visiting the graves of foreigners whose ghosts still wander. While these superstitions certainly hold a grain of truth, what attracts a spirit's attention to a potential host depends on the nature of the spirit.

Once the spirit locates a suitable vessel, it attempts to cajole him into becoming a medium. This usually manifests as a combination of physical illness and vivid dreams intended to make the spirit's wishes known to the host, although some spirits only use one or the other at first unless the vessel fails to understand its intent. To the Mwenemutapa these signs are unmistakable, and most quickly realize that they are being courted by a spirit. Once a spirit has chosen a host, the dreams and illness it imposes continue — and in many cases grow worse by the day — until he either accepts possession and becomes a medium or has the spirit exorcised by a powerful medium.

A potential medium does not know the nature of the spirit courting him until he first allows it to possess him. Even then, many of those who attract the attention of a varoyi do so by engaging in antisocial or even forbidden acts, and so they might not be unwilling partners in the arrangement. The varoyi may help the medium achieve his own selfish ends in exchange for

Spirits in the Conquered Land

The Shona focus on spirits in part because ephemeral entities are especially active in the Mutapa Empire. The occult peculiarities of the region make it difficult for most ghosts to enter the Underworld, and many of the vadzimu and other spirits Shona mediums consult are indeed the ghosts of their dead. This is not universally true, however. Many of the spirit guardians of animals hail from the Shadow World, for example, and Mhondoro spring from the symbolism of the Supernal World.

The shavi are especially diverse, and the word has become a catch-all term for any supernatural being — ephemeral or not — that is clearly inhuman. Shavi can describe foreign ghosts, spirits of the Shadow, Goetia, Amkhata, Gulmoths, Arisen, and stranger things. In short, anything of occult origin that meddles in the lives of humans can be called a shavi.

continued service to the spirit. Mediums who give themselves to varoyi are called **varoyi wamasikati**, while those who first allow themselves to be possessed by benign shavi are **shavi wamasikati**.

Wedzinza: Most mudzimu choose a single descendant as a vessel, with the resulting medium generally described as a wedzinza. The process by which one becomes a wedzinza is similar to the way a wamasikati comes into her power, except a mudzimu may choose anyone who can claim it as an ancestor. This includes those who have been adopted into the family of the mudzimu's descendants or who have adjusted their genealogy so that they are the spirit's descendants.

The most common wedzinza is the **mudzimu wedzinza**. This medium speaks exclusively to one or more of the mudzimu of her family. Some families have many such wedzinza that are usually possessed by the same mudzimu each time. Others have fewer or even a single mudzimu wedzinza who serves many or all the mudzimu of that family. Although mudzimu wedzinza are frequently called upon to address prayers to mhondoro, as well, they are seldom possessed by these more powerful tutelary spirits.

The most respected wedzinza is the **nganga wedzinza**. This medium is the regular host of a mudzimu who was once a medium herself (an nganga). The nganga wedzinza can call upon any spirit the nganga knew when she lived, as well as any spirit allies the ancestral medium has made since it left the material world. Nganga can grant powers of divination and healing to the medium and can even arrange for the mudzimu of another family to possess her. By this means the nganga wedzinza offers her relatives the means of making peace with another family, for they can ask the mudzimu why its descendants are angry, apologize if appropriate, and beg it to intercede on their behalf with its family. An nganga wedzinza will sometimes beg a mhondoro to lay a terrible curse on a criminal if no mortal justice is possible, and on some occasions the spirits grant her request. At moments of great crisis, a mhondoro will possess these mediums, which they can do without warning or invitation, but those occasions are both rare and terrifying for everyone in the area.

The **varoyi wedzinza** is as powerful as an nganga wedzinza, but he has a far more frightening reputation, and rightly so. Like the nganga wedzinza, this medium is the wedzinza of a mudzimu who was himself a medium. Unlike an nganga wedzinza, he was a medium who trafficked with varoyi or used his magic for evil and so has become a varoyi in death. The varoyi wedzinza can call upon any spirit the varoyi knew when he lived, as well as any allies the ancestral medium has made since it left the material world. However, most of these spirits are just as malevolent and prone to excess as is the varoyi. The varoyi provides the same powers of divination and healing as does an nganga. In addition, it grants the power to wither, to sicken, and to levy other curses even to those victims who have not earned these hardships by their evil actions.

Because a mudzimu may choose any of its descendants as a host, the child or grandchild of an elder may go to great lengths to earn her approval in hopes that she will choose him as her wedzinza after she dies. This is especially true of those mediums who serve an nganga or varoyi, for both of these promise power and prestige in the family after the aging medium dies. Sometimes this tactic succeeds. It isn't uncommon for an nganga wedzinza to openly choose her successor while she is yet on her deathbed. It is by no means assured, however, and more than one would-be medium opened himself up to possession by a varoyi shavi that he mistook for the nganga of his mother or grandfather.

Wedzinza and Sin-Eaters

In mechanical terms, many wedzinza are Bound, the protagonists of **Geist: The Sin-Eaters**, although culturally they have virtually nothing in common with their European counterparts and 21st century descendants. Aside from mages and mummies, the Bound are the supernatural beings best known to the Shona, afforded great respect and prominence by subjects of the empire, who see them as exceptionally talented mediums rather than inhuman beings. A Bound wedzinza may practice his trade as an exorcist and medium openly among the Shona, provoking the envy of Arisen and Awakened alike. Portuguese explorers (especially Moros mages or mummies particularly invested in dealing with the dead) who encounter a Shona Bound may recognize them as being related to the European "Sin-Eaters," who themselves are different in culture to modern-day Bound. The Sin-Eaters of Catholic Europe see themselves as folk exorcists with a quasi-religious role, often hiding their societies among monastic orders or the folk traditions of common people.

To represent those wedzinza who are not fully Bound, or to use them in a game without **Geist** crossover, use the Svikiro Merit

New Supernatural Merits

The following Merits may be used to represent Shona mediums who are not other supernatural beings. Although Mutapa's Awakened mages also call themselves svikiro, most mediums using these Merits are Sleepwalkers in **Mage** terms, not mages.

Svikiro (•••)

Prerequisite: Resolve •••, Composure •••, Awakened or Sleepwalker

Effect: Your character is a medium among the Shona. He cannot suffer the Claimed Condition, and you may purchase Social Merits to represent the relationships he has forged with ephemeral entities.

Choose wamasikati or wedzinza when you purchase this Merit.

A wamasikati has successfully attracted the attention of one or more shavi or foreign varoyi. She has the Resonant or Anchor



Condition when interacting with any ephemeral entity and can sense the presence of these beings if they are within five yards. The wamasikati can spend a point of Willpower to gain the Open Condition with regards to an ephemeral entity within five yards. This Condition lasts until she ends it by spending a point of Willpower.

A wedzinza has been chosen by one or more of his ancestors to convey their will to the living. He has the Open Condition when interacting with the ghost of anyone from his mutupo. The wedzinza may spend a point of Willpower to reduce this to the Anchor or Resonant Condition until she spends another point of Willpower to end this effect. The wedzinza can sense his ancestors and other ghosts of his mutupo within five yards. By spending a point of Willpower, he can communicate with these ghosts even if they are in Twilight.

Svikiro Channel (• or •••)

Prerequisite: Svikiro Merit

Effect: When the svikiro is Fettered, he can communicate with the entity fettered to him. He can also permit the inhabiting entity to use its Numina and Influences on a target of his choosing within five yards of him, but this does not compel the entity to do so.

At three dots, the svikiro may compel the entity to use one of its Numina or Influences as if they were his own by spending a point of Willpower and defeating the entity on a Resolve + Composure roll contested by its Rank + Resistance. He cannot force the being to violate its Ban or approach its Bane.

Svikiro Ridden (• or •••)

Prerequisite: Svikiro Merit

Effect: The svikiro remains aware of events while she is Possessed and can communicate telepathically with the entity possessing her, whether to negotiate with the entity or assist it. If she chooses to cooperate with the entity, it does not suffer the usual penalties to actions it takes with her body.

With three dots, the svikiro can exert some control over the actions of an ephemeral entity that has possessed him. By spending a point of Willpower and succeeding on a Resolve + Composure roll contested by the possessing entity's Rank + Resistance, the svikiro can control it as if their roles were reversed. This lasts until the end of the scene unless the ephemeral entity successfully uses the Possession Manifestation on the svikiro or the medium comes into contact with the entity's Bane. The svikiro cannot force the entity to act in a way that is inimical to it, including approaching its Bane or disobeying its Ban.

Svikiro Nganga (••)

Prerequisite: Svikiro Merit

Effect: The svikiro enjoys the benefits of both wamasikati and wedzinza.

Tributaries and Traders

The Mwenemutapa rule a great empire in a region that has been a major trading hub for centuries. While Mutapa's wealth doesn't penetrate every town and village, the ruling families have access to goods from around the world — silk and cotton garments colored with bright dyes, weapons and armor crafted from the finest steel, and exotic animals from far off lands. Early ancestors of firearms have fallen into Mwenemutapa hands, but these are not viewed as world-shaking weapons of war until the arrival of the Portuguese, rather, little more than curiosities. If it can be bought in any of the markets of Africa, Europe, or Asia, a prince of Mutapa might own it.

Wealthy families in the cities and larger towns procure some of these foreign goods, as well, but most people cannot afford them. The average Mwenemutapa has no real need for such luxuries. Native goods serve them perfectly well. Mutapa has a reputation for its people's fine ceramics and skillful stonecutting techniques. Most of their tools are iron, with important ones crafted of steel, which is more expensive.

Clothing reflects Mutapa's climate, which is largely tropical, but cooler at higher elevations. For the most part it is light and loose fitting. Bright colors are fashionable for those who can afford dyed cloth, but garments meant for work or war tend toward durable, if drab, materials. Hunters and warriors sometimes wear animal trophies. The nature of these reflects the climate. No one in a hot climate is likely to wear an entire lion pelt except for ceremonial reasons, for example, but he might wear a necklace of its claws or earrings that incorporate its teeth.

Jewelry carries special significance to the Mwenemutapa. Although the gold mines that elevated Great Zimbabwe to prominence are long past their peak, even people from less affluent families usually have a few pieces of gold or ivory heirloom jewelry that they wear on special occasions. As with so many other facets of daily life, the jewelry a Mwenemutapa wears reflects his mutupo — earrings and decorative combs for one, bracelets and lip plugs for another, and so forth. Wearing the jewelry of an ancestor not only keeps it in circulation, it also represents a physical connection between the generations.

When the empire goes to war, its warriors typically carry round or oval shields made of steel and spears optimized for thrusting in close quarters. Many carry knives for eating that can be pressed into service as throwing daggers or sidearms of last resort. Those of above average means may also carry javelins or throwing knives for use at range. Dedicated archers instead carry bows or throwing weapons.

The Shona certainly have the technological know-how to forge armor, but the steel breastplates and helmets of Europe are almost unknown in Mutapa until the arrival of the Portuguese for the simple reason that they are not suited to the country's hot climate. A handful of princes keep foreign armor in their palaces as conversation pieces, but a suit of Crusader-era chainmail doesn't see a lot of practical use. In consequence, Mutapa has not developed its own armorsmithing techniques.

The majority of Shona are neither princes nor merchants. They sustain themselves primarily by herding cattle and other livestock, supplementing their diet with whatever fruits, vegetables, and grains will grow in the soil near their homes. Cattle are especially important to the livelihood of ordinary people, who keep them in kraals just outside of their homes — both to

keep them within easy reach for milking and care and to make it easier to defend them from raiders who might carry off the valuable animals. Only princes and chiefs keep their herds far from their palaces, but this is a statement of their wealth and power. To begin with, they have so much livestock that they cannot keep all of it within easy reach. As well, they have warriors who are willing to stand guard over these kraals. Finally, these rulers can exact tribute from the neighboring families to replace any stolen cattle, so these tributaries have an additional incentive to prevent anyone from stealing from the chief. This was the case even at the height of Great Zimbabwe, when the diverse chiefs who lived in the enclosure even went so far as to keep all of their cattle in the same kraals so that no one knew which animals belonged to which clan.

Many smaller nations exist on the fringes of the Mutapa Empire. Some are independent trading partners, reliant on the empire economically, but free from demands of tribute aside from the import and export duties Mutapa demands of any merchants crossing their borders. Many other nations are true tributaries of the Mutapa Empire, offering cattle to the Mwenemutapa to ensure continued peace. They also share in the empire's prosperity through this arrangement, albeit not as much as do the actual member states. Early Portuguese maps often include all of these tributary states as a part of the Mutapa Empire, even though the Mwenemutapa feel no obligation to protect these remote nations from invasion. This ultimately plays a significant role in Mutapa's downfall, as the Portuguese offer these tributaries protection from the empire. Eventually, minor nations withhold tribute from the Mwenemutapa with impunity, eroding the empire's economic power by degrees.

Sertanejos

The Kingdom of Mutapa has been a destination of foreign merchants since it supplanted Great Zimbabwe in that role. The culture and history of the Shona's main trade partners has a significant impact on Mutapa, and conflict between these allies means conflict in the empire. In early decades, Muslim merchants dominate their economic attention. Later, Portugal rises in importance, eventually seizing control of the territory previously controlled by the Mwenemutapa.

Portuguese Explorers, Traders, and Missionaries

Portugal was the first European country to establish a global empire. Portuguese sailors began exploring the coast of Africa in 1418, something previously impossible due to the unfavorable prevailing winds and ocean currents along that coast, as well as the large number of shoals that made maritime travel there dangerous. This changed when shipbuilders in Portugal developed the caravel, which was able to sail into the wind and also had a shallow bottom that allowed it to sail up coastal rivers.

The Kingdom of Portugal quickly saw its potential to change the balance of economic power in Europe, and the exploration of Africa was a major component of that. For centuries, the Silk Road had provided access to the trade goods of China and India, but control over the western end of that trade route had historically been in the hands of merchants in Genoa and Venice. Trade with the East became even more difficult after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 to the Ottoman Empire, which barred European access to the Silk Road. Portugal hoped to establish a new trade with India by sea. In this they had fierce competition with Spain, which had a similar explosion of maritime exploration at that time.

The Portuguese have learned from the intelligence gathered by Pêro da Covilhã that Sofala was a gold emporium with trade connections to India, so this seems like a good place to set up a trading post. Not long after they establish themselves in the area by taking control of the nearby island of Mozambique in 1507, other Portuguese expeditions begin successfully setting up more promising trading ventures in India and China. Portugal takes steps to cut off alternative trade routes to the East, including those that have connected Europe to the Silk Road for centuries. They seek nothing short of a monopoly on Indian trade goods to Europe.

Sofala becomes largely irrelevant to Portuguese imperial interests, and expansion into southern Africa stalls. However, the presence of gold coming out of Mutapa inspires speculation that the empire holds the legendary mines of King Solomon, and that Sofala is the "Ophir" referred to in the Bible as the port that exported the mines' riches. Portuguese sertanejos seeking this fabled treasure penetrate deeper into the holdings of the Mutapa Empire and eventually make contact with the Mwenemutapa themselves.

Missionaries

Portugal, like Spain, has close ties to the Catholic Church. The Church views this age of exploration as a unique opportunity to spread the Gospel to people who have never heard of Jesus. Wherever the explorers go, Catholic missionaries are sure to follow. The accounts of these missionaries make it clear that these men see themselves (or want their target audience to see them) as righteous heroes bringing the word of God to the natives of faraway lands. They do not treat their hosts' beliefs as something worthy of note except insofar as parallels between indigenous religions and Christian doctrines offer potential leverage to convert them. As a result, these accounts rarely document indigenous beliefs at all, and when they do, the underlying assumption in the text is that they are backwards, bizarre, or just plain wrong. European technology frequently awes the natives in these tales, who convert to Christianity quickly.

Many missionaries surely write their accounts in this way in earnest. This kind of ministry is legitimately dangerous — not just because the indigenous people might prove hostile to the explorers but also because sea voyages are still dangerous and the new lands often have dangerous new wildlife and diseases — so it tends to attract the most zealous believers. The attitude of the Church toward heretics plays a role as well. While the Inquisition tends to focus its attention on rooting out those who recently converted to Christianity but might secretly



practice their former faith, it also has an interest in heretics against the Church. A missionary who appears too sympathetic to faiths that are not compatible with the Catholic doctrine could attract the Inquisition's unwanted attention.

Portugal, in turn, benefits from the work of Catholic missionaries. A military occupation of every new colony is not practical or cost effective. To rule in the long term the Portuguese need the support of at least a sizable fraction of the native population. Converting the indigenous peoples of those colonies facilitates the recruitment process. European nations have become extremely good at using religion to legitimize their laws, establish order, and maintain the status quo, so a native population that has opted into that religious framework is more apt to cooperate with the colonizing forces. This helps maintain the peace, but it also opens the door to the flagrant abuses of power by the colonists and missionaries (particularly slavery) in later centuries.

Muslim Traders

The Ajuran Sultanate and the Ottoman Empire have a significant stake in the events of Mutapa. The first is an Islamic empire in modern day Somalia that connects the spices and cloth of the Silk Road to the gold and ivory of the Mutapa Empire. The second is an Islamic empire in modern day Turkey that controls Constantinople, and with it the primary gateway between Europe and the rest of the Silk Road. The Ottoman Empire closed Constantinople to European traders in 1453, which caused the prices of goods from India and China to rise precipitously.

The Ottoman stranglehold on this trade route only increases when the empire seizes control of first Egypt (in 1517), then much of the remaining northern coast of Africa (by the mid-1500s). The Portuguese expansion along the coast of Africa represents a threat to the Ottoman Empire's near monopoly on Asian goods in Europe, and the two fight multiple wars for control over key ports along the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea between 1481 and 1589. Some of these possess characteristics of proxy wars in which the Ottoman Empire sends military aid to one side of a conflict between two African powers while the Portuguese Empire provides reinforcements to the other side.

During the course of one of these wars, the Ajuran Sultanate becomes a close ally of the Ottoman Empire. At the height of the Portugal-Ottoman wars in the mid-1500s, a Portuguese missionary penetrates the Mutapa Empire and successfully converts its king to Christianity. The traders and advisors from the Ajuran Sultanate see this as a direct threat to their trade relationship with the Mwenemutapa. Whatever the missionary's intention, it is easy to see it as a move against the Ottoman's Empire's control over Europe's ability to trade with Asia and Africa. The merchants of the Ajuran Sultanate are no allies of the Portuguese, and the Church has made it clear that they are unfriendly toward Muslims, so a Christian king of Mutapa presents a clear danger to their ability to maintain trade between southern Africa and eastern Africa.

Although framed by both sides as a conflict between Christianity and Islam, this execution has an economic component that eclipses any religious arguments from either side. The Ajuran traders are a known source of Asian cloth and spices, as well as a reliable market for Mutapa's gold, copper, and ivory. The Portuguese have military might, certainly, but it is not as immediately obvious what they can offer the kingdom. The Ajuran Sultanate applies pressure to the Mwenemutapa, warning of trade restrictions they will impose on Mutapa if the Portuguese are allowed unfettered access to the kingdom's trade goods. It turns out to be an act of war that sparks the Accidental Crusade, but at least in the short term it is the better choice.

Shingai's question hung in the air. He filled the silence with a concerned smile.

What did my ancestors say about my plan?

Mutota had been silent – a stirring, an indistinct whisper, but no lion's roar of insight. I knew he'd bring rain, fire, and luck if I needed it, but he was just as quiet as he had been when I found the passage and blue light, three days ago.

No. Mutota had no advice for me. I confessed this.

"This is my lesson for you," he said. "Without guidance, we do desperate things. I know there are too many of them, witches and Portuguese, for you to chase away from there. I even know that after you insulted the Serpent's Tongue at Zvongombe, you don't have any friends in the Serpent Totems at all, just a bunch of strong men and women who don't know a thing about magic. That's why you're considering this strange arrangement. And I'm afraid you might delude yourself about the possibilities."

"What else can I do?"

"I don't know, Prince. I don't know."

The Supernatural

This is a world of personalities: Powers with distinct voices. Forget what you know about sublime planes of existence, or at least look at them in a new light, as one perspective among many. According to Shona mages there are no Supernal Realms, but that doesn't mean their truths are gone or even obscured. In a similar vein, ghosts don't drift away from the world but live within it – though they know secret routes of the dead that some might call another place entirely.

This is not to say that inhabitants of the Mutapa Kingdom are closeminded. The Conquered Land hosts ambassadors and repels foreign threats, and its people have learned other points of view. The Portuguese talk about Heaven, Hell, and Platonic metaphysics. Some learned people know about the distant northern sands, their kingdoms beyond kingdoms, and the ruins and strange myths that originate there. Cosmopolitan mages and ordinary people know they live in a world filled with clashing perspectives but most of them use their own tradition as the context for others. The Arisen may bring foreign ideas into the mix, but they're immortals who've played the games of analogy and interpretation across many lives.

A Note on Methodology and Privilege

This section renders **Mage**, **Mummy**, and other aspects of the setting of the Chronicles of Darkness down to the basic principles they need to be consistent in their game systems and a setting with multiple perspectives on common, if enigmatic, truths. These principles may dig further into the fundamentals than you might expect. For instance, Shona mages possess a completely different approach to magic, but construct it based on the same universals expressed in existing game systems and **Mage**'s deep thematic currents. They believe in ancestor families, not Paths. There are no distant Supernal Realms.

They aren't necessarily wrong.

This section isn't intended to be the sort of "reskinning" where we add a layer to the ur-mythology, imply that everybody else knows better and move on. How do we *really* know there are Supernal Realms? How is a place with no relationship in space with our world, and no way to objectively measure, said to truly exist outside of a reaction to some profound mystical experience? The Shona method is reductive and conservative, recognizing states of being without turning them into enormous invisible kingdoms.

This applies to the relationship between lines as well. **Mummy**'s "Underworld" consists of the "realm" of Neter-Khertet, which other **Chronicles of Darkness** games call a "state," Twilight, and reserve the term "Underworld" for the chthonic tunnel world of rivers and dominions beyond Avernian gates. But when we look at it through functional criteria, the difference begins to blur. Ghosts in immaterial form often interact with each other. If they share a frame of reference, is that a location or a state? Is a gate to deeper realms in the Underworld travel between planes of existence, or simply passing through an unusual barrier?

The world of the Chronicles of Darkness isn't created by the subjective opinions of its inhabitants, but it is *described* subjectively. Culture and history inform reactions to universal phenomena. It's a wider harbor than you think, and unlocks new ways of thinking about the setting.

Mage: The Royal Mediums

Shona Awakened call themselves *svikiro*, or spiritual mediums. They're not the only svikiro because many types of mediums exist, but they benefit from permanent contact with the *Mhondoro*, supratribal spirits from mythic history. Outsiders map Mhondoro Lineages to the Paths, but Shona mages would retort that the Paths represent a sterile approach to the royal ancestors of old. Portuguese mages believe in Paths similar to those used by modern mages: ways to the Supernal created by Atlantean kings. Their Shona counterparts believe the Paths *are* these kings and their successors. Over time, one perspective attains global preeminence through colonialism, but the Shona system never dies out. Most svikiro don't believe in Atlantis, of course. Instead, clans and kingdoms pass through cycles of greatness throughout history. Their mythic nobles and heroes enter the presence of Mwari, the Shona concept of God, and attain the ability to be called back by svikiro, bringing divine truths and miracles with them.

The Mhondoro Lineages

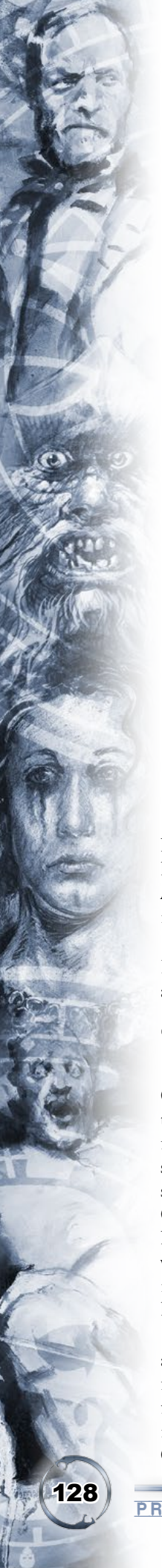
Out of common causes and related lineages, the five ancient Mhondoros have accepted others into their families, including men and women of power from recent history. Outsiders might say that Awakened svikiro see Supernal beings who take the form of ancestors, but for all intents and purposes, they are indeed these people. They possess the same knowledge and can take the shape of ancient and recent great figures. To Mutapa's Shona mages, Mhondoro also manifest as lions, as the name itself means "lion."

An Awakened sviriko channels one Mhondoro from her Lineage or, rarely, a few closely related ones. One Mhondoro stays in constant communication, but this doesn't mean she benefits from her knowledge beyond the gifts of Awakening. Mhondoros provide cryptic advice and inspire mages to act on personal insights, but only rarely provide straightforward information.

A medium is said to possess great *Simba*, a conception of power that encompasses the physical, social, and intellectual realms. Everyone has it, but mediums channel more, because communion with mighty ancestors grants it. Thus, they use it as a word for what Pentacle mages will one day call Mana (though Portuguese mages currently call it *Vis*). Both Arcana and individual spells are known as the Simba of a specific thing.

Elemental Affinities

The empire's indigenous traditions don't recognize anything like the five elements of Classical metaphysics. Shona focus on pragmatic interests. In a land of rivers, deep valleys, and a temperamental climate, access to water determines one's ability to survive and prosper. Life is moisture, and Shona say that people "dry out" as they age. In popular belief, all



Real vs. Awakened Belief

This section looks at the Awakened experience through Mutapa culture. The modern inheritors of that culture are the Shona and related peoples, who have developed these traditions into modern forms. Note that this section does *not* describe what modern Shona believe, but the perspective they use to interpret the enigmatic experience of Awakening. When we give Mhondoros the role of "Supernal" representatives, we're not saying that reality has bent to their beliefs, but we're not saying that that this is who the high ancestors "really" are, even in the setting of the Chronicles of Darkness. Rather, Mutapa mages draw from the language and framework they know. The "real" Mhondoros are defined by what living inheritors of the tradition believe, not the contents of a storytelling game.

Lest you believe this is an exception to the usual approach in other books, note the Paths, Orders, and metaphysical strangeness in the **Mage** core work exactly the same way. The difference is that to many English-speaking readers, the process is so ingrained as to pass without comment, so we don't usually take time to remind people that when a mage interacts with an angel, we're not pretending to talk about what Christians really believe, either.

Mhondoros are able to bring rain, and indeed, Shona mages have developed rainmaking spells utilizing a surprising range of Arcana, from "speaking to the rain" using Spirit to transporting water with Space.

Instead of looking to elemental relationships, Mhondoro Lineages declare affinity for various forms of water, which act as allegories for a full range of metaphysical forces.

Chimombe of the Iron God (Moros)

A lord of the North beyond the Zambezi River, Chimombe conquered the lands of the valley, displacing the chieftain Nyamapfeka's people and stealing access to the region's salt pans. Nyamapfeka sent his daughter Semwa to seduce Chimombe, and they married. One night, Semwa slit Chimombe's throat with a length of twisted iron. The Chiore River flowed forth from the wound. Therefore, Mhondoros from this Lineage have always been associated with valuable elements and death. The so-called "Iron God" isn't Chimombe himself, but the iron fragment used to kill him, which mediums of this Lineage guard in a secret place.

Mhondoros of the Lineage: Chimombe is the Lineage's ancestor, but does not appear to mages — he was killed, and now manifests as the Chiore River. Instead, Mhondoros from Nyamapfeka's line appear to guide mediums. These include Nyamapfeka himself, Semwa, Maria, Chigua, Chindamauyu, Nyamasoka and Chiyodzamamera.

Water: Drying rivers. As water retreats, the river exposes clay, stones, and salt. Dryness itself is death.

Awakening: Mages of the Lineage typically Awaken to its Mhondoros in moments of defeat. Like Chimombe himself, they let their old selves "die" to open themselves to new opportunities.

Ruling Arcana: Death, Matter. Chimombe's legend emphasizes renewal in the face of conquest and death along with salt and iron, precious elements of the land. Death gives this Lineage's medium special powers when dealing with the mudzimu spirits of clan ancestors. Chimombe's Mhondoros are believed to act as impartial third parties in disputes between ghosts. On the other hand, they are known to have the ability to reconstitute the moisture of shed blood within a corpse, reviving it to some mockery of life, and to lead ancestors and wild ghosts astray with various forms of witchcraft.

Inferior Arcana: Spirit. In Chimombe's myth, water isn't the province of spirits but born of blood. The other Lineages assign various characteristics to the natural world, but Chimombe's Mhondoros concentrate on the human, concrete aspects of the land.

Chingoo, the Conqueror (Mastigos)

As twins, Chingoo and Mutota came to the Conquered Lands together. Chingoo used his spear to open a beehive, anointing Mutota with a rain of honey. But Mutota was delayed in his journey, and Chingoo proceeded before him. He encountered the godlike warrior Nyamazunzu. Chingoo could not defeat Nyamazunzu, so gave his descendant Dymbu's daughter Peduru in marriage. During the wedding celebration Nyamazunzu drank too much, and while he slept, Chingoo took his head. Chingoo's clan annihilated Nyamazunzu's people and claimed their territory. Through his daughter, Chingoo's descendants claimed Nyamazunzu's power, and Chingoo himself came to represent the guile and temperance required to rule.

Mhondoros of the Lineage: Slain by Chingoo, Nyamazunzu does not appear to servants of the Lineage. Chingoo, Dumbu, and Peduru guide their chosen svikiro.

Water: Water in vessels. In a cup or held in the hand, water takes the shape given to it by a focused will. Water can be transformed into beer or poisoned — life can become death.

Awakening: To mages of the Lineage, Awakening takes the form of challenges that cannot be defeated through raw force, but require a combination of cleverness and self-control. Mediums of Chingoo's Lineage often Awaken to some hard-won position of authority, but they're more likely to be powers behind the throne than open rulers.

Ruling Arcana: Mind, Space. Chingoo's Mhondoros teach that to conquer others, you must rule yourself. They discourage drunkenness and excessive emotion, because these can be easily exploited in others. Space represents the power to see beyond personal perspectives and acts as the willworker's "spear." Just as Chingoo used his spear to acquire honey, members of the Lineage use the tools of sorcery to bypass limitations of distance.

Inferior Arcana: Matter. Relationships are more important than things. Conquest over minds wins the resources



those minds can muster, so there's no need to trifle with inanimate objects. It's better to use discretion when dealing with the sensual world, anyway.

Dzivaguru of the Rains (Thyrsus)

Legends differ as to whether Dzivaguru is male or female, but this may be due to the ancestor's ancient origins — he or she may have had a prominent svikiro of the opposite gender. In one legend, Dzivaguru controls light and darkness by trapping the Sunbirds, swallows who attract the sun to wherever they appear. In another, the Mhondoro travels across the land bringing rain, healing and fertility. Gosa, lord of the Mtawara people, sends the virgin Nechiskwa to serve him. Dzivaguru never married her, but walked into a deep pool, becoming one with the land and its waters. Thus, Dzivaguru still lives in the rain.

Mhondoros of the Lineage: Dzivaguru was never the parent of any blood descendants, but can appear in male or female form as a personal Mhondoro. In addition, Gosa, Nechiskwa, and other Mtwawara ancestors may act as Mhondoros. One of the most prominent Mhondoros is Musuma, who is known for his ability to bring rain.

Water: Rain. Dzivaguru is the rain itself, even when other Lineages summon it. Rain falls according to natural cycles, and rules the growth of plants, and coming and going of all animals.

Awakening: Svikiro find their calling in isolated places, where Dzivaguru's voice is easier to hear in running water, mists and rain. Awakening often takes the form of traveling into the wild to meditate and encounter the Mhondoro, then returning to the people with his or her message.

Ruling Arcana: Life, Spirit. The Lineage is one of healers, rain summoners, binders of light and dark, and scholars of sacred animals. Dzivaguru's Lineage is known for its ability to channel the mythic aspects of totem animals. The people of the empire don't worship totems and neither do mediums of this lineage, but respect the reputed powers of animals recorded in poems and legends. Water is the medium of life, and death is dust. Dzivaguru mages shape metaphysical "moisture" to heal and alter living creatures.

Inferior Arcana: Mind. Mediums of the Lineage have little interest in changing attitudes and beliefs. Empires rise and fall, but the rains keep their own counsel. The other Mhondoro rose from history that became myth, but Dzivaguru's legend comes from before all history. He or she is eternal. Human consciousness is trivial by comparison.

Mutota Lineage of Kings (Obrimos)

Mutota's Lineage is the most prestigious in the current age, since its ordinary descendants include Nyatsimba Mutota, founder of the Mutapa Empire. Mutota came to the future Conquered Lands in search of salt, which he tasted in an ox which had been killed in his honor. Mutota experienced many adventures as he journeyed to the Zambezi River Valley, and on the way his brother Chingoo bathed him in a rain of honey fallen from a beehive in a tree. (This is how



he got his name, which means "to be wet with rain"). But he failed to perform the proper spells to come down into the valley. He could not proceed and died — the earth opened and swallowed him up. His descendants completed the journey instead, and founded the line of kings, taking from Mutota power over the rain and the earth.

Mhondoros of the Lineage: Mutota founded the first line of Korekore kings, and his royal dynasty has produced dozens of other Mhondoros for followers of the Lineage to communicate with. The first line of descent includes Madzomba, Nyajore, and Nebedza. Lineage followers claim Chimombe as a descendant and subordinate. Then again, these things shift with political affairs in the kingdom itself, and if the Lineage were to lose prestige, stories of legendary parentage might change along with them. Indeed, in the future, a new Mhondoro named Nehanda will give strength to anticolonial revolutionaries, and eclipse Mutota himself.

Water: Storms. Mutota's water comes girded by lightning and rides waves of thunder. Mutota teaches Mhondoros how to rip open the sky and carve the earth with storms.

Awakening: Awakening to the Lineage usually involves symbolic encounters with water and earth, as well as a quest for personal esteem. The medium should not just return with knowledge, but should be acknowledged a master over others.

Ruling Arcana: Forces, Prime. These Arcana are royal privileges. Forces can create storms and summon rain, or open fissures in the earth like those which opened for the dying Mutota. Prime represents subtler authority over magic itself, giving the Lineage eminence above the others.

Inferior Arcana: Death. The Lineage's royal focus makes it ill-suited to deal with the ghosts that act as individual clan ancestors.

Nyamakwere, Lineage the Four Eyes (Acanthus)

Like Dzivaguru, Nyamakwere is said to have arisen from the primal energies of the world before history. Nyamakwere's four eyes guided unerring bow shots, and he was said to be so clever he could disguise himself as an anthill, or raise mists to disguise his people. One story says he ruled the Damba Plateau until Chambavanhu crept up in the night and bound Nyamakwere's eyes in black cloth, drowning him in a pool — though it is said that the Four Eyed One either transformed into a crocodile, or was a crocodile to begin with, hidden by magic. According to another legend, Chigamauro gave his daughter to Nyamakwere in marriage, but challenged him to an archery duel. The Four Eyed one killed him of course, but Chigamauro's daughter betrayed her husband, strangling him — again, with a black cloth. The Lineage is still associated with deception and strange catastrophes.

Mhondoros of the Lineage: The Lineage of the Four Eyed One does not consist of Mhondoros of his blood descendants, but those he bound into his myths. This includes Chambavanhu and Chigamauro, as well as Nyachava, Dandajena, and Dumbu, who gave Nyamakwere's wife magical assistance to defeat him.

Water: Mist. Mist rises before the dawn, heralding new possibilities, and conceals the correct path to anyone who doesn't know the way by other means.

Awakening: Svikiro from Nyamakwere's Lineage often enter its Mhondoros' service as the result of a string of personal disasters, each marked by a common omen, such as the black cloth that led to Nyamakwere's fall.

Ruling Arcana: Fate, Time. The Lineage reigns over the beginning and end of dynasties. Nyamakwere ruled Damba, but his age had to come to an end, even though he was a potent Awakened warrior. Mages measure time in royal reigns, and read the strings of destiny to discover threats to the empire's stability, but even legendary kings must relinquish their scepters eventually, because a reign that lasts beyond its appointed end grows corrupt.

Inferior Arcana: Forces. The stories of the Four Eyed One teaches that raw power can never ensure success. This is a Lineage of subtle ways, not storms.

Mutupos: Four Totems as One

When Shona mages Awaken to the presence of a Mhondoro, the experience shakes their old kinship ties. The Shona and many other people in the Conquered Land organize by clan and *Mutupo*, a word future generations will translate as "totem." Each Mutupo possesses a patron animal or, less commonly, a body part common to many animals. This is a mark of heraldic distinction, chosen because the patron performed a service or represented an important idea for the ancestors who adopted it. Shona avoid sexual relations within their Mutupo and never eat the totemic animal, body part, or its products. (Mutupo totems are not worshipped, however.) Each Mutupo includes honorific names and poetry that communicate its legends and traditions.

But when the Mhondoro call, they don't always consider clan and Mutupo, even though they create a bond so powerful it overrides ordinary blood relations. So from legendary times onward, Awakened svikiro have ritually left their old Mutupos for four totem groups that admit mages alone: the aspects of the Joka, or great serpent. Together, the Joka Mutupos represent the Mutapa Empire's "Convocation," though natives only use that term when they deal with Europeans.

Sviriko apply the usual Mutupo traditions to their Awakened totem. Sexual contact with other members of the same totem is forbidden, for example. In addition, each Joka Mutupo possesses a traditional duty. In this, they fill the roles of the Orders — or rather, the Orders are Mutupos without the sense of ritual kinship. Changing totems in this fashion is possible in mainstream Mutapa culture, but unusual, and mages go about it in an especially peculiar way, subject to skepticism from outsiders. Most svikiro keep their new affiliations a secret.

The Joka Mutupos have parallels with European Orders. The matching Order is listed in parentheses, indicating that members use the same Rote Skills and can acquire the same special Merits listed in **Mage: The Awakening second edition**.

The Serpent's Eye (Guardians of the Veil)

Two things separate legitimate mediumship from the arts of the *muroyi*, evil powers future anthropologists will call "witchcraft." First, a willworker must practice with proper intent, to benefit her community. Second, magic must obey

certain ritual strictures. These two elements are tightly related. For example, stripping the bark from trees and damaging plant life is said to threaten one's "mother." This is more than bad luck, since interfering with plants can ruin crops, drive erosion, and cause starvation.

Mediums of the Serpent's Eye regulate the social and moral laws of magic, but to do so, they must familiarize themselves with everything unclean. Unfortunately, witchcraft can confer strange, dark blessings on its practitioners, so members of the totem must understand and even experiment with these methods. Unlike Western Guardians of the Veil, they do not routinely practice impure magic with the excuse that their actions benefit the whole. They might temporarily study it to penetrate a circle of witches or recognize evil spells, however.

The Serpent's Scales (Mysterium)

The Serpent's Scales study sorcery for its own sake. They are ardent travelers, and practice many traditions from outside the Mutapa Empire. For example, they organize themselves as an initiatory society after the fashion of people who live thousands of miles away in West Africa, and some of their ritual tools ape designs found in Egypt and Europe. Some of them might even call themselves members of "the Mysterium," provided they were in the company of foreigners who respected that name.

Members of the Mutupo are expected to speak and read many languages, and familiarize themselves with multiple arts and crafts. They know that five general varieties of mage exist in most cultures. Some outsiders justify the categories through an elaborate cosmology, while others favor the familiar reductionist approach, where supernatural ancestors pass sorcery from one generation to the next. Serpent's Scales believe that by studying the common elements of many forms of magic, philosophy and even ordinary trades, they can better understand magic's true nature.

The Serpent's Teeth (Adamantine Arrow)

The Serpent's Teeth do not share the European Arrow's distaste for rule. In fact, it's their natural position. Serpent's Teeth regard themselves as princes, but not tyrants. Without Eye, Tongue, and Scales, the Serpent cannot see its enemies, negotiate peace, or protect themselves from enemy sorcery. When a warrior performs an unworthy deed, the people refuse to speak of him. He will not be called an ancestor and the other Mhondoros won't accept him into their ranks. When he acts bravely he becomes a *mwene*, or prince, and might earn a place among the revered.

Serpent's Teeth aspire to be warrior-princes who earn followers through personal skill, strategic cunning, and the ability to recognize that after the battle, a true ruler destroys the enmity between combatants, forging nations anew. These mages train Sleepers to add their spears and guns to his own. The bigger a prince's personal entourage, the more respect he commands. His followers expect him to lead them only on righteous (or at least wealth generating) campaigns, and provide spiritual counsel. But when a Mhondoro tells her warrior medium to act, he does so without hesitation, because his first duty is always to divine ancestors. Fortunately, the people usually treat Mhondoros with nearly as much reverence, so when their mediums say it's time to rise up, few ignore the call.

The Serpent's Tongue (Silver Ladder)

All sorcery has a political component. The Mhondoros invoked magic in the land but also brought families and followers. Therefore, the Serpent's Tongue concerns itself with matters of state to care for the magical ancestors' descendants, and honor the society they made. The Mutapa narrative is not one of lost civilizations and faded glories, but of clans and nations in the here and now, questing for prosperity through correct action. Members of the Mutupo advise fellow mages and Sleeper aristocrats, warning them when certain actions would anger their ancestors or bring misfortune.

Unlike counterparts in the Silver Ladder, the Serpent's Tongue do not view themselves as natural leaders. The empire's ordinary political processes were born of ancestral legends, and carry the Mhondoros' sacred approval. Nevertheless, they know how to phrase their advice to encourage certain actions. The Serpent's Tongue typically counsels peace and cooperation, including a certain degree of social stasis. The wealthy clans should keep their wealth, but share it generously, and those who toil below them should stifle their complaints. The Mutupo teaches that power ultimately resides in the land and water, however, and helps negotiate access to rivers, fertile soil, and sacred places.

Within the Empire, Outside the Serpent

As external pressures disrupt the empire's traditions an increasing number of svikiro refuse to join any Joka Mutupo. In most cases they would rather use magic to help their own families and totems, and consider abandoning their birth Mutupo akin to becoming orphans, who possess extremely low status within the empire. Many are members of the powerful Elephant, Water Zebra, or Pigeon Mutupos, and are reluctant to abandon family privilege, but a few hail from humbler origins and, regardless of what the Serpent's Tongue wants, would use magic to upend the order of things. In the future, these mages might join the Free Council. For now, they use **Mage**'s rules for Nameless Orders.

Foreign Relations

The Joka Mutupos have dominated magical practice since the time of Great Zimbabwe, and perhaps earlier, since legends and history interact fluidly within Mutapa culture. Mutapa mages are well acquainted with foreigners, both from within Africa and beyond. Awakened mediums have dealt with counterparts from as far away as China, though they are most familiar with neighboring Bantu peoples, such as those from the Kongo, Lunda, and Luba kingdoms. Visitors from India and Portugal are almost as well known.

At first Mutapa's nobles welcome the Portuguese. Their sartanejo "backwoodsmen" facilitate easy trade with India. Mutapa aristocrats grow wealthy; mediums who walk with princes prosper



with them. Few European mages travel with the sartanejos, but once Portugal enters into direct relations with the empire they come in greater numbers, accompanying royal emissaries and larger trading groups. Most belong to the Atlantean Diamond, and are educated enough to recognize parallel Orders in the Awakened Mutupos. Sporadic misunderstandings and battles for territory test relations, but Mutapa mages have always paid special attention to the land, and prevent foreigners from seizing magical places.

Diamond mages warned svikiros about the Seers of the Throne, but the threat never appears —at least, not until it digs its hooks into the empire's subkingdoms. The Seers opt for a ground-up infiltration over the period of this era, avoiding local attention and straining political stability, but chiefly serving the Seers' passion for internal competition. Hegemonic and Paternoster mages apply their respective strategies to regional courts, using Portuguese promises and religious conversion to advance the Throne's interests. As the empire crumbles, these Ministries ascend to influence with a mixture of local and European support. Frustrated Praetorians and petty merchant Ministries watch from the sidelines, as Joka mages support the empire's trade and military sovereignty, but at the expense of political unity.

Mummy: Strange Artisans

Arisen influenced the rise and fall of Great Zimbabwe, and exchanged old fortresses for new when people abandoned that empire and claimed the Conquered Lands under a new wave of princes. The Deathless' position is a paradox; they integrated by standing outside the ordinary political and spiritual order. To people aware of them, Arisen are embodied shavi, the foreign and unburied dead who teach practical crafts. Family and Mutupo distinctions do not apply to them. They are not true ancestors. In fact, hallowed ghosts often treat them with fear or spite, or a forced agreeableness that indicates some form of secret coercion is at work.

The Alien South

The Arisen share a continent of origin with the Mutapa Empire and, like them, understand that the dead influence the living, but otherwise have very little in common with the Conquered Land's people. As the hawk flies, parts of the New World are about as far from Irem's burial place, and Copenhagen is closer. Nevertheless, Arisen wanderers saw potential in the distant South, and established a formal nome during the rise of Great Zimbabwe. The old kingdom's artisans used the shavi to explain strange inspirations, including flashes of inspiration that made vessels of power out of the best examples of their work. Attracted by their genius, the Deathless appropriated the explanation, visited these great artists and makers, and said they were these orphan spirits of artisanship. After some early conflict the guilds agreed to sponsor those who practiced the same or similar arts as they once did, striking a rough balance of power for as long as the kingdom maintained a parallel balance in its trades.

This equilibrium collapsed when Great Zimbabwe's miners discovered prodigious veins of gold. Mesen-Nebu claimed the right to exploit miners and smiths, so they ascended to power in the 14th century. Yet the arrangement that gave them power only worked as long as gold came out of the ground, so they aggressively exploited the mines. In less than 200 years the richest veins had been exhausted, trade declined, and enterprising warrior-princes abandoned the shabby remnants of the old capital to seek more gold, salt, and verdant land. The Mutota dynasty colonized the northern hinterlands of the old kingdom and founded the Mutapa Empire. The Arisen followed. For some mummies, this came about during extended periods in Duat, while their cults were too poor or disorganized to raise them. To them, it happened in the blink of an immortal's eye. The old ways persist, and the nome hasn't fully adapted to the new kingdom's politics.

Plague Ships

One of the blessings of venturing so far south is that Shuankhsen are relatively rare. Local examples are usually damaged Arisen and not Iremite slaves. Since local Deathless often know these unfortunates, they can more easily eliminate the threat, but the Devourer's servants infest Europe and northern Africa, and follow Portuguese and African traders as they make contact with the Mutapa Empire.

Memory lapses and the Mutapa nome's lack of preparedness make it particularly difficult for the Conquered Land's Arisen to properly recognize the danger new bane mummies represent. The more the Portuguese establish themselves, the worse the problem becomes. Mortals suffer unexplained deaths, accusations of witchcraft, and general social unrest — one of many factors that causes the kingdom to fracture. It probably would have happened without the Shuankhsen, but foreign cannibals make the fall harder and faster.

Other Foreigners

Even disoriented by the rapid political changes surrounding them, the Arisen sense Deathless influence within the Portuguese presence as soon as it appears. After the fall of Great Zimbabwe, a few Arisen kept watch for the rest. They paid special attention to economics and trade to avoid a second disaster. When the Portuguese fail to maintain a fortress at the port of Sofala, the mortal princes see a foreign blunder, but the mummies in their courts know a seed has been planted that will grow no matter who claims to rule the soil.

The mummies from abroad who board Portuguese ships usually possess few or no followers, and small, half-wrecked tombs. In many cases they're losers from inter-Arisen conflicts, or are fleeing from the Deathless' other enemies. With little to lose, it's easy enough for the "Portuguese" Arisen to become "Swahili" Arisen, or encourage inter-ethnic trade communities where African, Asian, and Indian populations intermingle. As the Portuguese and their allies exert greater influence over the Conquered Land, newcomers build their cults. These are often the first followers these Arisen have had in centuries, or sometimes ever, so they can tailor their doctrines for the

time. From Sofala, Kilwa, and other coastal hubs, new cults build tombs and caches of gold and arms along trade routes.

This doesn't escape the attention of Mutapa's mummies, but they can't do much about it. The princes won't do without Asian luxuries, and those pass through Portuguese hands. Shavi mummies do prepare the Empire to resist colonization, but must work around the limits of their social status. Svikiro mages speak for great ancestors but Mutapan mummies remain foreigners to be consulted about the arts, not matters of state. The nome takes action by keeping the Mesen-Nebu from repeating the mistakes of Great Zimbabwe. They allow gold production to fall under the dominion of the monarchy and, through various advisors, encourage the royal house to spread the wealth around sparingly. In doing so, the Empire avoids Portuguese domination for a time.

Cults of the Shavi

The Mutapa nome follows the traditions it built in Great Zimbabwe. These don't always match the Conquered Land's political realities. The old kingdom recognized a powerful class of traders and artisans working for a highly centralized state. The Mutapa Empire's culture is no less sophisticated but is less centralized, and dominated by intrigue between Mutupo lines.

In Shona belief, Shavi exist outside the totem system. People from many different families can practice the same craft and seek related spiritual guidance without offending their ancestors, because the Shavi do not presume to take their place. The people of the Conquered Land accept that the foreign dead teach special skills, and that a medium might journey to some ancient stone structure where a Shavi died to speak to him, but an embodied Shavi is essentially an animated corpse — witchcraft. To most people, the Deathless cycle is an incomprehensible, evil thing. Therefore, Shavi Arisen only reveal their true nature to a select few. They hide (or perform acts of "witchcraft" they later pretend to have nothing to do with) at peak Sekhem or other times they might reveal their corpse forms. Disguised as mortals, they act as mediums of the true Shavi (themselves) until they secure mortals' complete loyalty. They find it highly convenient to initiate Sadikh, who can take followers through the process of initiation while their masters deal with other tasks.

Great Zimbabwe's mummies pretended to be Shavi to influence a broad, united artisan class. The nobility of the age trusted this group's lack of ambition even as made them intermediaries for virtually every important task. Power flowed through them for the Arisen to direct. Beyond this, it has always been in the interests of the Deathless to encourage mortals to master their chosen crafts. At peak inspiration, a few channel Sekhem into relics, or their legendary works evoke the feelings necessary to make them vestiges. This is never guaranteed — nothing can turn mortals into predictable vessel manufacturers — but supporting arts and crafts makes it more likely and generates wealth for the cult besides. The Mesen-Nebu have been generally successful, since everyone knows gold is power, water is life and iron is strength, but the Sesha-Hebsu have faltered, since the oral Mutapa culture has little use for mystic texts.

The Mutapa Empire is a more dynamic environment than Great Zimbabwe. Here, clans win noble rank through wealth and military power. They can have their ancestors recognized as Mhondoros later. Many families battle for supremacy, and the Shavi no longer unite artisans. Mortals still honor them, but it has become increasingly difficult for Arisen to maintain cults with members from rival Mutupos. Nevertheless, secret societies connected to the five crafts survive, each ruled by Arisen from a corresponding guild.

Societies of Gold and Iron (Mesen-Nebu)

Mesen-Nebu cults brought their masters formidable influence over Great Zimbabwe by controlling mines and metalwork. The Alchemists burned through gold to maintain power. The mines played out and enterprising lords colonized other lands, founding the Mutapa Empire. Thus, the guild endures a split between Arisen who witnessed Great Zimbabwe's collapse and retreated from gold production, and those who slept through it, don't believe they're to blame for what happened, and think the other guilds conspired to rob them of a traditional prerogative. Even better informed Alchemists will only reluctantly shoulder the blame. Mesen-Nebu hate being denied any route to realize their ambition, much less one that corresponds with their ancient duties. The arrival of poor, ambitious Mesen-Nebu from the coast and Europe have renewed this internal debate, since the invaders don't care about local tradition and attempt to seize mines for themselves. At least the locals agree that no matter who gets the gold, it can't be the newcomers.

Local cults draw most of their members from blacksmiths and traders. Petty warrior-princes who enjoy sharp steel and foreign jewels also sponsor them. Most of the nome's Mesen-Nebu cults are Enterprises. Alchemists encourage members of different totems to work together, and reward individual merit regardless of a cultist's social status. The Mesen-Nebu believe this is the essence of fairness, but this sometimes conflicts with the society's focus on Mutupo and shared ancestry. When a person accomplishes something, surely her mother, father, brothers, sisters, and cousins, all of whom support her, deserve some of the reward?

Societies of Masks (Maa-Kep)

After Great Zimbabwe the guilds followed migrants in many directions. Where other guilds looked for settled populations to influence, the Engravers of Amulets followed their ancient craft. Many Maa-Kep went north to the shores of Lake Malawi, settling among the Amravi people (later called the Chewa). Talented Amravi made amulets out of masks and other ritual objects. These were designed for the Amravi Mask Societies, who initiate men at ancestral burial grounds and perform stories in disguises that represent ancestors and animals. Beyond these public performances, Mask Society members speak to each other in code and share information across villages. The Maa-Kep appreciated these customs,

since they blended with how the guild prefers to operate. With some Engraver encouragement Amravi migrated to the Conquered Land, bringing their traditions with them. Mask Societies now serve as the model for Maa-Kep cults, and masks are the most common form amulets take.

The Maa-Kep paid a price for being largely absent during the formation of the Mutapa Empire. The other guilds recruit cultists from the ranks of princes and great clans, leaving little room for Engraver expansion. Furthermore, the Amravi themselves founded the rival Maravi Kingdom roughly a century before the Accidental Crusade, leading to tensions whenever relations deteriorated. Yet the Mask Societies have made a formidable network out of storytellers, and only the Maa-Kep consistently coordinate cults across two nations—or they did, until Arisen came with the Portuguese. Locals suspect that a handful of Engravers may have agents among the Jesuits across the coast, and as far into the continent as their missionaries travel.

Societies of Sculptors ⟨Tef-Aahbi⟩

In Great Zimbabwe, the Tef-Aahbi shared the lion's share of prestige with the Mesen-Nebu. The ancient capital was built of expertly worked stone, and few doubted that their builders raised a stable, centralized kingdom along with Great Zimbabwe's mighty walls. The Tef-Aahbi didn't teach this art, which arose out of native ingenuity, but rewarded mastery and initiated masons into their cults. Safe behind those walls, the artisans turns to sculpture. Tef-Aahbi watched and inducted the best of them.

The cults relied on a settled, wealthy population. When Great Zimbabwe collapsed, the Tef-Aahbi suffered a corresponding decline. Even the most loyal cultists were too busy navigating the chaotic political situation to honor their masters with well-worked stone and wood. Many Makers commanded their cults to only awaken them when a worthy city rose to replace Great Zimbabwe. They performed the appropriate rites when masons laid down the walls of Zvongombe, the Mutapa capital. It isn't as impressive as Great Zimbabwe, but this is just a matter of time. The people and wealth are here. Tef-Aahbi cults remain focused on stonework, construction, and sculpture, just as in the time of Great Zimbabwe, but keep a closer eye on economics and politics then they did before. Their Arisen discourage political change, hoping that a stable dynasty will let them play the long game, raise great fortresses, and maintain a strong, cultured empire. Fortunately, few Makers seem to have accompanied the Portuguese. Perhaps Tef-Aahbi are reluctant to leave their houses of stone no matter where they may lie.

Societies of Signs ⟨Seshr-Hebsu⟩

All Arisen are foreigners, but the Inscribers of Texts found it most difficult to settle in the South. One of them remembers the agreement to divide power by trade. She looked across a land nearly devoid of writing and complained, "You left us with nothing!" A Mesen-Nebu told her, "If your art is worthy, the people will learn it!" By and large, they



did not. There was no lack of intelligence or ingenuity, but Great Zimbabwe functioned well with a combination of oral tradition and symbols to mark anything holy or powerful, or to tally goods. The Sasha-Hebsu built small cults of traders and royal accountants, some of whom learned Irem's written language, but it was hard to generate enthusiasm for an art that required much effort for little utility.

The guild still acted as judges and negotiators, maintaining prestige in that fashion, but remained largely disconnected from local mortals until the Conquered Land rose and traded with Muslims and later, Christians. Visitors read and wrote, and sometimes carried occult texts with them. The Sesha-Hebsu now expand among the empire's literate foreign minorities, including the Portuguese. Alone out of the Mutapa nome's guilds, they view European and coastal newcomers as allies, not rivals. Their judges and negotiators are the least tempted to join forces with the new arrivals, while those who believe they should be scribes first are often willing to undermine the Empire in exchange for relics, wealth, and more cultists.

Societies of Wandering Caterpillars (Su-Menent)

Some Shona believe that after burial, a person's soul crawls from the earth in the form of a caterpillar. It wanders until the deceased's family calls it to become a *mudzimu*, or clan ancestor. (These are usually ordinary ghosts, not the Mhondoros that guide Awakened mediums.) Traditional religion doesn't believe that ghosts go to an Underworld. They're always present, in a state that can only be perceived by mediums who know how to see them. To the Su-Menent, this describes the liminal place called Neter-Khertet. Priests of the Shell established themselves among undertakers but, as most funeral rites were strictly family affairs, also recruited from the ranks of healers who stayed with the dying to comfort them.

By supporting those who dealt with corpses and healed the sick, the Su-Menent satisfied universal needs, and were relatively undisturbed by the transition from Great Zimbabwe to the Mutapa Empire. Of course, princes demand the best healers and when they die, their families want many mourners and impressive sacrifices, so the new kingdom has proven to be a benefit. Nevertheless, Arisen metaphysics remain irrelevant to the people. Muslims and Christians are a bit more open to the idea of kingdoms beyond life, so the Su-Menent's cults have grown among foreigners and converts. Like the Sesha-Hebsu, the Su-Menent are more likely to welcome counterparts from abroad, but visitors from their Guild don't seem as power hungry. Su-Menent from the Mutapa nome welcome newcomers like long-lost cousins, and set about the morbid business of the guild together.

"Did you bring gold?" The man had foreign tribal scars on his face, but I knew what the light dots on his arms were: the kiss of the forge. The members of this society were all blacksmiths. I gave him a little golden figure – an elephant from India, like the ones carved on my ridiculous imported throne. He nodded, satisfied.

We were far from any fire but almost burning, in the heat and dust beyond the valley. It was dry as the dead, but the smith drank dark wine as fast as someone celebrating by the river on a misty night.

Fear of the Deceived

No member of the Lost Guild has come south. That's the Mutapa nome's customary position, and it's evolved into a taboo against even speculating that the Deceived might invade. When the Deathless surveyed the Zambezi Valley and adjacent lands they observed a people drenched in poetry, dance, storytelling, and quiet contemplation of nature — all sources of *seba*: intangible relics beloved by the Lost Guild. This inspired rampant paranoia among Deathless who remembered, and led to accusations that one Arisen or another was secretly serving the enemy. It even inspired attacks against Awakened *svikiro*, who were accused of being Deceived puppets. Few on either side of the mage-mummy conflict remember what exactly happened, but tradition says it occurred around the fall of Great Zimbabwe, annihilated a generation of ancestor ghosts, and left a few poems and stories about unnatural disasters.

Rising Portuguese power has renewed the whispers, and the guilds increasingly honor the taboo in the breach, not the observance. Rumors abound, but no reputable witness can confirm a member of the Lost Guild has ever set foot on Mutapa territory. Yet the benefits to them would be significant. Local Deathless cannot follow khepher to seba, for the other guilds are not attuned to them, but they have witnessed probable examples: chants that bring strange rains and dances that strengthen a warrior's sword arm. The policy there is simple: Kill the artist and suppress the art.

We didn't stop until we reached the mound. It was rough, but obviously built by human hands, with a wooden door covering one side.

He offered me wine with his left hand, but drew it back after I frowned. After an awkward moment he said, "I'll talk for you. He's a blacksmith who died out here. He's got a strange name."

"He isn't though, is he? He's a walking dead man from the furthest north, beyond the fires of Nyiragongo. You're not his medium."

"You're right. Does it matter?"

"No, but we don't have to pretend." I strode past and flung upon the door to speak to the dry, dead man, so that we could defeat witches and monsters together.

Crossover in the Conquered Land

To understand how mummies and mages interact we must take a functional approach. This is especially significant since both groups contend with the Mutapan perspective. As noted



earlier, the Shona and other local groups are skeptical about the existence of magical realms, lands of the dead, and the elaborate metaphysical architectures Awakened and Arisen alike use to explain their unnatural experiences. The world as it is has supreme importance. It gives life and accepts the dead. Mortals and ancestors don't need to travel anywhere else for enlightenment, grace, or damnation. Certainly Mwari contains the highest mysteries, but few people presume to speak to God directly, much less claim to stand in his or her presence. That's a matter for ancestors and mediums, and although they know certain secrets, they use them to work within a world everyone knows.

Lands of the Dead

The Awakened believe Twilight is a series of states, not a discrete place. In a state of Twilight, a being is typically invisible and intangible. Many Twilight states exist, so that a nature spirit in Twilight cannot necessarily be perceived by a ghost existing at a different Twilight "frequency." This largely matches local traditional beliefs, where the dead still dwell in the world, but only mediums can perceive them.

Yet in Irem, the Shan'iatu and their pupils observed that ghosts can usually perceive and interact with each other even when mortals can't see or touch them. As the inheritors of that knowledge, the Arisen classify the shared Twilight state ghosts dwell in as *Neter-Khertet*, a place between places. It shares most of its geography with the living world, and is functionally identical to Twilight. The distinction is theoretical and functional, but in practical terms all powers that affect beings in Neter-Khertet affect beings within the shared Twilight state of ghosts, and any other beings who enter that shared state, such as creatures that might rise from the Underworld, or mummies traveling Neter-Khertet. Conversely, powers that affect ghosts in Twilight reach into Neter-Khertet, though if they specifically target ghosts, they do not affect other beings in that shared state. If such powers affect ghosts *and* beings such as cthonians, they might affect anything said to dwell in Neter-Khertet.

Anpu (Anubis) is said to rule Neter-Khertet, and sometimes speaks to the Arisen. Accordingly, from an Awakened point of view, Anpu dwells in ghostly Twilight. No Awakened spell below Archmastery can affect Anpu unless he wishes it — he's functionally omnipotent as far as lesser mages are concerned. He may allow sensory or information gathering spells to function, which mark him as both a Supernal being aligned with the Death Arcanum, a native of the Underworld, *and* a being from the Lower Depths, but each category seems somehow wrong, or at least incomplete. He isn't especially interested in the Awakened and won't intervene for good or ill in their business, except to impart Mysteries. If mages attempt to transport Arisen to anywhere they're not supposed to be, Anpu *does* have the power to put a stop to it, in his role as Arisen Psychopomp. (This appears to irritate Anpu greatly, and he may allude to doing this because he must, not because he wishes to.) Mummies can never travel to the Lower Mysteries of the Underworld, voluntarily or otherwise. They can visit the Autochthonous Depths, which they consider another part of Neter-Khertet, but deeper travel is forbidden, no matter the method. Anpu sometimes forbids Arisen from traveling to the Astral Realms and Shadow, but a sufficiently interesting scenario may change his mind. The Storyteller has ultimate discretion in these cases.

Duat is unknown to the Mutapa Kingdom's people. Some mages might call Duat a "Lower Depth," but the term is a label for regions so poorly understood that it might as well be an admission of ignorance. The Arisen occupy a similar situation when they say Supernal manifestations such as Mhondoro ancestors come from A'aru, a place they know almost nothing about to begin with.

Clash of Wills

Second Edition Chronicles of Darkness games introduce a mechanic called "Clash of Wills" to determine which power prevails when two supernatural abilities act in opposition. The effects of these powers must counteract one another by nature, such as when a supernatural sense contends with supernatural concealment.

In these cases, players roll dice pools related to their characters' powers. The character backed by the most successes has her power activate normally. The character with fewer successes suffers his power's nullification.

Ties reroll until one player has accrued more successes than all others. The effect invoked by that player's character wins out and resolves as usual, while all others fail. Victory of one power in a clash does not mean the immediate cancellation of the others, save in cases where only one power can possibly endure (such as competing mental control).

Characters may spend Willpower to bolster the contested roll, but only if they are physically present and aware that powers are clashing. Certain powers, such as those with exceptionally long durations, are more enduring in a clash. Daylong (or nightlong) effects add one die to the clash roll, weeklong effects add two, monthlong three, and effects that would last a year or longer add four. Some mage spells increase their Clash dice pools; see **Mage: The Awakening second edition** for more details.

A mummy's Clash of Wills dice pool is Sekhem + character rating in the highest Pillar requirement for an Affinity or the highest Utterance tier she can currently use. A mage's Clash of Wills dice pool is Gnosis + character rating in the highest Arcanum used in the spell or other ability under consideration.

Ancestors and Ghosts

People in the Conquered Land recognize many types of ancestors. While occultists and magical beings often identify them with specific supernatural beings, remember that these are ultimately religious categories that those creatures have repurposed. A medium with a religious connection to an ancestor, but who does *not* communicate with a ghost or anything else supernatural senses might perceive, is just as real a medium as a mage who speaks to a ghost with game-definable traits. Page 121 describes how the Shona describe the hierarchy of ancestors.

The beings mages call Mhondoros are Supernal entities who adopt an ancestor's guise to effectively communicate with their Awakened mediums. Composed of the undifferentiated power of the Supernal "realms" (which Shona don't believe in — how is it a *place* when your body can't go there?) multiple beings can take the form of the same ancestor, and a single being can appear to be many ancestors. Supernatural powers that affect ghosts, spirits and other "Fallen" ephemeral beings do not affect Mhondoros. This includes all known Utterances and Affinities.

Mudzimus, or clan ancestors, are usually ghosts with powerful anchors maintained by living families. They use the standard rules for ghosts. The Empire has few Avernian Gates, and mudzimus do not usually enter the Underworld. Their descendants still honor them, and the concept of going anywhere else is alien to them.

Although mummies pretend to be shavi, the Conquered Land has many examples of the genuine article: ghosts of the unknown, or foreigners. They only possess anchors if honored as shavi. Otherwise, they dwindle and descend into the Underworld as ghosts in other places do.

Mana and Pillars

Mana is Supernal energy: the light that projects reality, according to some Awakened. In this conception, a mummy's Pillars are the thing Mana's light gets cast upon: the uncreated medium of existence, which casts shadows according to its particular shapes. Mages who study the Arisen Pillars might fear they represent aspects of the Abyss (What else can anyone call the unformed stuff of existence?) but in the Conquered Land, the Abyss is not considered a place, but an ill-omened state. Pillars represents the land's untamed power, before mages apply their civilized spells.

The Arisen believe Sekhem, and the Pillars of its divided power, are the stuff of Creation. When they encounter Mana, they do not think of it as power, but as a manifestation of *Ma'at*, or law imposed by ineffable beings and cosmic principles. Unlike later Egyptians, the Nameless Empire did not believe in Ma'at as a moral law, but an intrusion from solar and sky-borne powers. They believed these gods were opportunistic entities, perhaps even delusions given magical weight who overthrew proper respect for the Judges of Duat and their Shan'iatu representatives.

Mana and Pillars exist in a dualistic relationship. Mana shapes the world. Pillars *are* the world. Yet mages and the Deathless both stretch this relationship. Mages can command Mana to shape the world without expanding Sekhem, and mummies don't need Mana's controlling principle to use their powers.

Mages and Pillars: Mages associate the Pillars with the five subtle Arcana: parts of the human soul. The correspondences are as follows:

- **Ab:** Spirit
- **Ba:** Mind
- **Ka:** Prime
- **Ren:** Fate
- **Sheut:** Death

Utterances and Revised Ghosts

Revise the following ghost-affecting Utterances in games that use Second Edition rules. (Note that Awaken the Dead works with corpses, not ghosts, and Words of Dead Glory affect corpses and Nenitu simulacra, which are also not ghosts.)

Chthonic Dominion: The Utterance doesn't impart Conditions. For example, a ghost commanded to guard a place does not acquire a Manifestation Condition that allows it to confront mortal intruders. Ghosts so commanded do not suffer Essence Bleed for the duration of their service, however.

Words of Dead Fury: The first Tier creates a new Anchor, as the Condition, for an existing ghost, and compels the ghost to its presence. If the mummy touches (or is) a pre-existing Anchor, she may compel the ghost to assume the Materialize Condition for a scene, at no cost to itself. Tier two only affects an area where a significant part of the place (not as much as half, necessarily — an important monument might qualify) possesses the Open Condition for ghosts. This extends the Open Condition to the entire area of effect and in addition to granting ghosts the listed benefits, imparts immunity to Essence Bleed for resident ghosts. On the fifth night of operation, the area generates one Shadow Gate in a location of the mummy's choosing. The third tier's Chthonic Beast can only pass through a Shadow Gate, though this need not be created by the mummy.

Words of Dead Hunger: This power does not impart particular Conditions, and simply operates as written, as the magic of the Utterance cuts through normal ephemeral cycles.



Mages can sense Pillar points in creatures or objects by using Unveiling spells from the linked Arcana.

Mages can seize Pillar points from a Vessel or any being with Pillar points, resisted by a Vessel's dot rating or an entity's Resolve + Sekhem. This requires a Weaving spell based on an Arcanum associated with the Pillar, as above. The mage cannot store points within herself, but must employ an object (including a place) with a Resonance keyword that matches the Pillar's theme (Storyteller's discretion). Such a spell transfers Pillar points equal to its Potency into the object. This becomes an artificial Vestige and develops a Connected sympathetic bond with the mage. If she becomes a ghost, it transforms into one of her Anchors.

Against a living, Lifeless or Deathless target, siphoning Pillar points provokes a Clash of Wills.

A mage can spend Pillar points within a Vestige she creates with a siphoning spell (as above) or from one they acquire. This requires a two dot Ruling spell keyed to the Pillar's Arcanum, as above. This can be used to transfer Pillar points equal to the spell's Potency to a being capable of internalizing them (such as a Deathless or Lifeless entity), to another Vestige, or for direct utilization.

What else can the Awakened spend Pillar points on? They can't replicate or undo the Rite of Return or use Arisen powers, but might perform other feats after deep research and stories of hard-won knowledge. These actions impose unique, strange drawbacks as well. Use relic descriptions in **Mummy** for inspiration. The Storyteller should freely invent new uses for Pillars, and make unlocking them the core of difficult Mysteries, but take care not to do anything with them that would trivialize their use by Arisen.

One effect that mages might learn of is that as the stuff of base existence, Pillar points can be spent to create a Yantra that enhances spells from the associated Arcanum listed above. It creates a stronger spell in the same way a potter with more clay can create better work. She can discard what's imperfect and begin again, or work hard at the wheel to create a larger, more elaborate masterpiece. The Yantra possesses a bonus equal to the Pillar points spent by the required Ruling spell. Furthermore, the Yantra can bring total Yantra bonuses over +5, as long as other Yantra bonuses are no higher than +3, but this brings a drawback with it: each point over the +5 cap adds +1 to the mage's Paradox dice pool.

Mummies and Mana: Arisen cannot naturally channel Mana, but their Guild-conferred understanding of the magic in objects even extends beyond Irem's methods. By whispering crafthouse secrets to Supernal artifacts and other material items that contain Mana, they may manipulate them, as long as a target object matches their Guild's purview. The Storyteller determines when this is the case.

A mummy may spend Mana equal to half his Sekhem (rounded down) per turn, expelling it from the object for a given purpose but, like mages and Pillars, Arisen have yet to understand the potential of the alien power they use. The Storyteller determines how the Arisen might use Mana. Like Awakened Pillar use, this should be an object of ongoing, dangerous study. Use Paradox results as inspirations for the drawbacks of these experiments.

The first application Arisen might discover is that they may spend Mana to activate the powers within a magical item that fits within their Guild's purview, even if this ability normally requires Awakened Gnosis. When a Gnosis score is required, use the mummy's Sekhem. When an Arcanum is required, use the Pillar rating associated with the required subtle Arcanum under "Mages and Pillars," above. If the required Arcanum is gross, use the gross Arcanum normally connected to the linked subtle Arcanum by Path. For example, the mummy would use Ka to replicate Forces if this Arcanum required a dot rating to utilize a magical item's powers. Note that this does not allow Arisen to use powers that aren't embedded in objects, even if those objects are Awakened magical tools.

Mages Affecting Mummies

The following miscellaneous notes apply to how Awakened magic (including Attainments and other abilities that aren't spells) affect the Arisen. Generally speaking, magic cannot manipulate innate, template-granted abilities including Sekhem, but Archmasters might defy this restriction — sparking conflict with the Judges in the process.

Detection: The Arisen appear alive to Life Sight and spells, and deceased to Death. Using these Arcana together reveals both characteristics simultaneously, but from a common source: a characteristic that defies Awakened understanding, which typically separates them into opposing Supernal sources. Furthermore, mages sense a vast, alien *purpose* behind the Arisen. They see shadows of ancient gods and dream of bizarre hieroglyphs.

Mages can see the true forms of Sekhem-bearing beings by using Unveiling Death magic, but these beings may invoke a Clash of Wills if they wish to avoid detection.

Sekhem and the Descent: Magic cannot directly influence the Descent or permanently destroy a mummy. Magic *can* be used to obliterate a mummy's body or force mummies to commit acts that trigger Descent checks, however. For example, a Mind spell might force one of the Arisen to blaspheme the Judges of Duat. As an envelope around an Arisen soul, Sekhem prevents any force from stealing, disrupting, or otherwise manipulating it. Mages can still affect Pillars points (see above — no spell affects permanent dot ratings) and consciousness, but cannot impose soul loss Conditions or similar effects. A mummy's Sekhem also renders her immune to any form of possession, though not to spells that merely affect behavior without transplanting another personality. Finally, when a mummy begins a new Descent, the magic of the Rite of Return removes all magic affecting her, for good or ill. This does not apply to mid-Descent resurrections.

Affinities: Magic cannot directly target Affinities that only affect the Arisen, though spells might reduce their usefulness. For example, a mage might use Fate magic to make a mummy clumsy, so that Anointed Prowess merely compensates for a deficiency instead of ensuring superhuman athletic performance. Otherwise, spells can affect the result of an Affinity if they would influence similar phenomena, subject to a Clash of Wills.

Utterances: Like Affinities, it is only possible to counter the effects of an Utterance. They cannot be suppressed with countermagic and other methods that attack its underlying supernatural nature. When a spell works directly against an Utterance, use a Clash of Wills.

Memory: Magic cannot retrieve memories lost due to a low Memory Trait for a simple reason: Those memories are not present in the mummy's mind at all. They aren't repressed or buried, but are presumably inscribed on the Scroll of Ages, where mummies believe all knowledge resides. When a mummy's Memory increases she attunes herself to these memories, and when it decreases, she loses touch with them. Mages may implant *false* memories with Mind spells, but their Duration automatically expires if the Mummy's Memory increases. Mages cannot change the Memory Trait with spells, though they might cause Arisen victims to perform callous or identity-denying acts that affect it.

Khepher: Khepher is a psychic sympathetic connection between Arisen and vessels attuned to their guild. Mages may sense and manipulate these connections with Space and other magic that manipulates sympathy, but never permanently. Sensing a Khepher connection does not necessarily tell the mage what it means to the mummy. One rank of Potency adjusts Khepher one step on the table on p. 145 of the **Mummy** core. Spells cannot push the connection past the closest or furthest degrees listed there. It is however possible to completely sever a connection between a mortal proxy (**Mummy**, p. 147) and a vessel, though the mortal might re-establish it by interacting with the vessel again. For the purpose of sympathetic magic, mummies have Connected sympathy to personal relics they do not sacrifice to Duat.

Sahu: The mummy's sahu is her undead body, a preserved corpse suffused with magic. When parts crumble and rip away, magic solidifies to replace it. Unless the mummy unleashes certain powers, it projects the illusion of life. (This "illusion" is material, and cannot be banished with spells that affect illusions.) Spells that alter life functions don't harm the Arisen, who don't need, and often don't even possess, organs. Life spells can change a mummy's shape, however any such magic expires upon the mummy's death. Arisen suffer aggravated damage from relic weapons and fire. Supernal artifacts are *not* considered to be relics for this purpose. Magically generated fire functions just as well as natural sources, however. Mages cannot inflict aggravated damage on the Deathless by simply charging a spell with Mana. Organs from the four jars are considered body parts for the purpose of sympathetic magic.

Sybaris: Mages see Sybaris as a powerful, unique form of Resonance with additional properties that the Awakened cannot fully explain. An area affected by Sybaris possesses one Resonance keyword appropriate to Death, Fate, and Time, plus one additional keyword per rank of Unease (0 and negative Unease still provide one keyword).

Sybaris does not affect mages, and mages cannot receive sybaritic omens. The Awakened may banish Sybaris by using Prime spells that alter Resonance (such as "Geomancy"), but the spells are Withstood by half the most powerful Sekhem Trait generating the Sybaris, rounding up.

Virtue and Vice

In First Edition Chronicles of Darkness Games, characters possessed a default set of Virtues and Vices, but it was possible to create variants. In Second Edition, players devise their own Virtues and Vices. If you use self-invented Virtues and Vices, assess powers that refer to First Edition Default Virtues and Vices based on whether the First Edition defaults and the second edition Virtue or Vice share an act that would award Willpower.

Vessels: Vestiges do not contain Mana. Their Pillars can be manipulated as per Pillars. Relics are not Supernal, and while their powers can be countered by magic that affects the end result, spells cannot affect their innate nature. For example, Forces might counteract a relic that generates fire, and Mind one that enslaves minds. Prime cannot disenchant a relic, though it can cause one to activate. Relic curses may similarly be countered on a case by case basis. Spells that interfere with a relic's curses or powers cannot be made Lasting. Relics withstand spells with their dot ratings.

Mummies Affecting Mages

Detection: As supernatural beings, the Arisen (and Lifeless, and Sadikhs,) count as Sleepwalkers for purposes of Paradox, Quiescence, and Dissonance. Furthermore, a mummy may use Lifesense to detect the presence of magical items, including objects that have been temporarily ensorcelled if these would fit her Guild's purview. She cannot sense these at a distance like true vessels, but once examined by hand, she can use Khepher to sense the connection between the object and the mage who last enchanted it or last used its supernatural properties. Treat these as proxies for the item. Godsight (**Mummy: The Curse**, p. 105) reveals the presence of a mage through a brief vision of the last spell she cast and a sense of her Nimbus, but must contend with a Clash of Wills if the mage is covered by a spell or attainment that would conceal her past, aura, or fate.

Gnosis and Magic: Arisen magic cannot reduce or increase Gnosis. Arisen do not possess any innate way to counter Awakened magic, but may master Utterances that do so by affecting what the spell does — not what it is. When an Utterance conflicts with a spell, this provokes a Clash of Wills roll, including the use of Rebuke the Vizier.

Wisdom: The Arisen cannot directly assault Wisdom, but can indirectly influence it with Affinities, Utterances, and other means that influence a mage's behavior.

Mortal Nature: Barring bizarre research, divine intervention, and other story events, mummies can't turn mages into Sadikhs. Powers that turn mortals into ghosts do function on the Awakened, but in those cases ignore the usual rules for creating ghosts set by the power. Instead, the Storyteller creates a ghost mage using the guidelines in **Mage: The Awakening**. This does



Fate and Fate

Fate in **Mummy** is not exactly the Fate Arcanum, but isn't unrelated to it, either. Arisen Fate refers to forces of cosmic necessity that determine the specifics of certain powers and events. These things are not probable — they're certain, embedded into the necessary course of history from the beginning to the end of time. Yet the Fate Arcanum is not wholly powerless. Mages can use Fate Unveiling magic to determine the necessary course of an action driven by Arisen Fate. For example, a spell might predict which ghost will arrive in response to the first tier of Words of Dead Fury. If Arisen Fate might retroactively set a thing up so that it always was before being unleashed, Awakened Fate spells may sense, for example, that a meteor may fall when the mage encounters a mummy who possesses Secrets Ripped From Skies. The Time Arcanum may also be appropriate, and spells like Constant Presence allow mages to resist retroactive powers of Utterances.

These Arcana cannot change Arisen Fate directly, but the resulting foreknowledge can influence the outcome as usual. Things brought about by the Arisen concept of Fate can be affected by all Arcana, including the Fate Arcanum, as usual. A ghost "fated to appear" can be cursed normally, for instance.

not exempt the ghost from falling in the thrall of such powers, though some ghost mages may resist using magical Influences.

High Speech: Mummies *can* perceive written and spoken High Speech objectively, though they do not understand it. The best they can do is notice when a nonsense symbol comes up repeatedly. It's part of the nature of High Speech to slip from comprehension, so if a mummy develops set definitions for the High Speech style of a particular mage, those symbols change, *somehow*, and the definitions become useless. The best a mummy can do is determine whether runes were written by a particular mage, or if the mage is using it to cast some sort of spell.

Story Seeds

The following scenarios are based in the Mutapa era. Each offers a setup, roles for the players' characters in the story, and possible resolutions.

The Road to Great Zimbabwe

South of the Kingdom of Mutapa stand the ruins of hundreds of fortresses built by the Kingdom of Zimbabwe that preceded the Mwenemutapa. How that dead empire met its end remains a mystery, but the secret may lie in Great Zimbabwe, the largest of the old empire's fortresses.

What is Happening?

A badly wounded sertanejo staggers into the place where the players' characters are staying. After ranting about the infinite spiral beneath the great watchtower, he falls into a coma from which he will not recover without supernatural intervention. If he is healed, he wakes with no memory of the labyrinth he was describing in his previous feverish state. If he survives, the sertanejo can tell them that he was part of an expedition that became lost south of Mutapa. They endured many hardships, and nearly half their party died in the wilderness before they came upon what any native of Mutapa will instantly recognize as Great Zimbabwe from the description alone. The sertanejos discovered another group of outsiders had gotten there before them, but the sertanejo has no memory of what they looked like or what happened next. His mind is as blank as a slate until a few days ago when he found himself wandering alone in the wilderness. He was on the verge of dying of thirst and only reached the place where the players' characters were by chance.

Who are the Characters?

The players' characters are interested explorers seeking to unravel the mystery of Great Zimbabwe. Mages among them might be lured there by hints of a great labyrinth built beneath the enclosure's foundation. No one has penetrated this maze deeply enough to learn what its trap-filled corridors are guarding, but it does not appear to be of Atlantean origin.

Arisen among them might have vague memories of the terrible events that destroyed the Kingdom of Zimbabwe. Learning the true history of its fall could help restore the mummies' memories of their previous Descents. If that is not incentive enough, rumor has it that the Deceived are seeking Great Zimbabwe in order to recreate the catastrophe that destroyed it. Or else an early explorer brought back a relic of Irem from the ruin, and that has drawn the Shuankhsen to the place to feed on it.

Possible Resolutions

Reaching Great Zimbabwe is no mean feat for an expedition of ordinary humans, but it is not particularly difficult for the Awakened or the Arisen. When they get there, however, they find that they are not the first arrivals. Some enemies have gotten to the labyrinth first and are in the process of exploring it. The nature of these strangers will vary depending on who the players' characters are. They might be Deceived or Shuankhsen if the characters are Arisen, or they might be Seers of the Throne or Scelesti if the characters are Awakened. Alternatively, if the characters are Mwenemutapa the intruders might be Portuguese mages or mummies — or vice versa.

In addition to the danger posed by these rival explorers, the players' characters must also contend with the dangers of the labyrinth — traps, guardian creatures, and the natural hazards of traveling deep underground. It might contain any number of marvels, but one of its features is a thirteen-sided chamber. By speaking the right combination of words, this chamber can transport those inside to one of dozens of identical chambers scattered throughout the world — each one guarded by another



labyrinth with completely different dangers to overcome before the traveler can reach her destination safely.

Accidental Crusade

The execution of Father Gonçalo da Silveira gave the Portuguese all the excuse they needed to stage an invasion of the Mutapa Empire, but the expedition never reached its destination. Four years later, the survivors of the Accidental Crusade returned from the upper Zambezi and slaughtered the Swahili traders who had shown them the way to Mutapa. They told vague stories about disease and animal attacks, but none of them is able to convincingly explain why the mission failed — or how an army provisioned for six months had survived several years without fresh supplies.

What is Happening?

The 1,000 soldiers who set out on the Accidental Crusade wander into a pocket realm shortly after making contact with the first warriors of Mutapa. If the players' characters are Awakened, this might be an Arcadian Emanation. It could also represent the intercession of a Mhondoro, but it could be a phenomenon with no connection to anything the characters understand — such as a naturally occurring spatial-temporal anomaly.

Whatever the truth, the place the army (and a handful of Mwenemutapa) finds itself in is unlike any other place on Earth. The wildlife is exotic and dangerous. The place's natives are hostile and possess strange abilities. The weather is unpredictable and prone to extremes, and the landscape defies attempts at navigation. As the number of fatalities among the soldiers climbs, matters become desperate, and it soon becomes clear that the players' characters are the only ones who have a chance of getting any of them out alive. But their occult powers also raise the suspicions of those trapped with them, and the Awakened or Arisen must face down accusations that they are somehow to blame for the situation.

Who are the Characters?

The players' characters are probably members of the Accidental Crusade who seek to penetrate to the Mutapa Empire's interior for their own reasons. Some might be Mwenemutapa who get caught up in the same phenomenon and must stay alive in spite of being surrounded by 1,000 enemy soldiers — possibly by pretending to know the way out even though they are every bit as lost as the Portuguese.

Possible Resolutions

The players' characters implement survival methods to minimize the loss of life and then set to work looking for a way to escape the phenomenon. If they are Awakened, they might be able to unravel this Mystery and bring their knowledge of it to their fellow mages. If they are Arisen, they might recover valuable Iremite relics or discover that the strange natives are cultists of another Arisen — either a potential ally or a dangerous and powerful enemy. Soon after leaving the pocket dimension the soldiers forget the details of their journey, arriving at



their home base four years after they left it, regardless of how much time has passed within the anomalous place.

The Ghost-Maker

The entire population of a small town is brutally massacred. Several days later, it happens again in another village. The usual supernatural methods of learning what happened are strangely confused, but the victims' ghosts know the truth.

What is Happening?

Some kind of monster or ephemeral entity is behind the killings. Perhaps it is an especially nasty Amkhat, but it could also be a powerful, low-Wisdom mage or a medium who has been possessed by a dangerous and vengeful varoyi. Regardless, the ghosts of its victims hold the key to putting a stop to the rampage. While some of the deceased are only too happy to help, most want something in return. Some might ask the characters to notify their children or grandchildren of their deaths. Others want a decent burial for their remains. Still others expect the living to pass messages or heirlooms to the ghosts' friends in exchange for their information.

Who are the Characters?

The characters are probably Mwenemutapa, at least some of whom have the capacity to communicate with ghosts or spirits. They might have some personal connection to some of the victims, a curiosity about the killer, or maybe they were sent by someone else to investigate the murders.

Possible Resolutions

The players' characters lay to rest as many of the ghosts as they can. They capture the killer (if that was their intent), drive it away, or destroy it. This isn't the end of the threat, however. The killer is not the only one of its kind, and the characters will need to take steps to prevent further massacres of this kind. This could mean finding where the killer came from and destroying the process that creates it or sends it into the world, or it might involve setting up defenses to prevent further villages from falling to it.

Mines of King Solomon

According to the first Book of Kings of the Bible, the great King Solomon received a cargo of gold, silver, sandalwood, pearls, ivory, apes, and peacocks from the fabulously rich port city of Ophir. The city's wealth is mentioned in several other places in the Old Testament (Job, Psalms, Isaiah, and Chronicles), and it was so substantial that the Solomon's agents were able to bring nearly 17 *tons* of gold to Israel from Ophir on a single expedition. The exact location of the fabled port has long been the subject of speculation, with recent rumors claiming it is another name for the city of Sofala.

What is Happening?

The rumors have a grain of truth to them. The interior of southern Africa used to export tons of gold and other precious materials each year, passing them through a forgotten city long before the founding of Sofala. This gold from what Europeans refer to as the mines of King Solomon provided the economic fuel of more than one empire in the region and is in no small part responsible for the rise of the Kingdom of Zimbabwe. Even though the city of Ophir and the mines that once breathed life into it have long since vanished, the gold it left behind is still scattered throughout the region as ancestral jewelry in the hands of Mwenemutapa.

What happened to the mines? No one knows. Until recently, no one had enough facts about Ophir to put its name to a location. The Mwenemutapa knew nothing about the legends of Solomon and so regarded the ruins of Ophir as just one more zimbabwe among the hundreds left behind when the Kingdom of Zimbabwe vanished. The Portuguese, meanwhile, had no inkling that a city lay buried in an extinct riverbed only a few miles from Sofala. If treasure hunters from both worlds were to but pool their knowledge, however, they might be able to learn the location of Ophir and, from there, trace a path to the mines of King Solomon.

Who are the Characters?

The players' characters all have some reason to seek out the mines of King Solomon. Some among the Awakened might be lured by its Mystery alone, but many will need clear hints that something they need or want can be found in the mines. Arisen might believe it is an abandoned tomb that still contains powerful relics, for example, while Mwenemutapas who seek the ouster of the Portuguese may learn from an ancestor's spirit that the mines contain some weapon that can be used against the European invaders.

Possible Resolutions

The mystery of the mines might turn out to be no larger than Ophir itself. The city once boasted powerful alchemists who used their abilities to turn base metals into gold, and the mines were nothing more than a cover story to explain away the apparent infinite mineral wealth of a single port city. The mystery of Ophir, then, is the mystery of what happened to those alchemists. Did they turn against one another until none of them was left alive? Did they leave the city to pursue less temporal mysteries? Did they run afoul of something more powerful than themselves? Did they fall to a temptation to seek power that turned out to be their undoing?

The mines of King Solomon might instead be a real place, albeit one that is nearly inaccessible now. Reaching them entails an epic quest on par with the search for the Holy Grail — one fraught with danger and distractions of infinite variety. Having overcome the obstacles and learned the truth about the mines, the players' characters must contend with the challenges of bringing their treasure back along the road of troubles that brought them to the mines.

The physical treasures of the mines of King Solomon might also be metaphorical, an allegory for his endless quest for wisdom. When the Bible describes him as giving honored guests tons of gold as gifts, it actually means that King Solomon shared his wisdom with those he deemed worthy of it. But if the king's

Chronicles of Darkness

Much as ghosts, Goetia, spirits, Abyssal entities, and Supernal entities are all "spirits" as far as they're concerned, the Shona disregard the fine classifications and divisions between supernatural beings European explorers are used to. Any given intelligent, occult entity is either shavi ("spirit") if benevolent or varoyi ("witch") if not. Furthermore, any supernatural being the Shona could interpret as a human fused with or in a pact with a spiritual entity is likely to simply be taken as a new and unusual medium, the same way Arisen, Awakened, and Bound are (see **p. 123** for details of the Shona's Sin-Eaters.)

Although other African nations have myths of blood-drinking monsters, the empire's **vampires** are isolated individuals, each cursed into existence in a unique way. They embrace the title varoyi and display a much greater variation in both physical appearance (odd marks like backwards body parts, hook feet, and animal eyes are common) and magical abilities than their European counterparts. As the Portuguese exploitation of Mutapa progresses, handfuls of the Kindred make the arduous journey south sealed in ship's holds, seeking new feeding territories.

Without native wolves to hide among, **werewolves** predominantly pass as human mediums, spirit guardians of animals, or animalistic totems, often at the same time, with Uratha going so far as to pretend to be multiple beings, or their own mediums. As with the Arisen, the Uratha are merely exploiting Mutapa culture to explain their abilities. Many African werewolves develop gifts to disguise their wolf forms as jackals and wild dogs.

Unlike werewolves and Arisen, Mutapa's **changelings** and **Beasts** don't have the separate supernatural societies needed to maintain their own culture in secret beneath a pretense of Shona beliefs; newly-Devoured Beasts or escaped changelings regard their experiences as encounters with strange totems or terrifying varoyi, and think of themselves as varoyi wedzinza, forever marked by the hostile supernatural.

Finally, **demons** and **Prometheans** inherently know that they are not human, despite outward appearances, and both transform into obviously inhuman entities: Prometheans when their disfigurements show, and demons when they go loud. Mutapa demons associate Mwari, the uncaring, cruelly-negligent creator god, with the God-Machine, and think of themselves as renegade spirits. This belief would see them cast as varoyi if they expressed it in polite company. Mutapa's Prometheans are less defiant; many believe that their nearly human state and their inner fire come from Mwari as a punishment for their demiurges, and associate *qashmallim* with spirits.

wealth was a metaphor for his insight and ability to see through deception, the Bible nevertheless hints that Solomon had a means of acquiring the wisdom for which he was so famous. Perhaps these rich mines were pure affectation, but perhaps King Solomon found some place where it is possible to draw up nuggets of wisdom from the ground like nuggets of pure gold. The players' characters may not be seeking a literal gold mine but a place west of Ophir that contains an incredible wealth of knowledge — a forgotten library, a mausoleum that houses the ghosts of the wisest men who have ever lived, or even some relic of Irem that might help the Arisen understand the ultimate goals of the mage-kings who made them.

Inspirational Material

Popular, accessible resources on the civilizations of pre-modern Africa are difficult to come by, especially when it comes to Southwestern Africa. The authors were grateful to find academic resources and consultation to help write this chapter.

Guns and Rain: Guerrillas & Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe by David Lan explores how the spiritual beliefs of the Shona (descendants of the Mutapa Kingdom's people) became an organizing principle to resist colonialism.

Early Portuguese Imperialism: Using the Jesuits in the Mutapa Empire of Zimbabwe. International Journal of Peace and Development Studies Volume 2 (4), pp. 132-137. April 2011. by Nicolaides, A., is an account of the events that sparked the Accidental Crusade, and provides a peek into how heavily Portugal relied on the missionaries.

Popular Politics in the History of South Africa, 1400-1948 by Paul S Landau attempts to reconstruct the political style of the 16th century empires in the area by looking at accounts of 19th century missionaries to one of the most isolated branches of tribes descended from those empires, and focusing those accounts through what modern anthropologists know about the way that people's culture actually functioned.

A Political History of Munhumutapa c 1400-1902 by Mudenge, S.I.G. is difficult to find for sale, but troupes with access to academic libraries should check it out as a basic overview of the region during the Mutapa era.

Finally, *King Solomon's Mines* and the other Quartermain books by H. Rider Haggard are with modern eyes extremely imperialistic and racist, but damn, Haggard knew how to write an adventure story.



It happened then that the heavens bellowed forth a red star that carried fire in its wake. I cowered from the star, and a great being neared me as I knelt. It was light and all behind it was a black void, and I knew it to be an angel. It folded its wings around me, made of bone and dripping with blood. A great light washed over me, burning out my eyes and granting me a vision of what was to come.

I saw a crystal woman, hands folded before her in piety as men adorned her with jewels. From the men came a priest who yanked the gold from her breast and the gates of frenzy opened, as the once-adoring people cast her down and trod upon her. I saw a young bride, wearing a resplendent crown made of gems and bearing the cross of the carpenter's son. She spoke words of faith, but from her mouth rode four horsemen who would bring only despair.

The angel pointed and I saw around me, people tilled the earth. The first rider fell upon them, rending the flesh with his flaming sword while his red horse broke their bones under its hooves. The rider came to me and I grew fearful, "I am not like them." That was my first step then, to set myself apart while mortals clawed their way through rising tides: I knew it could not be forever.

A white tower with many windows rose amidst the carnage. Five skinless sages stood upon its battlements to shout defiance at the riders. I rejoiced at their rebellion. I screaming my voice hoarse that I would not bow, would not relent, but the red rider tore the very stars from the sky and rained them down. I wept, but, abandoning my fear, let the horseman take me. The fire that burned my eyes kindled with the flames of his sword, an inferno that devoured my skin and flesh and sinew. Courage fled from me, I begged for mercy. My cries rose with those of men and women and children, and our voices filled the air in a chorus of torture. Beyond the flames, a man was awoken by our cries. He was clad in armor made of molten gold, and rode astride a snake made of secrets.

A great city of virgins sat on the bank of a river. Many traders came here and the city had grown fat on opulence, but now the second rider turned to it. She sat a white horse and bore a crown made of lead and chains which wrapped around the city walls. The armored man sent his whispering snake towards the beleaguered city, but the rider pulled her chains tight until the walls cracked. From the earth rose a tide of fire and locusts, swarming over the city and destroying every soul inside. Spent in my suffering, I simply watched, committing to memory every ember of hope that flickered and died out, only broken walls and ashes remained.

Now the third horseman rode forth and he sat a black horse made of emptiness. People tore off their own flesh as the horseman passed, and I saw them devour themselves. Still I burned, and my eyes ran down my face in hot tears, until the world was red. I took the fire, *my fire*, and became a mighty warrior to stand against the horseman. The people gathered around me, and I was their champion. The fire of the earth awoke a nest of snakes, which were devoid of flesh and skin, and writhed in madness. They hungered, too, and I knew they lusted after my flames, so I abandoned my charges and fled.

The three horsemen now fell upon the armored man, wielding fire and chains and hunger against him. His snake turned to meet them and they danced around each other in their need. They sang together, hissing and whinnying in a celebration of death. The crowned bride was long forgotten. The armored man lay dying. Yet the creatures cared not, for in each other they had found a match for their frenzy. The vision did not relent. The fire, now thick and red and liquid, spread across the land, the people, and finally, me. I turned to the angel to beg for help, for it was *too much*, but the messenger had already gone. Fire consumed me, took me, remade me. *I became fire.* Nothing remained but we, who sat upon her ashen horse. The horseman opened her hand and showed me a great gift, which was mine if I only dared take it.

The light diminished then and I returned to my body. Overhead, the red star still dragged its promise of blood through the sky. I knew my path now, and I shuddered.



When the Horsemen Rode (1618-1648)

Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.

–Revelation 6:8

The priest at Kurt's church says that the Pope is the Antichrist and this war is the one foretold in Revelations. He eagerly joins with a group of young men leaving town to become soldiers in the army of the Golden King. He fully believes that they will be victorious and defeat the Catholic League and the Holy Roman Emperor. With Babylon cast down, the crops will no longer fail. But God is surely on their side, as evidenced by the Swedish savior. He says his goodbyes to his family and leaves the only village he has ever known.

Bishop Förner believes that this outbreak of witchcraft is a sign that the Catholic Church has nearly won the battle against Satan. The Devil is now tempting the faithful with power through black magic because the Protestant heresy has failed. All he needs to do is to root out those whose faith was not strong enough and succumbed. Each soul he sends to the fires is a step closer to Paradise. This is the point at which he cannot allow himself to doubt his course. The end is near and his faith will save the world.

First, the crops failed. Then, the soldiers took what food remained. In its place, they left plague, which killed one in five residents of the village. Then, the enemy came and claimed the village. Those who resisted were killed. Their valuables were taken as were many of the women. When they left, they set the village to the torch so that their foe could gain no benefit from it. A child named Liesa huddles in the root cellar where her parents bid her hide and watches as the only world she knew is reduced to ash around her.

Marcel goes through the pockets of the dead piled in the streets, looking for a coin or trinket he can trade for some food. He lives by himself on the streets of the dying city, an orphan of the war, dressed in whatever scraps of clothing he can scavenge from the dead. He has a bad cough and his joints ache like an old man. He has no illusions about any sort of life, he just survives from day to day like an animal. There is little left to distinguish him from the dogs who roam the streets with him.

Food had grown scarce over the long winter of inactivity and the soldiers had not been paid in months. His unit had been through three captains since spring began: two shot dead and one resigned. Finally, they were in position and stormed the city. The army was triumphant but Peter was shot twice. The rest of his unit returned to loot the city and Peter's wife went with them. They could not afford to be without booty. Peter lay bandaged beside his sick child, watching the city burn and weeping. It was a beautiful city and he'd grown up in a town not far from it. He worried terribly that his wife would be caught in the blaze and not return to him. Even if she did, he worried that she would not have enough to sustain them.

The soldiers were supposed to move on before Christmas, but then the orders came that they would be wintering in Magda's village. They were already eating cats and dogs and digging through the monastery garden for overlooked roots or greens. Banditry was so bad that merchants stopped coming so even those with coin had nothing to buy. All their cattle were long since butchered to feed the unwelcomed guests but last night, they broke into the stores and took the seed corn saved for next spring. All hope is lost and winter has only just begun.

Henrik prays every night for his wife's soul. The witch hunters came for her a week ago and he hasn't been allowed to see her. He has pleaded with the Bishop for her life and the life of the child she carries but he has been unmoved. It was even suggested to him that the child isn't his but the Dark One's. He has already lost his brother to the flames but can't shake the suspicion that he named his wife before he died. Henrik doesn't understand how God can let this happen and so he prays. He doesn't know what else he can do. He prays and he fears for the day they come for him, too.

The Red Horse (Slaughter)

And there went out another horse that was red: and to him that sat thereon, it was given that he should take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another, and a great sword was given to him.

Bamberg, February 1630. Famine, blight, and plague have led to an escalating series of witch hunts in the seat of this staunchly Catholic bishopric, led by suffragan Bishop Friedrich Förner. A severe frost in the spring of 1626 prompted the most recent one, presided over by Prince-Bishop Johann Georg Fuchs von Dornheim (nicknamed the *Hexenbischof*), who has built a witch house (*Malefizhaus*) for the imprisonment and torture of the accused. Nobody is safe, as judges, merchants, and even the mayor are among the hundreds burned at the stake. The hunt for demon worshippers has been at a fever pitch for four long years as the faithful search out the reason for their misfortunes. The situation is reaching a head as authorities outside of the Prince-Bishopric move to intercede against the excesses in Bamberg.

The city has been a bastion of Catholic power for centuries. Its cathedral contains the remains of Pope Clement II, who served as Bishop of Bamberg prior to his short 12 months as pontiff. It is the only site of papal burial outside of Italy and France. Bamberg is a founding member of the Catholic League along with its neighbor Würzburg. With the recent defeat of the Denmark-backed uprising in Lower Saxony, it seems like the League is victorious and there is little concern that war will reach the city.

The witch hunt is not about rooting out Protestants or other religious non-conformists. The devil has no interest in the apostate, his efforts are to damn the faithful: good Catholic men and women. Thus, the mood is one of paranoia and betrayal as neighbor turns on neighbor and family members suspect each other of consorting with dark powers.

The Problem

An Edenite named Ufayr fell to Flux when swept up in the witch hunts. The newly minted Centimanus is of the opinion that his kind are irredeemable abominations and works with the clergy to identify them and see them burned at the stake.

Historical Considerations

The period of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) predates the Frankenstein Lineage. In its place are the Amirani, also called the Prophets **(p. 98)**, a choleric Lineage made from the corpses of those who died in agony. They are uniquely suited to inclusion amidst the horrors of this war and make an excellent character option.

Pneuma **(p. 164)** is an alternative Refinement of Gold that is experiencing its death throes during this period. It departs from the alchemical focus of the standard Refinements and offers a religious path to the New Dawn, which proves ultimately flawed.

Infantry of the period are issued either a pike or a musket as their primary weapon and a broadsword or rapier for close-quarters combat. Some also carry a dagger or pistol but have to provide these themselves. Cavalry usually have a pair of pistols and a sword. The cuirass is falling out of favor for being bulky without providing much protection from muskets. Cavalry and officers prefer the lighter buff coat.

Rapiers and spears are in the standard rules. Broadswords use the machete stats. Daggers use knife stats. Pikes use spear stats but require Strength 3, give +2 to Defense, and are useless at close range due to their length (10 to 20 feet). Buff coats use the stats for leather armor and a cuirass uses the stats for plate armor but with the speed penalty reduced by one and only torso coverage. Flintlocks take five turns to reload. Stats are below:

Pistol: Damage 0, Range 15/30/60, Clip 1, Initiative -2, Strength 2, Size 2

Musket: Damage 1, Range 30/60/120, Clip 1, Initiative -5, Strength 3, Size 4

Upon recognizing the characters, he will identify them to Bishop Förner, to whom he has revealed his true nature. He will set hunters to find and bring them to the witch house.

Further complicating matters is a Tainted Wasteland within the *Malefizhaus*, driving the witch finders to greater excesses. Gripped with hubris, the witch hunters are turning against one another and ignoring the looming threat of an Imperial or Papal mandate. Should the Wasteland fester further, it is doubtful that anyone inside will survive. It is likely, with Ufayr doing everything in his power to see the characters arrested, that they will find themselves in the middle of this crisis.



The Twist

The source of the Wasteland is not Ufayr but a Jovian Athanor (see sidebar) he created by accident, facilitating his fall to Centimanus. Resolving the Athanor will not only stop the Wasteland from festering further but also provide the characters with insights that will allow for his redemption and return to the Pilgrimage. The second step is necessary because the Wasteland will not fade while he remains in the area. His assistance will also be extremely helpful in getting the characters out of the *Malefizhaus*, once they are imprisoned. He will not be able to convince the Bishop to release them, but he is familiar enough with the buildings and its inhabitants that an escape will be much more feasible.

Scenes

The characters have come to Bamberg to find another of their kind, perhaps to learn a Complex Refinement or fulfill a Milestone. As luck would have it, the object of their quest is the poor soul being led to the fire as they arrive. Saving her is a risky proposition given the crowds, and she doesn't want to be rescued. Weeks of torture and Torment have convinced her that she is indeed a wretched creature better off dead and saved from further misery. Or, perhaps, her death at the stake may be one of her own Milestones.

The Burning

The mood is grim as the people of Bamberg gather on the Domplatz, in the shadow of Bamberg Cathedral. The accused is led from the witch house bearing the scars of weeks of torture. Her head is shorn and burned and her bare back liberally marked by the lash. Her hands and feet are twisted and broken. Those who knew her avert their gaze out of shame and fear. To earn this release she assuredly named others and the threat of being next hangs over every head: rich or poor, fair or plain.

Watching over this slow procession from before the doors of the great cathedral are the architects of her fate: Prince-Bishop von Dornheim and his suffragan Bishop Förner. The condemned does not raise her head to look upon them as the charges are read. Her escort, Captain Weber, shoves her cruelly whenever her pace slackens, which she does often. She seems almost too weak to stand. Upon arrival at the pyre, her hands are removed by the Captain's sword before she is bound to the stake. Too poor to purchase the mercy of the church, she will burn without first being beheaded.

The characters immediately realize that the woman about to be burned at the stake is a Promethean and that the witch house from whence she came is possessed of a Wasteland. They will also sense Ufayr amidst a group of monks and penitents watching from near the cathedral at about the same time he notices them. He will immediately point them out to Bishop Förner, who seems very interested in whatever the Centimanus whispers in his ear.

The characters will notice that only the soldiers and clergy seem affected by Disquiet. They watch the proceedings with an intensity verging on madness. Their fervor takes the form of thankful prayers, shouts of encouragement, and thrown stones. Captain Weber, in particular, has an air of grim satisfaction and seems genuinely pleased to light the fire at the Promethean's feet. The rest of the crowd is fearful and weary and seems anxious for the whole affair to be over.

Unless they interfere in some manner, the Promethean is burned at the stake without a struggle while the crowd looks on. Ufayr will use his Solvent Alembic to interfere with any attempt to use Transmutations to save the condemned. If approached or attacked, he will flee or retreat towards the Prince-Bishop, relying on his guards to keep the characters at bay. He will, regardless of what happens, gain Bishop Förner's ear to tell him that he has new victims for the fire. He will point out the characters, if given the chance, but will not force a confrontation until he gathers Captain Weber and his men.

Arrest

Once Ufayr has outed them to the Bishop, the characters are hunted. It is only a matter of time before they are found and their capture will be even quicker if they attempt to leave the city. The people of Bamberg have lived with this witch hunt for four years and this is only the latest of several. By now, few would risk sheltering family or friends, much less stranger travelers who provoke mistrust by their Azothic nature. Nonetheless, there may be allies to be found or at least bolt holes to hide in for a time.

Eventually, though, Captain Weber and his men will find them. Ufayr will accompany them when they know they are close in order to use his Transmutations to thwart any attempt to escape. The soldiers do not know what the characters are, precisely, but they do follow Ufayr's advice to bring torches. They are under orders from the Bishop to kill them, if need be, rather than let them escape. If the players are clever, this scene may repeat itself any number of times before the characters are captured.

Should they elude the soldiers repeatedly, they will note that the Wasteland at the witch house is growing worse and, with it, the witch hunters. They will start going house to house, searching for signs of Satanic influence, and may even begin to take children (as has been happening in Würzburg). Any townsfolk who have been kind to the characters or assisted them will be arrested. Of course, it is perfectly reasonable for them to escape the city, but it should be clear what has started here and where it is heading. Eventually, the Wasteland will fester to the point that a Firestorm ignites, causing potentially tremendous damage.

The Storyteller should not hesitate to allow the characters to trade themselves for the freedom of others. Bishop Förner is aware of what they are and is willing to do whatever is necessary to have them delivered into his power. Ufayr will dangle this possibility if it will mean avoiding a physical confrontation. He is very good at reading people and should be able to swiftly determine what angle will work best after interacting with the characters for a scene. Ufayr will flee as soon as it is apparent that his side is losing a fight.

The Witch House

The characters may arrive at the witch house as prisoners or may investigate on their own in order to determine the circumstances of the Wasteland within. The first floor contains eight cells, a chapel, and rooms for interrogation, torture, and holding court. The second floor contains another eighteen cells, a second chapel, a guardroom, and a confessional. A narrow set of stairs leads up to the attic where the guards and torturers sleep. The accused do not leave the building except to meet their fate. They are tortured, questioned, tried, and convicted all within the confines of the witch house.

If the characters are brought here as prisoners, they will be put into separate cells on the second floor after being shorn and having their heads doused in alcohol and burned. When in their cells, they will be locked in agonizing positions to break their will. The screams, cries, and desperate prayers of the other prisoners will be the only sounds they hear, and feeble light from a small, high window the only light. As Ufayr has convinced the Bishop they have no souls to save, their tormentors have no interest in confession but only wish to break them in preparation for execution. Nonetheless, the Bishop will visit daily as he is fascinated by these demons made flesh.

The source of the Wasteland is Ufayr's Jovian Athanor: a small crucifix hanging on the wall of the confessional on the second floor. While the Bishop has no interest in their confessions, he is not the only clergyman in the witch house and is the only one who knows what they are. Thus, it is possible to convince one of the other priests to hear their confession, giving them access to the Athanor and the insights it holds. In order to neutralize it, a character will need to take on Ufayr's guilt and find some way to resolve it. However, destroying the Athanor is not sufficient to end the Wasteland. She must also convince Ufayr to leave the witch house or destroy him.

Confrontation

If the characters are prisoners in the witch house, Ufayr will come to see them at least daily. He is trying to convince himself that he is in the right, after all, and hopes that one of his victims will absolve him of his guilt. If they are not prisoners, they will need to seek him out and confront him. The easiest time to do so is when he travels from the witch house to the cathedral to receive confession and report to the Bishop. In this latter case, if they wish to speak with him, they will have to find some way to force him to listen. His first impulse will be to call the guards to arrest them.

Of course, the easiest way to deal with him is to kill him. Given how close he is to the Bishop, doing so will practically require that they flee the town. However, he is not beyond redemption, particularly if one of the characters has absorbed the Jovian Athanor. He desperately wants forgiveness for his sins and for someone to understand why he did what he did. Thus, he is receptive to conversation, though his Torment will taint his perspective.

The Wasteland

When the characters arrive in town, the Wasteland is Tainted. Everything within is starting to weaken, including the human inhabitants, whose point of persistent Bashing damage manifests as a pale cast to their features, like someone just beginning to get sick. Every hour spent within worsens their physical condition while, at the same time, driving them to overconfidence and hubris. The air within is cool and damp, like fever sweat, and it always seems to be raining these days.

The Wasteland is close to festering to Blighted, at which point it will begin to inflicting lasting damage to those within. The Storyteller should use this step as a way to convince the Prometheans of the need to deal with the problem, if they are dragging their feet, or to punctuate the last act as they confront Ufayr or face off with Captain Weber.

Using the Social Maneuvering system, two Doors need to be opened to convince him to return to the Pilgrimage and leave the city. The characters start with an average impression. A character who has absorbed his Athanor goes one level up the chart. Anyone who can determine his Torment also goes up a level. Forcing doors isn't plausible unless they are in a position to threaten or intimidate him. If they are conversing from behind bars, it just won't work. Also, if it fails, they will have no recourse but to kill him.

If successful, Ufayr will switch from Centimani to Stannum. Between his newfound Disquietism and his knowledge of the witch house and its inhabitants, he should have little difficulty helping the characters escape. He will not agree to help with a full scale jailbreak. As he is still fully in the grip of his Torment, he is convinced it would not succeed with the Wasteland and the level of Disquiet present. He will admit that both the Imperial Court and Rome are set to intervene shortly, as word has made it to both of the horrors being committed in the Prince-Bishopric.

One thing that does stand in their way is Captain Weber. His distrust of Ufayr has caused him to pay close attention to his comings and goings. While the Osiran may be able to get the characters past the rest of the guards, the Captain will block their exit, triumphant that his suspicions have been proven right. He has no compunctions against killing any prisoner who attempts to escape and will raise the call for help should he be overwhelmed or should his quarry get past him.



Storyteller Characters

The perpetrators of the witch hunts are flawed men trying to gain some measure of control in a chaotic world.

UFAYR

An Osiran named Fatimah created Ufayr from a Spanish Morisco both to progress on her Pilgrimage and to explore the sacrament of marriage. The married couple traveled for many years throughout Europe, tending to the sick and moving on before their nature could taint their good works. They arrived in Bamberg shortly before the latest round of witch trials and found themselves imprisoned in the witch house. Immersed in the Follower Role, Ufayr testified against his creator and wife as demanded by Bishop Förner. With her screams still ringing in his ears, he attempted to create an Athanor to cement his mastery of Pneuma and provide guidance for other Pilgrims, but his guilt and despair led to the production of a Jovian Athanor instead.

His self-hatred, fed by the Jovian Athanor and continuous torture, finally pushed him to fall to Centimani. No longer restrained by his faith, he turned his Transmutations against his captors to facilitate his release on the understanding he would bring others to the fires. He now believes Prometheans can never gain a soul and helps the witch hunters find them so they can be destroyed as the abominations they are. With each Promethean he burns, he tries to convince himself that he was right to destroy his creator.

Description: Ufayr is a tall, olive-skinned man with a shaved head and pale blue-gray eyes like still water. He wears the knee-length sackcloth tunic and sandals of a religious penitent. He radiates an unsettling intensity that those affected by his Disquiet interpret as scrutiny and seek to be away from. His accent is thick and he speaks in absolutes, his tone expressing anger and despair.

Fields of Knowledge:

Ufayr has access to the Solvent Alembic of the Flux Transmutation and the Assimilation Alembic of the Deception Transmutation.

Medicine 7: Ufayr has spent many years tending to the sick.

Empathy 6: Years spent on the Refinement of Gold has made him very good at reading people.

Religious Lore 5: Before abandoning his Pilgrimage, he read his Bible every day.

Combat and Health: Ufayr has some minor combat skill, is strong, and in good health.

BISHOP FRIEDRICH FÖRNER

Friedrich Förner has dedicated his life to the faith. He studied theology in Würzburg and Rome, attaining his doctorate before entering the priesthood at the age of 24. He preached and wrote passionately on two topics: the Counter-Reformation and the persecution of witchcraft. It was on his advice as vicar-general that the first witch hunts were perpetrated in 1610 and his ascension to Suffragan Bishop of Bamberg followed shortly afterwards.

To Förner, the fight against witchcraft is a continuation of the struggle against Protestantism. The devil has failed to bring down Catholicism with heresy and his attempts to do so through witchcraft is a final effort, which the Bishop has vowed to thwart. To that end, he has written treatises, penned sermons, and distributed pamphlets as well as helped to conceive and design the witch house. Now, four years into the latest round of witch hunts, the Wasteland feeds his fanaticism, as does the revelation of soulless abominations masquerading as men and women. The Bishop is dedicated to seeing this final battle against evil won before his time on earth is ended.

Description: The Bishop is an elderly Caucasian man of stern countenance and unforgiving gaze. He has an air of unwavering certainty that comes off as strong faith or fanaticism. His strength of character is in contrast to signs of age and failing health. Grey hair has receded entirely from a bald pate and his mustache and beard are almost completely white.

Fields of Knowledge:

Theology 8: He is highly respected for his opinions on the faith, history, and demonology.

Expression 7: He is a renowned writer who has published numerous books, sermons, and pamphlets.

Persuasion 6: The Bishop is skilled at convincing people, whether using debate or torture.

Combat and Health: The Bishop has no combat training and is in poor health.

Ufayr's Guilt

This crucifix is the Jovian Athanor Ufayr created after completing the last Role of his Refinement. He meant it to be a Pilgrimage Marker but his guilt at betraying his creator and witnessing her destruction has tainted it. It created a Wasteland encompassing the entire building, exacerbating the excesses of the witch hunters.

Any Promethean who tries to destroy it will acquire the Guilty Condition and have to work through Ufayr's internal conflict between his Faith Elpis and Dejection Torment. The insights gained will make Social Maneuvering much easier and allow a chance to redeem the Centimanus and secure his assistance in escaping.

CAPTAIN EDUARD WEBER

Eduard's worst days were not in the army, but watching his children die from starvation after the crops failed four years ago. Rather than feeling abandoned by God, he believed Bishop Förner that agents of Satan among the citizens of Bamberg were to blame. When the burnings began, he volunteered to lead the men sent to arrest the accused and guard them until they recant their Dark Lord. His grief has steeled his heart and he feels no mercy towards those he drags from their beds. He firmly believes that God would not allow anyone to be accused falsely and so those who are taken are guilty beyond any doubt. Because of this, he doesn't trust Ufayr. The Spaniard was accused and so, by Weber's logic, his only exit should be through the flames.

Description: Captain Weber is a grizzled figure with broad shoulders and scarred hands. His face reflects how his hard life has driven him to cruelty. He is terse in the performance of his duties and does not explain himself. He wears a worn but well-maintained breastplate and carries a sword at all times. He wears a silver crucifix that belonged to his wife, who passed away a year ago, unable to recover from her loss.

Fields of Knowledge:

Military 6: He has been a soldier all his life and it is all he knows.

Intimidation 5: The captain is an imposing figure and he knows how to use that to full effect.

Bamberg 4: He knows the city and its citizens well.

Combat and Health: The Captain is a skilled soldier possessed of strength and good health.

The White Horse (Conquest)

And I saw: and behold a white horse, and he that sat on him had a bow, and there was a crown given him, and he went forth conquering that he might conquer.

The Location

Magdeburg, May 20 1631. The city of Magdeburg has been a stronghold of Protestantism since Martin Luther preached here in 1524. As one of the largest and more commercially important cities in the Holy Roman Empire, its support of the newly arrived King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden is seen as crucially important for the Protestant cause and he sent Colonel Dietrich von Falkenberg to take command of the defense of his ally. The Imperial army lay siege last November and was joined by the Catholic League army in January. Unfortunately, uncertain political alliances have prevented the Lion of the North from coming to their aid and the city fathers tried to sue for peace, but their message did not reach the Imperial commander before word was given to storm the city.

Frustrated at the defiance of the city and their unpaid salaries, the Catholic army offers no quarter. They slaughter the garrison and shoot the Colonel while sustaining minimal casualties and leaving the city defenseless. The soldiers now loot and pillage without restraint, terrorizing and murdering those who resist or have nothing to give. Fires have started throughout the city and shortly it will be ablaze. Many have fallen back to the cathedral to take refuge and hope to find some mercy from the rampaging Catholics. By nightfall, the city will be ashes and twenty thousand or more of its thirty thousand residents will be dead. The charred bodies of the dead choke the Elbe River. The extent of the destruction will horrify the Protestants and convince many to join with the Swedish king. "Magdeburg justice" becomes a term used when executing Catholics who ask for mercy.

The Problem

The cathedral contains an Athanor in the crypt below the chancel. If the soldiers loot the cathedral, it risks destruction, particularly if they put the building to the torch. If the characters wish to protect or hide it, they must make their way through the chaotic streets of the city to the holy site. Once inside, they will be shoulder to shoulder with a thousand terrified citizens. Disquiet could easily spark a riot, especially if the characters are mistaken for looters or Catholic soldiers.

The Twist

A deranged alchemist named Ingrid Maier found the Athanor by translating the pilgrim marks leading to it.

The Athanor of Magdeburg

A Tammuz named Joachim created this Pilgrimage Marker after completing the three Roles of the Pneuma Refinement two centuries ago. He was one of the laborers who took part in the three-century-long construction of the cathedral and so was able to carve his Athanor in the depths of the crypt, leaving pilgrim marks throughout the structure so that the Created could find it. Since then, it has drawn Edenites from across Europe.

Joachim's carving is a relief depicting a penitent kneeling with arms raised towards Heaven. Rays of light emanate from above, illuminating his upturned face. The alchemical symbol for gold is between the hands of the figure, as if he is grasping it as it descends from God. Both the symbol and the rays of light are adorned with gold leaf.



Although she does not know what it is or represents, she senses the Vitriol within it and lies in wait for any who come to claim it. She carries with her a pistol loaded with an alchemical bullet that she believes will disrupt the Pyros of any Created she hits. Her hope was to incapacitate her victim enough that she might capture him and take him back to her laboratory for further experimentation. With the siege ended and the city burning above her, she intends instead to harvest what Pyros and Vitriol she can and use it to facilitate her escape.

Scenes

When Ufayr tells the characters about an Athanor in Magdeburg, they come to partake of its visions and are caught in the siege. They have been here for six months, during which time Ingrid has been watching them and making her plans. She has only recently been able to decipher the Pilgrim Marks in the cathedral and discover why they keep returning there. If this is the case, they may already have met Frau Egger and made an impression on her, which could work to their benefit or detriment.

Chaos in the Streets

The townspeople flee before enemy soldiers and growing fires, seeking refuge, loved ones, or some means of escape. The dead litter the streets, cut down by invaders for their wealth or simply as retribution for the length of the siege. Horses rush through the streets, driven to a panic by the chaos and the scent of fire in the air, trampling the weak underfoot. Some citizens, armed by the garrison, try in vain to resist the occupation. If there is any order at all, it is the current of people fleeing towards the cathedral hoping to find refuge on holy ground.

The characters, on their way to the cathedral, come across a young woman and her two small children. The younger child is too small to walk and the older one is so terrified that her mother is nearly dragging her with her one free arm. They are barely making any progress and the soldiers are getting closer. Should they opt to help her, she will be very grateful. She introduces herself as Ada Egger and says she is meeting her family at the cathedral. Her husband was a volunteer with the garrison and she fears that he's dead. If he survives, he knows where to meet her.

Many obstacles lay between them and their destination. A stampeding horse hitched to a cart full of burning hay bursts from an alley in front of them. An explosion in a nearby granary sends chunks of masonry and burning timber into the street. A gang of mercenaries blocks their path and demands any valuables they have in return for passage. A badly injured old man lies in the middle of the street in danger of being trampled, crying out for help from those too fearful of their own fates to stop and help.

Looters at the House of God

When they finally make it, the head priest, Reinhard Bakes, is on his knees before a band of soldiers of the Catholic League, begging them to spare the cathedral. One of the men,

Bernhard Bahruth, seems disposed to listen but the other men in his unit argue against him. The booty they stand to gain is all the payment they will see for this endeavor and many have families to support, like Bahruth. The characters have the opportunity to weigh in and try to convince the men to look for booty elsewhere.

As a Social Maneuver, they have to overcome three Doors. Because Bahruth is a fair-minded man, they start with an average, rather than hostile, impression. Since they don't have time for a prolonged argument, they need to find ways to improve their impression or attempt to force doors. He wants to direct his men elsewhere and if one of the characters determines this, either through a Wits + Empathy roll or a Transmutation, one door can automatically be opened.

His impression of a person improves one level if they are clergy (even Protestant). Since his men are looking to loot, offering them valuables will improve it a level as well. Should the topic come up but the characters have nothing substantial to give, Ada will enter the cathedral and return with Frau Egger's chest. Resorting to Hard Leverage is a dangerous prospect but can work if they make it clear that the cathedral is not easy pickings. Should they succeed, the soldiers will leave and Bahruth will quietly thank the characters and wish them good luck before joining his fellows.

The Cathedral

Thousands of terrified people fill the church, huddled together in groups and flinching at every gunshot, explosion, and cry from outside its walls. Most watch the doors with a mixture of fear and anticipation. Each time they open, it may be a troop of soldiers looking to loot and murder or a loved one who has come to join her family in refuge. While the priest stands outside the doors, those within look to Ada's mother, Frau Egger. She has organized the residents, assigning tasks to those who are able to tend to the weak, young, and old. She also is wise enough to realize that keeping people busy will distract them from their precarious situation.

Ada will immediately rejoin her family and introduce her saviors to her mother. This interaction should prompt a Disquiet roll and a lot hinges on the results. If Frau Egger becomes Disquieted, the characters are in a great deal of danger. The crowd is volatile and their leader's suspicions will carry much weight and are likely to prompt impulsive actions. Complicating matters is the fact that, if she suspects something is wrong with them, she is not likely to leave them alone. This both hampers their ability to sneak down to the crypt where the Athanor is kept and is likely to prompt more Disquiet rolls, potentially worsening her condition.

Even if they are not dogged by the consequences of Disquiet, it will be difficult for them to get into the crypt unseen. The door is behind the altar and in full view of the crowded nave. Passing through it will require a distraction or a good explanation. Witnesses may think them looters or imagine that they know of a secret exit from the cathedral and word will travel quickly. Long explanations will also prompt more Disquiet rolls, making the endeavor even more treacherous. It may take some time to arrange a distraction or simply wait for an opportune moment. The Storyteller should stress, though, that every minute among this terrified crowd is a risk.

Lost Child

When the characters make their way to the chancel, they find a young girl concealed behind the altar, frantically praying. If they speak to her or approach her, she looks terrified and doesn't seem capable of speech. Her reaction isn't specific to the characters, as anyone who approaches her causes her panic. The press of the crowd drives her to hysteria. Her state of mind isn't the result of trauma but a congenital disorder. If the characters ask around, nobody seems to know who she is but several people recall her being brought in by another group, who found her wandering alone on the streets.

The girl's name is Helena and it will take a great deal of calming and coaxing to get that much out of her. She is incapable of walking through this massive crowd of strangers to search for her family and so she prays to God that they will find her. Listening to her pray, the astute will notice signs that she recites it from rote and may not understand all the words she is saying. Gaining her trust can be treated as a Social Maneuver with only a single Door to open. Her impression of any stranger starts at hostile (effectively). A Manipulation + Empathy roll can raise that one level, or presenting her with a rosary or crucifix, which seems to focus and calm her.

Her lack of verbal skills may convince the characters that she is simpleminded, but she is actually rather intelligent. If the characters give her something to draw with, she will sketch a very accurate portrait of her father and mother. She can also answer questions nonverbally, though this could be very time consuming (treat as a Wits + Enigmas roll). If they gain her trust, they may be able to coax her into the crowd, but it will require opening another two Doors. She will cling to the one she trusts and still be obviously terrified.

Whether they have Helena, a picture, or a description, they can search the cathedral for her parents. This will be an extended Wits + Composure roll that requires 10 successes. Each roll represents 30 minutes of searching. Eventually, they find her father being tended to by a midwife. He is unconscious and suffering from a spear wound, but the midwife is optimistic that he will pull through. When he regains consciousness, he will be overjoyed to see Helena and say that his wife went back out to look for her. Not long afterwards, she returns to check on her husband and the family is reunited.

The characters' efforts on Helena's behalf will do a lot to endear them to the refugees in the cathedral and to Frau Egger, if they have gotten off on the wrong foot or Disquiet has started to set in. They gain the Connected Condition, applying to the citizens in the cathedral. In addition to the usual bonuses, it will make them generally less suspicious of their activities (like going down into the crypt).

The Crypt

The crypt is claustrophobic: dry, cramped, and dusty. The dead surround the characters as neatly stacked piles of bones.



Stone pillars support the heavy, vaulted ceiling above, breaking up the room into a grid of small spaces. The Athanor is hidden in a corner far from the narrow stairs that lead down from the chancel.

Ingrid Maier lurks in the shadows within sight of it, waiting with her pistol in hand, its alchemical payload ready for her first victim. She is not expecting more than one Promethean and may hesitate or, if spotted, attempt to stall through conversation. She is very unstable, though, and it will not take much for her to cast aside reason and attack. It is possible, though, if the characters can get a handle on her motives, to talk her down with promises of alchemical secrets or some other benefit which appeals to her aspirations. A gift of Vitriol would go a long way towards convincing her.

If anyone saw the characters descend into the crypt or were suspicious of them and notice their absence, it is possible they are followed. In this case, violence becomes a more complicated issue. Ingrid is a life-long citizen of the city and the daughter of a renowned scholar. The Prometheans, on the other hand, are strangers. Any conflict will likely see the locals siding with the mad alchemist and she will seize on any lie necessary to secure their aid, going so far as to claim they are Catholic spies.

However the situation with Ingrid is resolved, the problem of the Athanor remains. The gold leaf is an obvious temptation to any looter while a fire in the cathedral would certainly see it damaged or destroyed. There is no easy way to remove it, though a skilled stonemason might be able to, given time. It is in a recess that could be filled with bones or other items to conceal it and, potentially, protect it from damage. The Fortification Distillation of the Alchemicus Transmutation is an excellent option. If none of the characters have it and if they turned Ingrid to their cause, she may be able to provide a potion with an identical function if they can get her to her laboratory across town.

Aftermath

The enemy soldiers are forced to retreat from the city when the fires grow too fierce to contend with. By the next day, the city is ashes except for the cathedral and a small collection of houses. For the next three days, those within the cathedral huddle in fear, uncertain of their fate and without food. Finally, on the 24th, the Count of Tilly has them brought forth, given bread, and housed in the cloisters of a monastery. The Elbe is choked with thousands of corpses, disposed of in the river in order to clear the streets. The following day, the enemy holds a solemn mass in the cathedral and Tilly renames the city Marienburg, for the Virgin Mary.

Few of the survivors remain in the city, scattering to the countryside and surrounding villages rather than stay in the smoking ruins of their homes. After four days of plunder, there is not even anything of value to be found among the ashes. Frau Egger takes her family and a dozen orphaned children back to the village of her birth, hoping to avoid the war by remaining in the country. If she lives, Ingrid will travel east in an attempt to join the army of the Swedish King, unless she reached an accord with the characters, which sees her traveling with them. Her ambition will remain a danger to them.

If the characters took sufficient efforts to protect and conceal the Athanor, it will survive. The ruins of the city will attract more Prometheans, particularly those Edenites looking for guidance during this time of religious turmoil. For the remainder of the war, it is a refuge for the Created, a place where they gather to meet and leave pilgrim marks pointing the way to other safe places amidst the war.

Hell's Scribe

The ruins of Magdeburg eventually attract an Originist named Katica. She dwells at this crossroads of the Created and collects the stories of those who pass through. Given the bleak setting, Prometheans take to referring to her as "Hell's Scribe." Her arrival marked the completion of her Pilgrim Role and her time here allows her to finish the Chronicler Role. By the end of the war, she has moved on to the Ascetic Role and spends her time in seclusion, compiling her notes and journals in preparation for making an Athanor when she is done.

Storyteller Characters

The individuals on both sides of this conflict are struggling to cope with the horrors around them while pursuing their personal goals.

INGRID MAIER

Ingrid's father was the great Michael Maier, one of the most renowned alchemists of his day and an important figure in the nascent Rosicrucian movement. When he died in 1622, he was about to be offered a lucrative position by King Gustavus of Sweden, the current leader of the Protestant army. Ingrid was too young to succeed her father at the time, but has spent the last nine years studying his notes and papers, hoping to present herself as a replacement when the King reaches Magdeburg.

Unfortunately, she has not inherited her father's genius and struggles to attain the same heights. Within her father's papers, she found mention of creatures given life through alchemical means and has become obsessed with finding one so that she might draw forth the secrets and materials she needs to perform a Great Work with which to impress the King. Since the siege started, she has become desperate, sure that the Protestant savior will arrive any day to liberate the city.

Description: Ingrid appears to have not slept in days, her dark eyes a bit too bright with her obsession and her clothes

rumpled and unwashed. The chemicals she works with stain her hands and her complexion is pale and unhealthy from toxic gasses she has inhaled in her recklessness. When she talks, it is the ramblings of someone half mad with exhaustion and desperation.

Fields of Knowledge:

Alchemy 6: She is a competent alchemist but not the equal of her illustrious forebear.

Perception 5: She has a keen eye, sharpened by obsession.

Magdeburg 4: She knows the city's geography well.

Combat and Health: Ingrid has been practicing with her pistol for months. She is young and strong but her health suffers for her obsession.

FRAU EGGER

Gertrud Egger is the aging matriarch of a large family of tinkers living in the city. Her husband and she joined the guild after moving to Magdeburg from the country and established themselves through hard work and a hard won reputation. Even after her husband's death, she and her progeny enjoyed a comfortable life until the siege. She has drawn her family in close, too practical to rely on rescue at the hands of the Protestant army. Despite her best efforts, she was unable to secure passage for them out of the city and refused to leave anyone behind. When the defenses fell, she led them to the cathedral to weather the aftermath. She has a small chest containing her family's wealth with which she originally intended to bribe the invading Catholics to get them out, but she is finding herself unwilling to abandon the others huddled in the cathedral to their fate.

Description: Frau Egger is an imposing figure with a large frame and strong arms. She has a commanding presence that demands obedience and attracts those looking for a leader.

Fields of Knowledge:

Tinsmith 8: She crafts tin and pewter with an artist's eye and a master's skill.

Politics 6: Frau Egger is adept at navigating guild and city politics.

Expression 5: Since her husband's death, she has trained many apprentices in her craft.

Combat and Health: Despite her age, Frau Egger is healthy as a horse, though she has no combat skills to speak of.

BERNHARD BAHRUTH

Bahruth is a tavern keeper who joined the Catholic League army out of a sense of religious obligation and the hope that a quick end to the war would minimize the casualties. When the Danes were defeated two years ago, he was prepared to go home secure in the knowledge that he had done the right thing. Unfortunately, the arrival of the Swedish king promises a more protracted engagement and Bernhard despairs that he may never see his home again. He also worries about his wife and children, since he and the other soldiers haven't been paid in some time.

The looting and murdering sicken him but he fears for his own fate should he try and stand between his fellow soldiers and the objects of their greed and bloodlust. He and his unit are making their way towards the cathedral and his heart is heavy with what he knows will happen when they reach it. The desecration of a church, Protestant or not, and violence towards women and children may be more than he can tolerate. He could not face his family with such acts on his conscience and so may be willing to risk his life to stop it.

Description: Bernhard is of average height but barrel chested.

Fields of Knowledge:

Tavern-Keeping 6: His family has been in the trade for several generations.

Soldiering 5: He has been fighting for years.

Firearms 4: Bernhard is well-versed in the maintenance and care of his weapon.

Combat and Health: Bernhard is a veteran arquebusier. He is a strong man of good health, despite the vagaries of war.

The Black Horse (Famine)

And behold a black horse, and he that sat on him had a pair of scales in his hand.

The Location

Nuremberg, September 1 1632. A century ago, Nuremberg was a center of culture, trade, and wealth. It played an important role in the Protestant Reformation and was host to artists, inventors, and merchants who traded to every corner of the world. In the intervening time, its fortunes have slowly declined. Nonetheless, King Gustavus considered it too important an ally to allow it to fall to enemy forces while he reunited the disparate parts of his army and so fell back into the city in the beginning of July and began reinforcing it while he awaited the arrival of the rest of his forces. The Imperial army, rather than attack the city, encamped on the steep heights to the west of the city and sought to starve the Swedes out.

The city has been under siege for two months now and both sides are suffering from starvation and disease. Corpses litter the streets, adding to the pestilence, and soldiers get bread only every three to four days. Reinforcements have

arrived but have only added to the number of mouths to feed. Meanwhile, the enemy sits in the highlands west of the city, dug in and intending to starve out their enemy despite suffering the same shortages. The countryside around the city is stripped bare for a day's ride in every direction. There is no feed for the horses, so their festering remains litter the city alongside the unburied corpses of the human dead. King Gustavus refuses to the abandon the city and the Imperial commander, Wallenstein, won't be lured into battle, so the armies remain at a stalemate, slowly starving to death.

The Problem

A pack of Pandorans led by a *sublimatus* is hunting Prometheans in the city. Each night, the *sublimatus* steals Pyros from the laboratories of the local alchemists and uses it to awaken more of them from dormancy. There are so many that they are becoming desperate for Pyros and will attack the characters even in broad daylight. Their leader is not so bold. It is able to sustain itself by eating humans (leading rumors of cannibalism) and is wily enough to stay out of sight and orchestrate attacks from afar. Trapped in the city, the characters need to find a way to deal with the problem before they become food.

The Twist

The originator of the problem is the head alchemist, Jakob Hofmann. Several days ago, his apprentice and lover Torsten succumbed to disease and starvation. Mad with grief and guilt at not being able to save him, the alchemists attempted the Galateid ritual and catastrophically failed. Torsten's body was transformed into a *sublimatus* which woke three other Pandorans while the resultant Firestorm awoke a half dozen others in the vicinity (relics of another long ago failure by the previous owner of the ritual). While the Pandorans wish simply to eat, the *sublimatus* that was once Torsten has an agenda to see to the ruin and destruction of his creator.

Scenes

The characters are chasing the rumor that an alchemist in Nuremburg has a complete copy of the original ritual used to create the Galateid. One of the characters may wish to use it to complete the *multiplicatio* Milestone or an Originist may simply want to record it for posterity. They have little to go on other than the name "J. P. Hofmann of Nuremberg." They entered the city a little over a week ago when reinforcements arrived from Bamberg, led by the Swedish Lord High Chancellor Axel Oxenstierna. The arrival of more troops has only worsened things, as there are now more mouths to feed.

Hunted

As dusk falls, the sound of cannons continues relentlessly as they have all day. King Gustavus has been bombarding the Imperial camp at Alte Veste all day, hoping to force his enemy to come down and fight. Soldiers have been on the move, as



well, and it is apparent that something else is planned. With the darkness come rats and dogs to feast on the untended corpses of the dead, and it is whispered that men have begun to join them, mad with desperation and hunger.

As the characters move through the pestilent streets, they start to perceive that they are being followed. At first, they may mistake their pursuers for the aforementioned dogs but as they get closer, the character glimpse them in the weak pools of light from windows and recognize the bizarre, twisted forms of Pandorans. The creatures are bold and the waning crescent moon offers little aid in seeing them slink through the shadows.

This first fight should be with a small group of Pandorans and the *sublimatus* only glimpsed on the periphery, too intelligent to risk itself before assessing their strength. If they try to find it after the fight, they see it slither through the narrow gap of a sewer drain. Nearby, they find a fresh, half-eaten human corpse. Further investigation, through Transmutations or mundane means over the course of the next day, can narrow the epicenter of the strange snakelike creature's activities to a block near the Pegnitz River, which flows through the city.

The Storyteller should not hesitate to stage subsequent attacks at dramatic moments or points of low activity. Unexpected attacks should happen whenever a member of the throng is alone or isolated from the others. They should also constantly be spotting Pandorans following them or watching them. The tension should remain high. Once they have the characters' scent, they will not relent.

Guard Duty

At some point the next day, September 2nd, a Swedish officer named Thorsten Vinter and two soldiers accost the characters while they are in a public space. Their relative health and strength have caught his eye and they are ordered to report to the battlements to supplement the militia while the soldiers move out to camp across from the Imperial fortifications. He will not be easy to dissuade and, unless they flee or answer with violence, the characters will probably have to join him on the walls and continue their attempts there.

As a Social Maneuver, they must open three Doors. Their impression starts at good if they obey without arguments or average if he has to threaten them or they try and weasel out of it. If they try and fail to escape, they will have to contend with a hostile impression. Of course, if they fight and lose, they are facing execution. Vinter aspires to higher office and his ambition (Vice) might be able to be used as leverage. Unless the characters want to spend days trying to sway him, they will have to resort to bribery or threats. The longer it takes, the greater the risk of Disquiet and Pandoran attacks.

Should they escape, the soldiers will be on the lookout for them and they'll have to proceed cautiously to avoid being caught. Of course, if they fight and kill any of the soldiers, they will be marked for death and rumor will spread that they are Catholic spies. This should make it very difficult to investigate the Pandorans and their alpha. Luckily for them, most of the soldiers will leave the city overnight and spend the following day fighting the Imperial army in Fürth and Alte Veste. This will give them a narrow window to complete their task without interruption.

That Fateful Night

Hofmann's catastrophic failure led to the igniting of a Lilithian Firestorm to herald the birth of his malformed creation. Engulfed in darkness, he heard his lover's body convulse and rip itself apart. He heard the chunks hit the floor wetly and then slither away. His reason fled and he admits to not remembering anything else until he woke the next morning, curled up under a table with blood running from the furrows he dug into his skin with his nails in his madness. If given access to the laboratory, the characters will immediately sense the ashes of the Firestorm, proving his tale.

The Alchemist

Either by tracking the movements of the *sublimatus* or because they have business with him, the characters are inevitably going to end up at the door of Jakob Hofmann's home. He will be hesitant to see them unless they mention the ritual, the creature, or reveal something of their true nature. Depending on their approach, he may agree to speak with them out of fear or fascination. Katrina, as Hofmann's faithful servant, will see to their needs and it will be apparent to those adept at reading people that she has opinions on the subjects they speak of, particularly the creature. If prompted, she will admit to seeing it come into the laboratory and say that it left via the latrine. She is certain that it saw her, but it offered no threat.

Hofmann himself will likely require Hard Leverage to admit the full extent of what he has done, though it is possible to get it out of him through gentler means, particularly if Katrina assists the effort. It should immediately be apparent, when he finally offers his tale, that the *sublimatus* was the result of his attempt to resurrect his assistant. Getting him to show them the ritual he used may take additional persuading, but it proves to be more fragmented than the rumors gave tell. He begs the characters and Katrina not to reveal what happened to the other alchemists, claiming it would ruin him.

At some point during the conversation, there is a loud banging at the door and a demand for entrance. The other members of Hofmann's alchemical society are there with King's guards to arrest Katrina for the thefts from their laboratories. If she survived the Siege of Magdeburg, Ingrid Maier is among them. They reiterate that she is the only person who has had access to all of their homes and is a relative



stranger. She will protest her innocence but her employer seems reticent to say anything on the matter.

If the characters have the trust of Hofmann by this point, they can probably get him to speak for her innocence, though he cannot be convinced to reveal the actual culprit (or even admit that he knows who it is). Depending on how they left matters with Ingrid in Magdeburg, she might be disposed to believe them about Katrina's innocence or could find their very presence suspicious and be inclined to discount anything they say. If she helps, though, she is likely to press for details or payment in Pyros or Vitriol.

Should the characters neglect to intercede or simply fail, the guards will take Katrina away. She will shout pleas to her employer and the characters to see after her son, Adam. Hofmann will be wracked with guilt but will still be unwilling to admit his failure to save her. Threats to reveal the full details of the incident (if he's revealed them) are sufficient for an attempt at Hard Leverage. There are only two Doors to overcome because of his deteriorating mental state. If pressed, he will swear to the fact that she is innocent and make up a nondescript intruder he nearly caught robbing him. He might not be convincing, but as the King's alchemist he has enough credibility for the guards to accept his word.

Katrina's Child

Adam has passed the point that Hofmann's skill as a physician can keep him alive. Katrina sits with her child to wait out his final hours while the alchemist takes the characters aside. He tells them that he has the formula for a potion that would save the child. The problem is that its creation requires Vitriol. He will offer them anything they want, including assistance in hunting the monster he created, if one of them is willing to provide it. If they are resistant, he points out that Katrina has nothing left, having lost her family and home to the war. He doesn't know if she will have the will to go on, should the boy die.

If they agree, he will invite them all to his laboratory where the donor will be strapped to the same table where he tried to resurrect Torsten. There, with the rest of the throng as witnesses, he will perform Lacuna. The donor is cut open and the fluid taken from her organs. Hofmann will be exceedingly careful and only extract a single Vitriol Beat. Nonetheless, the memories of that milestone are either lost or drained of their potency, leaving a hole within the Promethean. It is obvious that the alchemist doesn't really grasp the magnitude of the operation, seeing it as nothing more than a simple surgery.

Once the donor is sewn up, he will create the elixir. It takes hours, during which time Adam's health worsens. Hofmann will not be able to succeed without some sort of assistance. Katrina is qualified to do so, having assisted him in the laboratory, but it will take a lot to remove her from the side of her child. Any of the characters with a rating in Science or an Alchemy specialty in any Mental Skill (like Occult or Academics) can also fill the role. Alternatively, there may be Transmutations or other abilities that can be applied to help him along.

Once the potion is ready, it is administered to the child. After a bout of coughing, he begins to breathe more easily and falls into a restful sleep (in contrast to his previous fitful delirium). Katrina will be eternally grateful and provide any assistance the characters need, though she will be reticent to leave her son's side, particularly if Hofmann is going with them to find Torsten.

Should the characters not make the necessary sacrifice or should Hofmann fail, the child will die just after dusk. Katrina will be inconsolable and Hofmann will be hard to convince to leave her side. Not understanding what Vitriol is, other than a substance produced by Promethean bodies, he will be angry if they were not willing to help and impossible to convince to assist them further (his impression of them becomes hostile).

Lair of the Beast

Investigating the latrine reveals a pipe that exits at the riverbank rather than at one of the city's overflowing cesspools. Following the tracks of the beast through the mud and excrement is difficult, but not impossible, and leads to another pipe issuing from a house that has been quarantined due to plague. Soldiers at the door will not allow entrance and the windows have all been nailed shut to contain the foul air. Armed men aside, any random citizens who witness the characters trying to enter the house will be aghast and do whatever they can to dissuade them, including raising the call for soldiers or other assistance.

During the night of September 2nd, the soldiers leave their guard post and join the rest of the army as it departs the city to approach the Imperial encampment. This allows entrance into the plague house if the characters have not already found another means. There is not a living thing left inside its walls. Half-eaten corpses lie strewn in every room and the tracks of the beast are easily seen in the pools of congealed blood that cover most of the floor. As they move into the house, they will hear scraping, scurrying, and knocking as the Pandorans lurking in the shadows begin to rouse themselves.

The *sublimatus* will hang back, as before, and let its Pandoran allies attack unless Hofmann or Katrina are present. If Hofmann accompanied the characters, Torsten will attack him while recklessly ignoring the characters. If Katrina is with them, it will clearly instruct the Pandorans not to harm her, though the tone in its voice betrays its own confusion over its order. While the creatures issuing forth from the darkness will horrify Katrina, the characters may be able to persuade her to talk to Torsten to try to draw him forth.

Should the characters gain an upper hand against the Pandorans, the *sublimatus* will finally engage, consumed by its rage and torment. Nothing will sate its bloodlust, not even the death of its creator. If badly wounded, it may try and escape through the latrine in the back of the house. If it succeeds in getting away, it will come for its creator at every opportunity until he is killed or it is destroyed. Should Torsten manage to slay Hofmann and escape, it will disappear, fleeing the city.

The next morning, the sound of guns and cannons begin near the Imperial encampment and continue for the next 24 hours. With the battle distracting the two armies, it is possible to slip out of the city after nightfall. By the next morning, the Protestants will be defeated and retreat behind the city walls with their wounded. The Catholics do not pursue.

Aftermath

The Protestant King tries in vain for another two weeks to lure the Imperial commander into a fight until, unable to further weaken his forces by remaining, Gustavus marches his army out past the Imperial camp, stopping only to bombard it with cannon fire, and heads north towards Würzburg. The Imperial army breaks camp a few days later and marches past Nuremburg, burning villages but never occupying the city, and then heads north to retake Bamberg. In the end, Nuremburg is a prize left on the battlefield, claimed by neither side. The war of wills between the two great military commanders had only weakened both sides through attrition. Nothing, ultimately, was gained.

Storyteller Characters

The three principals are connected by pain, death, and obsession.

JAKOB HOFMANN

Jakob is the leader of a renowned circle of alchemists tasked by King Gustavus with creating gold to fund the war effort. They have had success and minted the metal produced into gold ducats. His apprentice was an eager young man named Torsten who relished the chance to rise from his humble roots to become a man of wealth and learning. Jakob professed a keen interest in the sexual symbolism of his craft and explored this with his assistant. The two became lovers.

When the younger man died, Jakob realized the depth of his feelings for Torsten and, in his grief, attempted to bring him back from the dead. The result was horror and madness. He tries to carry on, haunted by visions of his foul progeny, but Pyros is being stolen from his fellow alchemists, thwarting their continued efforts. He is aware of the identity of the thief, but his horror at what he has unleashed has stilled his tongue.

Description: Blond and blue-eyed, intelligent and erudite, Jakob seems to possess every advantage. Once he spoke with confidence but now his every word seems shadowed by doubt and he looks haunted. The siege has taken its toll on everyone, so his change in demeanor has barely registered as unusual.

Fields of Knowledge:

Alchemy 8: Hofmann is a remarkably talented alchemist with an extensive library.

Medicine 6: He is a competent surgeon and physician, though only as a last resort.

Research 5: His success has its foundation in his research skills.

Combat and Health: Jakob has no combat skills. His health is poor due to the famine.

TORSTEN

The failed Galateid is a wickedly intelligent creature obsessed with the downfall of its creator and the survival of itself and its siblings. To this end, it has been working to ruin Jakob by raiding the resources of his circle and using them to raise more Pandorans. It fully intends to devour the alchemist (consuming his heart and, with it, his memories), once it has broken him utterly, but in the meantime, it has the more pressing problem of feeding its growing horde. Its intended nature has left it with one unusual quirk: a strong fondness for Jakob's housekeeper, Katrina. It isn't consciously aware of this and couldn't explain why if it was pointed out, but it is incapable of harming her, even though she has seen him raiding the laboratories of the alchemists.

Description: The *sublimatus* is a skull on a spinal column. It moves like a snake, slithering along the ground. His visage has so tormented Jakob that he put it on the obverse of the last batch of ducats.

Fields of Knowledge:

It knows the Lordship Alembic of the Flux Transmutation, which it uses to keep its siblings in line.

Alchemy 6: The Pandoran retains a great deal of Torsten's knowledge.

Stealth 5: It has a keen instinct for staying out of sight and moving quickly.

Intimidation 5: It enjoys the terror it provokes in those who see it.

Combat and Health: The *sublimatus* is remarkably dangerous, with a variety of Dread Powers at its disposal.

KATRINA KEIL

When the Imperial army captured her village, Katrina took her young son Adam and fled with the Swedes. She followed the army to Nuremberg and took a position as housekeeper and cook in the home of Jakob Hofmann. She is desperate to keep the position so she and her child do not starve on the street. As it is, Adam is weakening on the meager ration they are allowed. She is convinced that Jakob's skill as a physician is the only thing keeping the boy alive. Since Torsten died, she has stepped into the role of assistant for the alchemist but her added responsibilities have put her in grave peril. Members of Jakob's circle believe she is the one stealing Pyros from their laboratories and are demanding he see her punished. She has seen the creature that is responsible and knows, somehow, that it is Torsten, but despairs that none would believe her.



Description: Frau Keil is a painfully thin young woman wearing a house dress she meticulously mends so as not to appear slovenly. Her shoes have fallen apart and there are no replacements available, so she goes barefoot about her duties.

Fields of Knowledge:

Housekeeping 6: The rhythms of housework are second nature to her.

Sewing 5: Katrina has deft hands which makes her sewing go quickly.

Medicine 4: She has paid close attention to Jakob while he works and tends to her son.

Combat and Health: Katrina has no combat skills and her health is failing due to hard work and starvation.

The Pale Horse (Death)

And behold a pale horse, and he that sat upon him, his name was Death, and hell followed him. And power was given to him over the four parts of the earth, to kill with sword, with famine, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

The Location

Convent of the Holy Sepulchre, July 1633. When the Protestant army first occupied Bamberg in February of 1632, the Dominican nuns were surprised at how well the enemy treated them. They received polite visits from officers and their wives. The Jesuits was not so lucky, driven from the city after the looting and occupation of their monastery by the Swedish forces. This created a great deal of friction with the citizens of the city, particularly when the Protestants made gifts to the nuns of looted goods and livestock. They held the city for only a month before retreating before the Catholic League forces.

When they returned a year later, the death of their king, lack of pay, and shortage of supplies left them somewhat less cordial. Worse, the occupying forces brought disease. Typhus (called "the Hungarian disease") has ravaged the city despite the efforts of the Protestants to prevent its spread but so far the convent has been spared. With food stores depleted and plague ravaging both citizens and occupiers, tensions are high. The future of the war is uncertain, the Protestants having lost their leader and the Imperial commander, Wallenstein, apparently unwilling to attack his enemy. Some hold to the hope that the end is in sight and all are exhausted by 15 years of fighting. None can predict that the war is only at the halfway mark.

The Problem

The failure of the Promethean Maria Agnes to complete her Pilgrimage has attracted the attention of a greater *qashmal* taking the form of Death. Its mission is to dislodge her from the Companion Role she's stalled in by killing the other residents of the convent with Black Plague. Exacerbating matters is the Edenite's use of the Deception Transmutation, which has made it difficult for her to remember that she is not a Catholic nun. She is lost in her Role and her divine vision. The characters must help her find herself and complete her Great Work.

The Twist

Her final Milestone is *Projectio*. In order to complete her Great Work, she must die. It is not enough to simply kill her; she must take the final step and choose to die. So long as she is lost in her delusions, she is unable to make that choice, even if she can be convinced that her death would serve a greater purpose. She must understand who she is and why it is necessary so that she can make the informed choice and take the final step.

Scenes

The characters are witness to the Firestorm that marks the arrival of the *qashmal* while passing through the city. Such an event and its implications should not be able to be ignored, but even a cursory investigation should make clear the scope of what is happening. Alternatively, they may be investigating the Wasteland that was forming at the convent due to Maria Agnes' stagnancy in her Role before the Firestorm burns it away.

The Grim Reaper

Dusk has just given way to night when the figure of Death appears before Maria Agnes in the courtyard of the convent. The nuns have just completed vespers and are on their way to supper when a foul air kicks up and a figure taller than a man by half materializes, surrounded by a sickly green light. The characters feel the chaotic energies of Flux whip into a Lilithian Firestorm around the *qashmal* that lasts for three turns.

Some of the sisters flee while others collapse under the weight of sudden illness. Maria Agnes stands her ground, though shaken. The figure tells her calmly that her time here is done and it has come to see her complete her journey. She expresses confusion and begins to pray the Rosary, standing fast before the figure. The characters can attempt to question the creature, but it will not elaborate on the details of its mission, merely restating that Maria Agnes must leave and adding that it will remain until she does.

When the Edenite completes her prayers, the figure will dissolve into a luminescent green fog that will slink through the convent like a living thing. Before it dissipates, it will have found and touched every living being in the building. Maria Agnes will collapse in obvious pain and one of the sisters, Maria Anna, will rush forward to help her to her room. The Mother Superior will appear and ask what happened. The characters may try to explain or leave her to the accounts of the nuns.

Firestorm Aspect: Sickness

As Flux flows over the affected area like a pale green mist, all those within are stricken with plague. Characters suffer the grave version of the Sick Tilt until the Firestorm abates, at which time they must make a Stamina + Resolve roll at -3 (the storm's strength) or continue to suffer from a Severity 3 disease with symptoms similar to the Black Death. They must roll daily to resist taking three Lethal damage.

A Plague of Rats

The ill nuns are taken to their cells and the rest eventually arrive at supper. The usual silence is broken by whispers and the Mother Superior repeatedly has to chastise nuns. Midway through, a scream disrupts the already unsettled meal. A huge, diseased rat has appeared in a corner of the room, sending the nearby sisters scurrying away. Another is spotted almost immediately in a different part of the room. The ruckus should attract the attention of the characters if they are not already present.

The Prometheans will immediately recognize that these creatures are not, in fact, rodents, but Pandorans newly awakened by the Firestorm earlier. The Unborn will ignore the nuns for the most part (while inciting Disquiet) but will immediately move to attack the Created. Two more will appear over the course of the battle, coming from other parts of the convent seeking the taste of Azothic flesh. The Disquiet leaves many of the nuns Stricken or Terrified. Luckily, the bestial appearance leaves little to explain and all assume these creatures were sent here by the apparition from earlier.

The Black Death

Maria Anna carefully records the details of the incident in her journal while she tends to her friend. It is immediately obvious that many of the nuns are still sick, even after the plaguemist is gone. By morning, they manifest buboes and fevers. The Mother Superior speaks privately with Maria Agnes when she wakes the next morning. Should the characters eavesdrop, they will hear her ask the Amirani what happened and receive a perfectly accurate report, though no mention is made of *qashmallim* or the Pilgrimage. The abbess remarks that God is testing them and that they must not lose faith.

The characters will undoubtedly speak to their fellow Promethean and, through the course of conversation, should become aware that Maria Agnes has forgotten what she is. Any who have followed the Refinement of Gold may recognize the symptoms of prolonged use of the Deep Cover Distillation. She can relate her personal history, but the characters might notice gaps in her narrative in support of the idea that she's impersonating another woman. Picking at these discrepancies might cause her to pull back or could be the key to getting her to return to herself.

Speaking to the other nuns reveals that Maria Agnes came to them six months ago, claiming to be a refugee from a convent looted and burned by Croat mercenaries. The characters also gain the impression that the nuns grew progressively uncomfortable around her. She spoke of a vision of Heaven and the other sisters may admit to feeling their own shortcomings more strongly in her presence. The astute may recognize the signs of Amirani Disquiet. Now the nuns are afraid of her and they are often caught whispering speculation about what Maria Agnes has done to warrant being stalked by Death itself.

Within a day or two, as illness spreads and the weaker of the afflicted begin to succumb, the residents of the convent will begin to insist that Maria Agnes be asked to leave. The figure of Death is sighted constantly and few don't believe that it will only leave with its quarry. Why should the other sisters die to save the life of this newcomer? The arguments become fiercer as time goes on and Disquiet caused by the characters will make them targets as well, as their arrival coincided with that of the morbid specter.

Looters

One morning, a small band of armed men enter the convent grounds. They will confront the first people they see and demand to be given food, livestock, and any valuables. They are violent and show no fear of striking a nun or looting holy ground. Their only concerns are food to fill their stomachs and booty to fill their pockets. The Mother Superior will plead with them, saying that many of their number are sick and will certainly die without food. The men scoff, claiming that they can easy acquire more from the faithful citizens of the town.

This band of mercenaries is certainly prepared for a violent confrontation. Combat is the most straightforward way of dealing with them, but they are also susceptible to intimidation. They chose to loot the convent because they expected no real resistance. A show of strength might be enough to turn them away without a fight. Using Social Maneuvering, this would be a use of Hard Leverage against three Doors (two if they are offered food or booty in return).

The danger of this turning into a fight is that use of Transmutations could reveal Disfigurements, causing the nuns to think them demons or some other monster in alliance with the Reaper. On the other hand, if they are able to scare the men off without bloodshed, the Mother Superior will be very grateful and the rest of the nuns will be significantly more at ease with them. It could be enough to quiet rumors about their possible link to Death's appearance or get the nuns to back off on demands that Maria Agnes leave.

The Problem of Maria

Until the characters can help her remember her true self, she will stubbornly cling to her current identity, unable to



shed her Companion Role. Using Social Maneuvering, they need to open four Doors. This is a difficult proposition with the time constraints and the fact that they are relative strangers. Getting the Mother Superior or Maria Anna to vouch for them will get their impression to good. Showing a strong knowledge of religion will also move the impression up a level. There are also any number of Transmutations that could assist. If they take the bold move of explaining the situation to Maria Anna, she will surprise them by being receptive and will lend herself to the task fully, allowing the characters to utilize her excellent impression.

If successful, Maria Agnes will shed her borrowed form. Her actual appearance is that of a young woman with pox-scarred olive skin and jaundiced eyes. Unable to say goodbye, she will gather her few meager possessions and ask the characters to accompany her out of the convent. She has fallen to Torment and is angry at herself for subjecting the nuns to this plague with her selfishness. Her body has the sickly sheen of fever and she smells of illness and death. As they leave, she stops frequently to cough and steady herself.

Departure

Upon reaching the convent gate, the figure of Death appears to block the way. Maria Agnes is enraged and demands it let them through. The *qashmal* tells her that she must take the final step on her Pilgrimage and it will not let her leave until her Great Work is done. Rather than stoke her anger, this causes the former nun to grow quiet and nod her head. She asks the characters if they will see her through her New Dawn. If they agree, she will tell Death that she is ready. The *qashmal* will again dissolve into mist but the vapor will enter Maria Teresa through her nose and mouth as she closes her eyes to receive it.

When it is done, she collapses. The signs of her illness immediately grow more serious and they can see buboes already beginning to form. She's barely coherent and can't offer any more insight or advice. The characters are left to decide what to do with her. An obvious solution, given that she looks nothing like she did before, is to return her to the convent. However they explain it, the nuns won't turn away a sick stranger, adding her to the ranks of the dying. Maria Anna will come to tend to her friend even if she doesn't know who she truly is.

The Edenite will not last the day. She has periods of lucidity when the fever ebbs for a moment and tells stories of the places she has been and the people she's met. The characters should realize that these are references to her Pilgrimage and be able to glean hints of Athanors, mentors, or any other plot hook the Storyteller wishes to introduce. Over the course of the night the characters feel Pyros gathering and each should nod off and experience an Elpis vision. On the beds around her, the nuns are beginning to recover. Fevers break and her sisters enter restful sleep.

New Dawn

In the dead of night, Maria Agnes dies. Her body is consumed with fire like slowly burning paper shrouding another form. Beneath is a young woman with long blonde hair and pale green eyes who blinks repeatedly, as if she's just woken up. Maria Anna will smile, call her Elizabeta, and say it is good to see her awake. She'll comment that the fever has broken and that the worst has passed. After making sure she is comfortable, the nun will leave to tend to other patients.

For the moment, Maria Agnes remembers her Promethean life and is willing to answer any questions the characters might have (including clarification on any of her fever visions or stories). She encourages them to continue on their paths and says that God will watch over them and see them to the end. When she finally goes to sleep, she will awaken with no memory of her old life, only the one that the Great Work has created for her. She is Elizabeta Gritti, a Catholic nun who has traveled her from Venice to treat victims of the plague, with which she is well acquainted.

Storyteller Characters

These three women of the convent must face and overcome death.

MARIA AGNES

The Amirani (p. 98) calling herself Maria Agnes was created from a plague victim over fifty years ago in Venice. She came to her second life with a vision of heaven that her genitor relentlessly questioned her about before moving on with her own Pilgrimage. Maria Agnes moved through a number of Refinements in search of humanity before learning Pneuma. She came to Bamberg just before the first Swedish occupation and managed to control her Disquiet enough that it was lost in the general tension surrounding the war. She has mastered her final Role, Companion, and completed enough Milestones to attempt to reach the New Dawn, but is stuck in her assumed persona. She cannot leave her Order during this time of great peril and, at times, even forgets that she is a Promethean.

Description: She appears as an unassuming middle-aged woman with dark eyes and dark hair. When her disfigurements are visible, she shows off intricate brass fixtures and copper wire holding her ravaged body together.

Fields of Knowledge:

Religion 8: She has a knowledge of Catholicism to rival any religious scholar.

Survival 7: Maria Agnes has lived on her own for five decades.

Medicine 6: She has spent many years tending to the sick and infirm.

Combat and Health: She has no combat skills but has the strength and resilience of a Promethean.

MARIA ANNA JUNIUS

Maria Anna entered the convent when she was very young. Both of her parents were burned at the stake for witchcraft in 1628. Her father, Johannes Junius, was the mayor of Bamberg. Before his execution, he penned a letter to her sister, Veronica, telling how his confession and those of his accusers were coerced. She seldom speaks of her parents but doubts the guilt of the bishop's many victims. She is very interested in events outside the convent and is worldlier than many would assume from her age. Any new arrivals to the convent are sure to be confronted by the eager young woman.

Her best friend is Maria Agnes and they have long conversations about religion, the war, and morality. She has an inkling that there is something extraordinary about her friend but her doubts about the bishop and the kind treatment of the Swedes have made her hesitant to judge people. Even a brief glimpse of the Prophet's disfigurements has not caused her fear.

Description: Maria Anna is a young woman with bright, intelligent brown eyes wearing the white tunic and black veil of a Dominican nun. When not attending to her duties, she carries a small leather bound journal.

Fields of Knowledge:

Expression 6: She has taken to writing a diary to record the events of the war as they affect the convent.

Religion 5: Having been at the convent since she was a child, she is well versed in her faith.

Medicine 4: She tends to the sick and the injured on both sides of the conflict.

Combat and Health: Maria Anna has no combat skills but is healthy, for the moment.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Kunigunde Manshofer was the youngest daughter of a noble family in Würzburg. She spent her youth devouring the books of her brother, who studied at the university. While still quite young, she entered a convent and found that the routine and the proximity of the library suited her. Rather than marry, she chose to enter the Dominican order and quickly proved the sharpness of her mind by advancing to positions of responsibility. She has been the abbess of the Holy Sepulchre convent for five years and the experience has tested her. First the witch hunts and then the war caused her to question her faith as well as the character of her fellow man, but she has come through it with resolve and compassion.

Description: The Mother Superior is a middle-aged woman with a fierce intellect and a strong will that is readily apparent to any who speak with her. Her fingers are stained with the ink of many books and her red hair can sometimes be glimpsed when it slips free of her veil.

Fields of Knowledge:

Religion 7: She would have a Doctorate in Theology if she were a man.

Administration 6: She is well-suited to the practical side of running a convent.

Persuasion 5: Her tenure has included a lot of negotiation with opposing forces.

Combat and Health: The abbess is untrained in combat but is reasonably healthy.



PNEUMA

Refinement of Gold (Grace)

Edenites

Pneuma is a reference to the breath of God that turned inert clay forms into living, breathing human beings. The followers of this Refinement argue that what separates them from humanity is a soul and that only God's Grace can grant it. They consider their Great Work to be a metaphorical journey to the Garden of Eden, where Adam received God's breath, and their path is strictly religious. Eschewing the alchemical methods of the other Refinements, the Edenites have dedicated themselves to moral improvement in the hopes that the Almighty will reward their efforts.

Ultimately, Pneuma is a dead end. A failed variant of Aurum, its insistence that the New Dawn can only come about through an external source dooms it to failure. In addition, because it does not recognize the need to explore multiple Refinements and their Roles, its adherents can only progress so far in their Pilgrimage before stalling. Eventually, as the Christian faith fractures and belief in God is itself called into question, the Refinement dies out. All that remain are a handful of Athanors scattered throughout Europe.

Practices

Edenites strive to become paragons of the faith. They model their practices on monastic life, focusing on sacraments, prayer, and good works.



- Those dedicated to Pneuma consider the sacraments pivotal to their redemption. New followers seek baptism and confirmation at the earliest opportunity and all strive to regularly attend mass and offer penance. Many pursue holy orders and even marry in order to fulfill their obligations to God as well as fulfill the Refinement's roles.

- Edenites strive to pray several times a day, both alone and with the congregation of the church they attend. In addition to the standard prayers is one specific to the order, an entreaty to God to take mercy on them and forgive the sins of their genitors, called the Prayer for Ensoulment. The most dedicated (and desperate) will intone this prayer repeatedly for days, taking neither sleep nor food as proof of their faith.

- The faithful work diligently among the sick and the poor to prove their worthiness to be humans, and the bonds they form with their charges are in stark contrast to the usual hate and distrust they engender. It is common to discover others of their kind among the destitute and their kindness often helps convert those so found.

- Prometheans, by the nature of their Great Work, have a fascination with all things human and so, when provided with the educational resources of an abbey or monastery, it is no wonder that many lose themselves in learning. Their greatest

dedication is to the Bible, which members of the order read obsessively in the hopes of discovering more clues to help in repairing their soulless state.

- Many of the deepest bonds found between people form over common labor and the Edenites claim that honest work is a sacrament in itself. The unnatural endurance and strength of the Created allows them to do more than their fair share, thus relieving others of their toil.

Ethos

The Edenites attempt to adhere to the proscribed tenets of the faith. When the Roman Catholic Church dominated, this was a straightforward proposition. Then came the Lutherans and now the Calvinists, and the Refinement, like Europe, is beginning to fracture. Followers of Pneuma argue over which branch of the faith to follow and some wonder if their Great Work is even possible without a clear path. The strain of adhering to already mastered Roles has also forced many to leave the Refinement or be lost.

Roles

Followers of Pneuma inhabit the same Roles as Aurum, but usually within the context of a religious community. They master *Companion* by joining a religious order or getting married, *Follower* by being a faithful member of a congregation, and *Leader* by becoming a priest, abbot, or abbess.

Practitioners

Luis wasn't made to be male but the monastery called to him and so he shaved his head and dressed like a man. He is sure that his genitalia and breasts are the mistakes of his Genitor but knows in his heart that God recognizes who he really is. The routine of prayer and work among these other men fills him with a peace he has never known. Lately, though, he has noticed the attention he is drawing from some of his brothers and it makes him feel confused and aroused. He weeps at night because he knows that his Disquiet will soon force him to move on.

Sotiria has traveled the length and breadth of Europe to visit every great cathedral. Lost in a crowd of humans among the grandeur of these awesome structures she is able to believe that God might someday smile upon her and grant her what she most desires. She is careful to move on quickly, though, unwilling to taint these holy places with the corruption of her half-formed existence. Her throng always travels with poor pilgrims, protecting them against the hard world and hoping that their good works count towards their eventual redemption.

Nobody dares harm Cyryl's children. They are the orphans of war, poverty, and disease and he takes them to his home, feeds them, teaches them, and protects them. At night, when he puts them to bed, he tells them of the vision he had of heaven and how, if they are good and help people, they will all one day meet in paradise. The truth is that his Pilgrimage is stalled. He does not care if he ever becomes human. His responsibility is here and now and he will not fail.

It has been years since Verena abandoned alchemy to seek Eden. Despite its brevity, she treasures the sacrament of her marriage above all other Milestones. Even before he succumbed to the Hungarian disease, she stood beside him on the battlements of their besieged home. Now that he is gone, she has picked up his spear and fights alongside the men to repel the armies of the Pope and the Emperor. She is not the only woman here. The horrors of war have made them equals in the defense of their faith.

Peter has a heart full of faith, which guides the sword in his hand. He has been with the army of the Catholic League for five years now and considers the motley group of peasants, nobles, and mercenaries to be more than brothers-at-arms. They are fellow crusaders fighting the forces of Satan himself and protecting the Holy Church in Rome. Each life ended at his hands brings him one step closer to the gates of Heaven and the soul, which he is certain he'll earn once he's shed enough heretic blood.

Refinement Condition: *Masked* – Edenites share the Mimics' talent at moving among humanity without betraying their soulless nature. By spending a point of Pyros, they may avoid revealing their disfigurements when some trigger would normally force them to do so. **Beat:** Once per chapter, she gains a Beat by putting herself in danger to protect or aid her human associates.

Transmutations: Deception, Mesmerism

Stereotypes

• **Other Refinements:** No amount of alchemy can create what only God can grant.



Only the Lord our God can grant you a soul, brother.



Storytelling the End of the World

The Thirty Years' War is one of the most brutal conflicts in medieval Europe. Over seven million people die. Germany, where this chapter is set and the war takes its greatest toll, loses a fifth of its population. Perhaps most telling, the Thirty Years' War would be the last in a series of religious wars that had lasted for *over a century*, as the cost was simply too great to repeat. So how to run a Thirty Years' War story without leaving everyone at the table feeling depressed?

Setting Goals and Boundaries

Designing a great campaign begins before the story starts. After creating characters and a throng as they normally would, the group should discuss players' expectations. *When the Horsemen Rode* includes four scenarios, which might not be enough for every character to do a full Pilgrimage. Is everyone okay roleplaying part of their character's journey without getting to the end? Do any players absolutely want a chance for their characters to reach New Dawn? It's perfectly fine to decide that a full Pilgrimage, and by extent New Dawn, can't be achieved in this game, as long as the players know beforehand.

The Storyteller should also inquire after topics people *don't* want to see in the campaign. War is a show of horrors and some players can't handle description of dead children, acts of sexual violence, or any of the other topics common to war. All players are free to declare areas that are off limits or must fade to black. If a no go is incompatible with how the Storyteller wants to run the game, this setting might simply be wrong for that group.

Getting Started and Going Places

Once out-of-game expectations are established, it's time to begin play. Since Azoth calls to Azoth, and the *Red Horse* revolves around the Centimanus Ufayr and his Jovian Athanor, it's not hard to justify how the characters ended up in Bamberg. Storytellers can run a few intro sessions in which the Prometheans are drawn to Bamberg and meet on the road there. Characters should have enough time to get involved with each other, but not so much that they know each other through and through – mystery creates tension, and tension creates good drama. The Storyteller can also take time to introduce some of the non-player characters and emphasize the many guises people wear. The throng meets Bishop Förner and he seems like a kind old man – until he gets to the subject of witches. Likewise, establishing a positive rapport with non-player characters gives them a reason to go back; Natali Hofstetter was kind once, so the Prometheans return to her for solace on their Pilgrimage later — allowing the Storyteller to kick off the *Pale Horse*.

Back to School

This chapter provides all the information necessary to play a chronicle set during the era *When the Horsemen Rode*, but a little extra research never hurts. In addition to history books, there are excellent movies and series' set in the war, which showcase the drama behind the facts. YouTube has short intros on which side did what. In the end though, story always trumps fact. If players ask, "Which side burned this village?" the Storyteller can just tell them, "Nobody knows, and the only eyewitnesses are in that smoldering pile over there."

With one scenario wrapped up, the issue becomes how to move the Prometheans to the next. 'Azoth calls to Azoth' can only be used so many times before it becomes incredulous. Fortunately, the Prometheans' own nature provides the answer. Between Disquiet and war naturally displacing people, any throng spends a great deal of time on the road. This provides the Storyteller with ample opportunity to steer the characters in the right direction. Magdeburg was not their initial destination, but it became so after meeting Father Johan who travels there to rehome Sofia with his brother.

Elpis visions are also great for moving the characters to the next part of their story. These visions guide Prometheans on their Pilgrimage, and the next mapped Milestone is in Nuremberg. Characters should always have room to pursue their own plans, but there's no harm in the Storyteller letting the players know that the next prepared encounter lies 'that way.' There's no need to keep track of exact travel times though. Roleplaying the significant encounters, and hand waving the rest, works for most groups.

Bringing the Story to Life

Whether the characters are currently traveling or already on location, give them opportunities to get emotionally invested in the story. The story isn't "the French allied with the Swedes to take on the Habsburgers," or even "the characters go to Magdeburg to claim an Athanor." It's about people, life, loss, and hope. The Prometheans meet Gertrud Egger and come to care about her and her family. Now they have an anchor in Magdeburg that rivals even an Athanor, and things get interesting. Do they protect the Athanor in the cathedral, or their friends? Can they do both? The Storyteller can also use travel times to highlight the reality of war: abandoned villages, burnt crops, families clutching their last possessions while they travel nowhere. This makes the war tangible.

It's important to remember that Prometheans aren't alive, but they can do life. It's all about being there, getting

The Chronicles of Darkness in 30 Years of War

And the other monsters of the Chronicles of Darkness as the world ended?

Vampires are often a historical scapegoat when wars happen and indeed, for centuries to follow, the Lancea et Sanctum in the region blamed the Invictus for starting the war and vice versa. The wisest and most powerful fled the region at the first real scent of war, however, and those who could not flee changed their feeding habits to live and die with roving soldiers or shepherd commoners as feeding stock and companions.

Werewolves tried their best to pretend the affairs of humans were not the affairs of Uratha, and so many packs spent much of the era battling the horrific creations that were birthed on the spirit side thanks to the conflict. Still, stories surface of mercenary bands being repelled by unusually fierce farmers when coming to procure goods or land, farmers with claws and glinting fangs.

The **mages** who weren't killed outright became smugglers and insurgents, stealing and hiding the jewels of the region from the ravages of the war.

If the Hedge is Hell, many a **changeling** was borne away to it willingly in this era. The hell of the Keepers would likely seem preferable to the hell of the war. Returning changelings were few and far between, however, lacking the will or the purpose to fight their way home.

Sin-Eaters won't be found at battles, sieges, and bombings. Rather, they trail the death and destruction, cleaning up after it, studying it, or trying to make right what they can on the heels of the Horsemen.

As the Church and the Protestants warred, there were and are endless places for the **unchained** to hide. After all, people are expecting to see evil and manipulation, devils all around them, and so a slip of cover isn't an earth shattering event, and the angels of the God-Machine are busy following false lead after false lead. The machines of war? These are the infrastructure of the God-Machine.

With the Inquisition come the **hunters** of the Malleus Maleficarum, burning their way across Europe and killing anything and everything in their wake that smells even remotely of magic or perversion. While many had once been on the Vigil on their own terms, pressure or fear sent them to the Malleus as the war raged on.

Beasts have a fat and easy time of it. The Horsemen run through the cities and settlements of humanity and the distant, secret places of the beasts are forgotten about in the face of the end of the world. Better yet, any Hero that might spring up in the era is likely to be forced to war rather than follow their unique obsession and get killed before they can find a quarry. Still, boredom and curiosity draw some beasts to the world of men. A beast must eat, after all.

involved, and making choices. They take one step, and then another. That's the Pilgrimage. In many ways, that's also war. Kings and generals have an endgame, but the people don't. They're just trying to make it through another failed crop, another siege, or another bloodbath. War turns individuals into masses, but even while war and death make equals of all men, Disquiet sets the Promethean apart. The Storyteller can play on that, too. Was the horrific sack of Magdeburg somehow the Prometheans' fault? Did they stay too long and is this horror actually a Wasteland? Even if the answer is no, the question should cross the characters' – and players' – minds.

Not everything in war is chaos and death though. Humans are hardwired to do kindnesses for each other. Kurt Rogge turns a blind eye when he catches the Prometheans smuggling the Egger family out of Magdeburg. Against all odds, one Promethean finds love with Veronika Turnau. They all witness the New Dawn of Maria Agnes. Europe in the 1630s is one giant furnace of despair, human perseverance, and chaos, perfect for refining the Promethean.

The Righteous and the Hungry

People displaced by marching armies, starving behind walls, or lashing out in fear and hatred: this is the face of war. The Storyteller can use these characters to expand a scenario or give the player characters additional hooks into the plot.

ARNO POPEL

As long as he can remember, Arno has felt God's presence in his life. His father, a blacksmith and eminently practical man, implored him to learn a trade, but Arno knew his calling was with the church. Seeking out an apprenticeship with a local priest, Arno prayed harder, confessed more, and fasted more diligently than any of the other students. Yet rather than acknowledge Arno's superiority, the priest told him to



be gentler and seek God in small acts of kindness. This insistence on 'small kindnesses' stalled Arno's liturgical studies and frustrated him immensely, until the fire of the Inquisition spread through his town. In the Inquisitor, Arno finally found a match for his own fervor. He has since finished his studies and been ordained as a priest, while sending countless men and women to their deaths. Despite the tortured bodies in his wake, though, Arno does not believe himself to be a cruel man. After all, what harm is a broken body, when Confession restores the wayward soul to heaven? Arno genuinely believes he is protecting the meek, and that the Inquisition will stamp out the seed of sin and corruption to usher in a safer world for God's flock.

Description: Arno is a handsome man in his thirties, with tousled chestnut hair and aquiline features. He is fluent in written Latin, though his accent betrays a common birth. Arno is good with children, having infinite patience for their antics and an unending supply of candy in his robes. Children, to Arno, represent the purity of God. Any semblance of kindness is shattered when he deals with adults though, and Arno is both unforgiving and deadly in his judgment of them.

Fields of Knowledge:

Biblical Knowledge 8: Arno's range of biblical knowledge is astonishing and his knowledge on the Holy Spirit can provide a little insight into the Principle.

Folklore 6 (**Witches** +1): Arno doesn't know what a Promethean is, but he could recognize and mislabel her a witch.

Intimidation 7 (**Torture** +1): Arno is an expert at extracting confessions, true or false, from mortal and Promethean alike.

Combat and health: Arno is untrained in combat, but he is strong and in good health.

Using Arno in your chronicle: Inside Arno smolders a small measure of Azoth, which gains the attention of Prometheans, Centimani, and Pandorans alike.

Arno has identified one of the Prometheans as a witch, and is coming after her.

Arno's zealotry is the result of a Galateid's Disquiet. She seeks the characters to undo the damage she wrought.

KURT ROGGE

Kurt isn't bloodthirsty, nor is he stupid. He knows that the war has long ceased to be about God's glory, and is now solely about the power and wealth of noblemen. Yet Kurt *is* a practical man, and amidst endless war there are only so many professions a man can pursue. Fortunately for Kurt, he is tall and strong; offering him a more profitable path than that of a farmer who toils all year and must pray his crops aren't destroyed before harvest. Abandoning his father and the farm where he grew up, Kurt joined the Catholic forces led by the Count of Tilly.

Kurt has done his share of fighting and has seen enough blood to last him a lifetime. He has also found camaraderie in the army, though, and even love in the arms of a fellow soldier named Elmer Kroeger. Since meeting Elmer, Kurt has begun to reconsider the life he left behind and quietly began to put money aside to retire from the army – if they'll let him. He hasn't told Elmer of his plans yet, but hopes he can persuade his lover to retire and buy a farm together. As far as Kurt is concerned, this siege at Magdeburg is his last military endeavor.

Description: Kurt is taller and broader than most men. His broken nose sits squarely in a common face framed by sandy hair. He has hard hazel eyes, though they soften when he looks at Elmer. His piecemeal armor is looted from fallen soldiers on the battlefield, but his sword is sharp.

Fields of Knowledge:

Farming 6: Once derisive of his father's work, Kurt has grown nostalgic for it; talking about farm life brings out Kurt's compassionate side.

Gambling 7: Kurt has taken up gambling in the army. He becomes loose lipped when playing, and teaching Kurt a new game earns his friendship.

Melee Combat 7 (**Brawling** +1): Even Prometheans find it hard to beat Kurt without using Transmutations.

Combat and health: Kurt is a competent soldier. On top of that, he's big, strong, and in great health.

Using Kurt in your chronicle: Kurt's strength has attracted a Tammuz, who plans to use his body to create a new Promethean. The characters can aid the Tammuz, or save Kurt's life.

Kurt sends letters to his father every month, but the return letters, written by the village priest, have suddenly stopped. He asks the Prometheans to investigate.

Kurt gets the opportunity to desert shortly before the sack of Magdeburg, but Elmer doesn't want to go. Helping the couple resolve their differences, regardless of the outcome, provides great insight into humanity.

LEA AND TORBEN MAIER

Lea and Torben live in the city of Magdeburg. She is a successful seamstress and he a tanner, and both wield significant influence in their respective guilds. Between their own success and taking in several apprentices, they have squirreled enough away for a very secure future – *if* they live to see it together.

Baptized a Catholic, Lea converted to Lutheranism against her husband's wishes. She doesn't begrudge him for not converting, as she believes Lutheranism is the true path to which all men come eventually. Torben worries for his wife's soul though, even if his love is stronger than his doubts.

Both hope against hope that the war will end soon, and Lea has even argued that they dismiss the apprentices, since

they're just more mouths to feed and there isn't enough work. Torben, however, insists that the apprentices already paid for their tutelage and that bargain must be honored. Ironically, this argument about money is driving a greater wedge between them than their religious differences.

Lea and Torben have four children and seven grandchildren. Their daughter Susanne and her two children still live in Magdeburg, and one grandson named Jörn lives with Lea and Torben. The pair has previously complained about the rest of their family living 'so far away', but now they are secretly glad they're no longer here – a sentiment neither has expressed to the other yet, as it would be tantamount to admitting just how bad things are.

Description: Lea is a middle-aged woman whose black hair is beginning to gray, although it still hugs her scalp in tight, natural curls. Her dark hands are long and adroit, with calloused fingertips from sewing. A painful stiffness has begun to spread through her hands and while it doesn't impair her work yet, she worries about it.

Torben is an older man with graying hair and laugh lines around his eyes and mouth. He doesn't laugh anymore though, as he becomes increasingly worried and sullen. His arms are stained from tanning.

Fields of Knowledge:

Empathy 7: Lea is a good judge of character and, sensing that a Promethean has led a hard life, offers comfort until Disquiet makes it impossible.

Sewing 9 **(Lea), Leather work** 8 **(Torben)**: Lea and Torben come recommended to any character in need of new or repaired clothes, bags or bedding. They make custom items as well. Subtract two dice from Lea's pool during winter months.

Combat and health: Neither Lea nor Torben have any combat skills, but they are in good general health.

Using Lea and Torben in your chronicle: Lea organizes a prayer circle to beg for God's deliverance of Magdeburg, and the characters hear that a Seeker of Eden is with them.

Torben offers the characters good money to smuggle Jörn out of the city.

Lea and Torben's presence slows the spread of Wastelands as long as they remain together, so their rising differences are a direct concern to the Promethean.

NATALI HOFSTETTER

Natali grew up near the town of Bamberg. She went to church every Sunday, dutifully confessed her sins, and paid her indulgences. Then the witch trials started. Natali was shocked to hear that her neighbor consorted with the devil and even more dismayed as accusations spread. Shock and dismay slowly turned to fear and distrust, and she wondered how many of her fellow villagers served the devil. But as the number of witches continued to rise, and the ashes piled ever higher, a miracle occurred. As she watched another witch confess his sins at the stake, the hand of God touched Natali. This *witch* had been her doctor. He had taken care of an unwanted pregnancy after Natali's affair with a married man. He had been, she believed once, a *good* man whose only interest was helping others. As his screams turned to shrieks, then moans, and then silence, she realized he was *still* a good man. God had opened her eyes to the truth of the witch trials – these were all good people, forced to false confessions through excruciating torture.

Natali didn't act on her new insight immediately. Rather, she continued to attend the public trials, eager to prove to herself that she'd been wrong. Surely the church of God wasn't capable of such cruelty? Blind innocence did not return though, and she decided *something* must be done. Through a combination of distant family ties, sheer determination, and more than a little luck that the wrong people didn't hear about it, Natali got in contact with Hofmann's Friendship. This group resisted the witch trials in any way possible; publicly speaking out against them, jailbreaking convicted witches, or simply paying a guard to deliver a last letter from the victim to his family. Theirs is a dangerous undertaking, but one that Natali believes to be true and just.

Description: Natali is in her early twenties, on the short side and a little overweight. Her dark blonde hair hangs in curls over her shoulders. She is physically unassuming, but her personality shines with the radiance of the sun when she speaks.

Fields of Knowledge:

Persuasion 8 (**Oratory** +1): As long as Natali speaks true and from the heart, she has a fire that few people possess – Prometheans even sense a spark of Pyros in her.

Survival 6 (**Foraging** +1): Harvest season hasn't always been kind, and Natali amends her diet with forest bounty. She'll share if a character is hungry.

Combat and health: Natali has no combat skills or physical strength to speak of, but she is hardier than people expect.

Using Natali in your chronicle: Her doctor confessed to Natali's abortion under torture. The characters must convince the torturer to keep this to himself, or Natali is next on the Inquisition's list.

A Promethean has been branded a witch and Natali acts to save him, but she is not immune to Disquiet.

Natali has been arrested and, under torture, gave up another member of Hofmann's Friendship. The characters must act to save the circle and free Natali.

RUPRECHT MAURITZ

Ruprecht is a textile merchant specializing in silks and fine linens. Or at least, he *hopes* he still is. Ruprecht's last shipments have all been held up, or gone missing entirely, as his people try to navigate between war zones. While Ruprecht's



ancestors converted from Islam to Catholicism many generations ago and he considers himself a God-fearing citizen, his trade crosses the religious divide. Even if Ruprecht *did* want to keep track of which side he does business with, it's become impossible ever since the Catholic French joined the Protestant Swedes to combat the similarly Catholic Habsburgers.

Ruprecht owns several warehouses, including one in Nuremberg – though he fears he'll lose that one soon. As if missing cargo and lost stock weren't bad enough, Imperial taxes are raised ever higher as the war drags on. As a result, Ruprecht is becoming increasingly torn between his faith and his mercantile needs.

Description: Ruprecht is a finely groomed man in his thirties, with a neatly trimmed goatee. He is overweight, but looks no less resplendent in his expensive clothes. His laughter is boisterous and quick, and he makes friends easily. Ruprecht's eyes are a striking shade of blue, made even more so as they stand out against his dark skin.

Fields of Knowledge:

Textiles 8: Ruprecht can tell where a character is from by the cut and fabric of her clothes.

Business Sense 8: Ruprecht is an expert at making profitable deals, and tries to sell an item or two to the Promethean.

Combat and health: Ruprecht is stronger than most men, but his health isn't optimal. Attackers would have to deal with the two guards that are always at his side (both Melee 7).

Using Ruprecht in your chronicle: Ruprecht hires the characters to find his missing textile shipments.

Ruprecht wants to get his Nuremberg stock out and has the necessary contacts with the besieging army, but none in the city itself. He asks the traveling Prometheans to find the right people in Nuremberg.

Ruprecht's trade routes trace the same pattern as the branches of the river Styx. Mapping it would give the characters an invaluable advantage in returning from the dead, or even grant a milestone.

SOFIA HOPFER

Sofia lived with her parents in a small house in Prussia. They had no lands of their own, but her parents found enough work on neighboring farms to see them through spring and fall. Between that, a diet of mashed acorns during the winter, and whatever alms the local Priest could spare, the young family managed to scrape by – until the soldiers came. The first passing army was on 'their side' as Sofia's father explained it. They took what little food and coin the family had, but left the house and family unharmed. The second time, the soldiers were *still* on their side, but now they took Sofia's father. The third time soldiers came, Sofia's mother said they were heretics and fled with her daughter.

Sofia doesn't know how long she and her mother ran before the approaching army. Sometimes people joined them and they traveled in small groups with strange men eying her mother, until they struck out on their own again. Winter came and Sofia learned the true meaning of hunger, even as her mother starved in an effort to keep the child fed. Eventually, Sofia's mother couldn't keep going and she handed her child over to a family who had room for one more on their cart. Sofia tried to be brave as her mother had told her to, but when her new family grew increasingly hungry, too, the stranger's child was the first they let go. Sofia now travels with a priest named Johan, who rescued her as she lay shivering in a ditch beside the road. She doesn't know where they're going, nor does she care anymore.

Description: Sofia, once a bright and happy child, has grown pale and gaunt. Her eyes are dull, she never smiles, and rarely speaks. She obeys Father Johan, though she doesn't know why. Her mommy told her to keep going, so she does.

Fields of Knowledge:

Foraging 7: Sofia knows how to forage for food. She'll trade for simple items if a character is hungry.

Hiding 7: The Promethean is hard-pressed to find Sofia when she doesn't want to be, but she shares her hiding places if he earns her trust.

Stealing 6: Sofia steals to stay alive. A character catches Sofia pickpocketing, or discovers a cherished possession missing after the fact (in which case talking to the right street contacts leads him to Sofia).

Combat and health: Sofia is a young, malnourished child.

Using Sofia in your chronicle: Sofia portrays the worst war has to offer: a disenfranchised child. Watching or helping her provides great insight into the highs and lows of humanity.

Father Johan is an Osiran and Sofia is part of his Pilgrimage. The characters can band together to aid Johan with this.

Sofia's mother was a Promethean who achieved New Dawn, and left clues to the Pilgrimage in the songs and stories she taught her daughter.

VERONIKA TURNAU

All her childhood, Veronika suffered abuse at the hands of her parents, who wouldn't accept that their boy was a girl. When they couldn't dissuade her, her parents called on a local priest and the admonishments grew increasingly violent. While Veronika outwardly gave in to avoid more abuse, she held onto her identity with a remarkable sense of self. Running away from home later, she began her life as Veronika.

Veronika has spent her life on the streets of various towns and cities since. She's held an assortment of jobs, none of which fetched enough coin to keep hunger at bay. Sheer luck kept her out of bad hands, and finally she ran into Emelie Weingart in Nuremberg who took Veronika off the street. A self-styled savior of lost girls, Frau Weingart rents them out for a variety of tasks and claims a fair cut of the money, but



at least her house is warm and none of the women have to sell themselves. At least, *so far*. The continuing war is taking its toll and Frau Weingart is openly questioning how much longer she can keep them all safe. Veronika is unfazed though. She's been through worse and, rightly or not, believes she can weather this storm too. If she can get through it with the woman who saved her and the other women who have become like sisters to her, then so much the better. If she *can't* though, Veronika knows she can make it on her own.

Description: Veronika is tall and on the skinny side, with brown hair that falls down to her waist. One of the other girls brushes Veronika's hair every morning and evening. If left to her own devices, Veronika leaves her hair unkempt until it's a matted mess. Her eyes, green like spring grass, are her most striking feature.

Fields of Knowledge:

Innuendo 6. Veronika can spot people who don't quite fit in – including Prometheans – and who'll accept who she is.

Strong-willed 8: Veronika never lost her sense of self. Her steadfastness is comforting to a Promethean wavering on the Pilgrimage.

Survival 7 (**Urban** +1): Veronika keeps herself alive in the city, and grudgingly trades or shares food with a character who needs it.

Combat and health: Life on the street has taken its toll on Veronika's body, but she picked up a few dirty tricks and she's very quick.

Using Veronika in your chronicle: Veronika immediately recognizes a Promethean as 'different' and, drawn to someone who is as wayward as she, begins following him.

Veronika has fallen in love with one of the women at Frau Weingart's, and they ask the characters to help them escape Nuremberg together.

Veronika is becoming increasingly frustrated with her physical characteristics, and seeks a way to adopt a more traditional female body. Veronika would even be eager to become a Promethean if it provides her with a female physique.

Inspiration

It was a grim time, and any material to inspire you to tell your stories is likely to be grim and dire. Read or watch with that in mind.

C.V. Wedgewood's *The Thirty Years' War* is a complete historical look at the events with a clean and readable narrative.

The Last Valley (1970, dir. James Clavell) is a movie depicting the life of a hero during the war. There's a love story in there, so there are touches of humanity. The film stars Michael Caine, and is by the director and writer of *Shogun*.

On the more human level, consider *Day of Wrath* (1943, dir. Carl Theodor Dreyer), a black and white film about a woman in love with the wrong man during the horrors of the witch hunts in Denmark. It's well in keeping with the moods and themes of this setting.



Explorers called the lands west of the Atlantic by many names. They called it the New World and God's Promised Land — but they were wrong. Those were bold words, the proclamations of the greedy ignorant, the desires of kings and queens who rule over kingdoms of dust and bone. They were wrong, and I was wrong.

Now, I am paying the price.

From the minute I stepped foot on a galleon bound for the Americas, I thought my path was clear and worry-free. I believed Sin-Eaters were only born in Europe, and I was one of the precious few charged with a sacred duty, to help ease the passage of ghosts around the world. I believed the new lands would bring me peace unlike anything I had known before. Why did I not know that ghosts could travel across the vast and treacherous seas? Or that ghosts could be anywhere, in any land, at any time? And worse, that I was not chosen by God to become a Sin-Eater after all?

On my journey, I tried to put the ghost of a mournful sister to rest at sea, but she resisted and clung to the side of her fading brother. I then tried to pass the time by learning what I could from my fellow passengers, but I could not for I was interrupted by an eerie wail that came not from above or beside me, but from below. Far, far below deck a haunted cry called out to me, so I peered over the side of the ship into the dark oceanic depths, and a ghastly vision passed before my eyes, a thin veil of soggy twilight. As I looked closer, I spotted a pair of slimy green claws, wretched and gnarled, parting the froth-covered waves, showing me the watery kingdom of the Deep God and the ghosts eternally trapped by his side. So many! Too many ghosts begging for safe passage, too many bonds to break. Too many for me alone. I was impotent. Instead, I begged to return home, but my pleas fell on deaf ears.

The ship kept sailing, despite my petitions to the contrary, and days afterward we landed on a shoreline so vast I could not see its end or beginning. I pretended to be excited. While I feigned interest in my fellow passengers' so-called "New World", I worried what awaited me as I stepped foot onto a sandy beach. Every step I took with dread, unrealistic and terrible, and I knew fear like I had never felt before, all the while suspecting I was not alone. How could I be? How could I be the only one to give passage to the spirits of the dead? How could these shores — these vast, fertile lands — be uninhabited? Or, if I *was* alone, what good works could I do by myself? There would always be another ghost, another place in the Underworld, another abmortal I must face, and that brought me no satisfaction. Only a pain deep and throbbing unlike anything I'd ever felt before.

My mind was aflame with questions, and my every burning query challenged the world I knew by revealing how much I did not. I spent many days and nights wandering among the cypress trees outside of our encampment, searching for answers. Soon, however, I discovered the truth of my existence, that I was not alone as I so foolishly believed. I met my kind here on these foreign shores, while gathering berries out in the woods. These people are different from myself. They wear animal skins and shells instead of cotton dresses and pearls, they call themselves Ghost-Talkers, and even though we worship different gods, we share the same fate.

The Ghost-Talkers spoke English well enough, gleaned from the visitors who had come to their shores months earlier. After our introductions, they told me their stories; of Kerberoi so old they go by many names, and a Crooked Man who divines the future by reading the entrails of the dead. And then they asked where the others rest their heads at night, and when I told them Roanoke, they fell silent. Then, they told me to gather as many of my kind as I could, to encourage them to make the journey across the seas to be by my side. At first I did not understand their strange request. Were these Ghost-Talkers weaker than I? Were they afraid?

Until they showed me the truth of my folly, I did not know the extent of my arrogance and my naïveté. Until they brought me to the center of Roanoke Island, where hundreds of ghosts were gathering in that accursed, tainted place, I had no idea that they were not asking for my help.

The Ghost-Talkers were offering me theirs.



Foreboding Lands

(1585-1590)

"They say that shadows of deceased ghosts
Do haunt the houses and the graves about,
Of such whose life's lamp went untimely out,
Delighting still in their forsaken hosts."
–Joshua Sylvester

The mid-to-late 1500s was an era marked by disease, strife, and death. The plague-ridden European countries, namely Spain, England, and France, sought to colonize the Americas as a way to secure their kingdoms for the glory of their rulers and their Christian God. However, the lands they sought to reap were already occupied, and indigenous populations struggled to make sense of the newcomers, not realizing fully what dark futures were in store for their peoples.

In the rush for colonization, Sir Walter Raleigh sought to claim an English colony for his beloved Queen Elizabeth I, and financed expeditions to cross the Atlantic in 1584. The first attempts to establish a colony, however, were not successful and, despite this, the English returned to Roanoke Island a few years later to build a fort. This second attempt to resettle in Fort Roanoke was doomed to fail, and though a relief effort was launched, the colonists were nowhere to be found. Deemed the Lost Colony, whatever survivors remained were likely either taken in by local tribes or died from starvation and disease.

For European Sin-Eaters and Native Ghost-Talkers, this era not only challenges their ability to deal with ghosts, it opens up more questions than they have answers for. In this time period, ghosts are more abundant than they've ever been before, and old, ancient threats such as the Queen of Two Rivers are abandoning their homelands and traveling across vast oceans. Most are unaware of what lies beyond the vast ocean that separates their continents, and are genuinely curious about what awaits them there, for they have heard whispers of each other. Whatever the reason, several Native Ghost-Talkers are roaming the coastline trying to put unruly ghosts to rest, while European Sin-Eaters are joining expeditions and traveling great distances alongside eager colonists, settlers, and privateers.

Several Sin-Eaters are sailing for Roanoke Island; they pretend to pledge their loyalty to Queen Elizabeth I to avoid further scrutiny. When they reach the fort, however, they are shocked by what they find, for the island is a hotbed of paranormal activity that has not gone unnoticed by the local Native Ghost-Talkers who hail from neighboring tribes. Unfortunately for both groups, they are overwhelmed by the riddles waiting to be unraveled, ranging from the gnarled, withering cypress trees to the autochthonous depths in the area.

From Fort Roanoke to Secotan Village, both Sin-Eaters and Ghost-Talkers are in search of the same answers, but don't always understand each other or use the same methodology to deal with ghosts. In some ways, Sin-Eaters and Ghost-Talkers might forget how their values, beliefs, and attitudes affect not only their duties, but each other. If they can get over their differences, they may be able to solve the rise in paranormal activity and deal with the appearance of two underworld Kerberoi and the abmortals in the area, too.

Despite whatever horrors await them, whatever is happening on Roanoke Island may have major repercussions that extend well beyond the normal scope of any underworld portals, and might even go so far as to explain the mass gathering of ghosts.

Theme: Mystery

The events happening on and near Roanoke Island are new frontiers for everyone involved. Few Sin-Eaters have achieved even minute success in finding the cause for the large population of ghosts in the area, which leads to much chatter among the Bound. Could it be due to constant clashing of Kerberoi in the colony, whose ghosts are battling one another? Or, are spectral storms in the underworld spewing out ghosts into the lands of the living against their will?

Another part of the mystery comes from what happens when Native Ghost-Talkers and European Sin-Eaters meet for the first time. Cultural differences aside, neither knew the other one existed, and their core beliefs are challenged when they realize they've been both charged with the same duty to help ghosts. Can Sin-Eaters and Ghost-Talkers afford to closely examine the mysteries of who and what their true nature is in the face of such threats?

Mood: Terror

In this era, the unexplored lies waiting for Sin-Eaters and Ghost-Talkers at every turn. Roanoke Island is filled with supernatural horrors primed to destroy anyone they come into contact with. In addition to the ghosts, there are new Kerberoi, abmortals, and other creatures both groups are not used to dealing with. Some paranormal denizens have succumbed to their own madness, becoming little more than angry entities and poltergeists to terrorize living residents. This phenomenon has marked the island as a destination, but it is not the only reason why the area is haunted. If staring into an abyss of screaming ghosts wasn't enough, the abmortals of this era are also much more numerous, which should force any Sin-Eater to think twice about taking them on without help from their peers. The detestable pacts they forge to obtain corrupted power are unnatural and evil, but the fact that they seem to be much more organized is truly terrifying.

Despite their duty to help ghosts, both Sin-Eaters and Ghost-Talkers face the unknown even in their day-to-day interactions with each other. Native Ghost-Talkers are quickly coming to the realization that other terrors lie beyond the seas, and worry their homes will never be the same again. European Sin-Eaters, on the other hand, are struggling to come to grips with the fact that so many of them are leaving their homeland for the first time in centuries, and their exodus is filled with uncertainty. Both also face the possibility of working together in larger groups, an event that — to their knowledge — has never happened before.

Race to Colonization

Stories of promised lands that lie in the West began to circulate more frequently in the courts of Spain, France, and England in the early part of the 16th century. Though the relationship between Christopher Columbus and the Spanish crown ended on a sour note, Spain was the first European country to successfully establish colonies in North and South America, as well as in parts of the Caribbean. Spain's early drive to claim settlements was blessed by the Holy Roman Empire, and was spurred on by greedy desires to Christianize native peoples and plunder the land and sea of their many riches for the glory of the crown and their god.

This wealth did not come without great cost, however, for the Spanish violently conquered many empires, such as the Aztec and Incan peoples, in the process. These colonization efforts challenged the beliefs of everyone involved, for the conquered peoples believed that their gods had failed them, while Catholics argued whether or not the so-called "pagan" indigenous peoples had souls. At the time, Catholic doctrine forbid the enslavement of a fellow Christian, but the Spanish needed the help of the indigenous people they encountered in order to sow the lush fields they had planted, transport the gold and spices they stole for their own, and perform other forms of menial labor. Over time, both Spain and Portugal converted millions of native peoples and imported slaves from Africa to work the land, and this number waxed and waned as European diseases and inhumane treatment devastated local populations.

Following the discovery of large silver deposits in the mid-1500s, the roots of a monopoly over American silver led to a boom in Spain's economy that lasted for almost a hundred years. This monopoly, coupled with the ships filled with riches sailing back to Europe, spurred other European countries into action to claim a piece of the "Promised Land" for their own — before Spain's rapidly growing empire toppled theirs.

Queen Elizabeth I's desire to set up a permanent colony in the Americas was reflected in a political role called the Chief Promoter of English in America. This position was held by Sir Richard Grenville, a man of some renown who was also a sailor, soldier, owner of a merchant fleet, privateer, and explorer, and later by his cousin, Sir Walter Raleigh, who quickly became the Queen's favorite. In his new position, Raleigh suggested that a privateering base of operations at a strategic point would not only benefit the crown, but diminish the Spanish's powerful hold on the region as well. Eventually, Queen Elizabeth I granted Raleigh a patent to explore and claim new lands as his own, as she had granted his cousin years earlier.

Race to Roanoke

The first trip to Roanoke occurred in 1584. It is commonly believed that a pair of ships was directed to perform a reconnaissance mission that would determine the safest sailing route, which Native tribes were in the area, and a survey of the region. This survey was led by Manteo, the Croatan tribal chief's son, and a Secotan tribesman named Wanchese. The two returned with the pair of ships to visit England at the behest of their allies, and to do a little reconnaissance of their own for their tribal leaders. Though



Manteo and Wanchese were treated like visiting dignitaries, Raleigh manipulated them to help persuade the wealthy to invest in his dream of colonization.

England's decision to colonize Roanoke Island at that exact location and set up a military installation was intentional. After much consideration, Roanoke Island was selected as the site of the first colony because of its position, wealth, and allies to the Crown. At the time, the Secotan tribe was friendly toward the English, unlike the Iroquois-speaking Pamlico tribe. The tribesmen's visit to the English court also helped to assuage the fears of many and raise funds for Raleigh's expedition, while the Queen and her ministers grew increasingly worried that war with Spain was inevitable.

On all sides, the Queen seemed surrounded by new enemies. Catholic supporters in France, Spain in the Netherlands and Americas, and a growing Irish and Scottish rebellion against English rule occupied her mind. Despite this heavy burden, Raleigh's dream was attractive for three reasons. First, the potential wealth gained from a privateering operation in the area would greatly benefit the crown. Second, Raleigh cleverly turned colonization into a moral obligation that would allow the English to spread the influence of Protestantism, instead of Spain's Roman Catholic doctrines. Third was the ever-growing threat of competition from rival crowns. In addition to Spain, Portugal, and England, other countries that sought colonies and settlements in this part

Chronicles of Darkness in Roanoke

Imagine a world where fear is commonplace. Strange diseases trail after colonists and settlers hoping to stake their claim in foreign lands and waters, devastating Native tribes that have existed for thousands of years. Europeans, on the other hand, struggle to understand how to meet their basic needs, and their settlements are doomed to fail for their lack of knowledge. Amidst this uncertainty, the denizens of the supernatural community are also in turmoil, for their worlds are also changing and they must either adapt or die and be forgotten.

While Ghost-Talkers do compare notes, the time required to travel, tribal politics, and the diversity of tribal beliefs, customs, and languages commonly used during this era, like the Algonquian, Iroquoian, and Siouan linguistic families, act as a barrier to rapid communication. For this reason, many Ghost-Talkers rely on **hunters** within the Keepers of the Weave compact to help warn tribes of a potential problem and record their stories. Other hunters are just starting to uncover the perils of the uncharted wilderness, and their efforts are scattered as they struggle to hunt monsters beneath the sea and in the surrounding forests, supernatural creatures that include **changelings** once mistaken for mermaids like the Mi'Maq's water spirits called "Sabawaelnu", or the **werewolves** called the "Rugaru" by the northern Metis tribe or "loup garou" by the French that have been spotted heading north toward the Canadian border.

European **demons**, **vampires**, and some **mages** and **Prometheans**, on the other hand, have taken a keen interest in the push to colonize the Americas. Behind every throne, a demon might be found exerting their influence, pushing the French, Dutch, English, and Spanish to sail further West across the ocean. Vampires or the occasional Promethean might be found stowed away in the belly of ships to escape the devastating plagues and the witch hysteria sweeping across Europe, while mages might champion expeditions to explore new lands.

Though there seems to be a push for supernatural monsters to leave Europe and venture West or to the Far East, the winds of change are blowing through the lands occupied by Native tribes, as well. Demons press toward the coast to instigate intertribal battles and foster paranoia about the wide-eyed colonists that step foot near their homes. Mages are moving further and further West to protect themselves, as they are often being confused with flesh-eating witches that are preying upon unsuspecting travelers or are attempting to be converted by European settlers that believe all magic is the work of the Devil. Changelings, for the most part, have not abandoned the area and are commonly found in woodlands, swamps, and along the shore. The child-stealing Jug Woman, storm-summoning Granny Quannit, and shapeshifters that change into ravens, deer, and other animals, for example, continue to be spotted throughout the area.

Most concerning to all denizens of the supernatural, however, are the Native American tales that describe fallen witches and sorcerers that exist in a half-dead state. These monsters, found in many tribal legends, must feed on living flesh to survive and can only be destroyed by fire. Some fear that these unidentified monsters are not witches at all, but a lost bloodline of vampires or ring of demons. Others are convinced that these witches are victims of a supernatural predator that feeds off of *their* flesh, twisting them into unrecognizable, mindless shadows of their former selves.

Whatever the reason, whichever the cause, the world in this era is fraught with many perils for the denizens of the supernatural community, just as it is for the mortals they interact with and prey upon.

of the world included Denmark, France, Malta, Norway, Scotland, and Sweden.

Once Raleigh had the necessary funds needed to establish a colony on Roanoke Island, he wasted no time. In 1585, Sir Grenville sailed to Roanoke Island with a small fleet of ships, but he did not stay long. While on land, Grenville was caught up in two problems with the first expedition: a lack of food, and a missing silver cup. Guided by Manteo, the English attempted to make contact with a local tribe living in the village of Aquascogoc. The tribe appeared unimpressed by the English, and as Grenville turned to leave, it was discovered that a silver cup had gone missing. Grenville blamed the local tribe for the theft, and when his men could not recover the cup, they burnt Aquascogoc to the ground which inflamed an already tense situation.

Though his initial encounter was plagued by a lack of supplies and the and his mistreatment of the Algonquin-speaking Aquascogo tribe, Grenville headed to the northern part of Roanoke Island with 107 men to build the fort there, and returned to England shortly afterward leaving Ralph Lane in charge. While Grenville was away, tensions between the Secotan tribe and the English continued to increase, because the English did not know how to harvest and stockpile food for the long winter, and the Native tribes were afflicted with foreign diseases. Over the next several months, the colony was taken apart, piece by piece, as the English continued to make demands of their neighbors, which stretched the tribe's resources to the limit. Skirmishes with angry Native tribes, starvation, as well as failed rescue and resupply attempts by Sir Francis Drake devastated the remaining colonists, and eventually Lane decided to abandon the colony altogether following a hurricane.

Unflinching and determined to retake the fort, Raleigh decided it was crucial to return to Roanoke Island despite the colony's shaky start. Thus, two years later, in 1587, a fleet of ships under the command of Simon Fernandez has returned to check on the fort with a fresh batch of supplies, Governor John White, 115 colonists, and orders to establish a colony in Chesapeake Bay.

When the party reaches Fort Roanoke, however, they find that the area abandoned and stripped of all its supplies. Nothing is left — with the exception of a lone skeleton. For reasons unknown, the sight of those remains compels Fernandez to proclaim that Roanoke Island must be reclaimed.

Lands of Troubled Crowns

The push to revisit the Americas is felt all across England following the arrival of the Algonquin-speaking Manteo and Wanchese in 1585, an impending threat of war with Spain, and the devastating plagues and diseases sweeping the countryside. This is a time of great tragedy, and where there is death — there are ghosts.

English superstitions common during this time period are a mixture of folktales, Christian myths, and cultural zeitgeist originating from a fear of the plague. Belief in witches and the Devil is as strong as the conviction that benevolent and malevolent ghosts exist and could be seen by different types of people. People who were born at midnight during the "chime hours" were commonly thought to have the ability to see and talk to ghosts, for example, while others recant stories of accidental or tragic deaths that once occurred in lordly manors that have withstood the test of time.

Out in the countryside, however, the stories grow wilder and the sightings are even more impressive, as people wonder if they're simply hearing the clear, ringing sound of a hunting horn, or if that ominous note signifies a spectral Wild Hunt is about to begin. The Wild Hunt, which has been spotted throughout Europe for centuries, is a group of armed hunters led by a ghostly anonymous, historical, or legendary personage across plains and fields on the backs of ebony horses alongside black dogs. Most countrymen and women stay indoors after the first dog or hunter is spotted, for participating ghosts take their wrath out on the living and cut any who dare to walk in their path. Thought to be a sign of impending war, like the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, many Sin-Eaters wonder if the Wild Hunt is a warning for the living, or if these angry ghosts are riding out to escort them to their ships heading for Roanoke Island.

For Storytellers: Describing Spectral Myths

All cultures, regardless of where they originated, have their fair share of superstitions, folklore, and ghost stories. Native Ghost-Talkers and European Sin-Eaters do not share a common set of terms to describe spirits, spectres, ghosts, and other haunted myths and legends; some myths may also have deep spiritual significance as well and should be treated with great care. Too, due to the variety and number of indigenous cultures and tribes that existed during this era, one monster may be described in dozens of different ways, by several words across hundreds of languages. The absence of a mutually-used vocabulary is something Storytellers can use to amplify the feeling of icy dread and bring your players closer together. Focus on what the players might have in common by describing basic attributes like animal or human, height and width, apparent age or gender, etc.

Alternatively, you might describe how the ghost or, if you're introducing a red herring, monster is behaving instead. By zeroing in on the descriptions of your character's key details and surrounding environment, your players will feel vested in the story and the mood.





In other parts of Europe, namely Spain and France, they also have reported seeing ghostly processions, like the candle-carrying Santa Compaña that is led by a cursed mortal from town to town, or the chorus of howls that emanate from the labyrinthine catacombs that lie far beneath the city of Paris. Only time will tell if this increasing number of spectral omens is a warning or something far, far worse.

Oceans Apart

To Native Ghost-Talkers, the appearance of European colonists and settlers causes mixed feelings, for they have yet to understand why they are appearing in greater and greater numbers and, more importantly, why their dead are following alongside them. Often, Native Ghost-Talkers wonder if there is such a thing as a European "Ghost-Talker" and, if so, do they know how to handle a ghost? To many Native Ghost-Talkers, the fact that restless ghosts are travelling across the ocean alongside the strangers on their great ships probably means the European "Ghost-Talkers" are either ignorant or new to dealing with ghosts.

Although European Sin-Eaters are as capable as their Native counterparts, most are unprepared for the dangers that await them in a strange, new land. It's hard to say what a European Sin-Eater's first reaction was at learning that Native Ghost-Talkers existed, for they probably had other concerns on their hands as the ghosts of drowned privateers and sailors began to haunt tribes such as the Lenape, Nanticoke, Powhatan, and Pamlico all along the coastline. These stories might be true, or they might end with a moral embedded in the tale to clearly show the difference in values between the Europeans and the Natives. For example, it has been broadly speculated that Mashpee, Massachusetts, which is approximately 700 miles northeast of Roanoke Island, North Carolina, has been plagued with the ghosts of sailors promising riches. In similar European folktales, the "ghost" is really the devil in disguise who might appear in a forest or a dream, and the moral — that greed will be your undoing — is only learned after the hero makes a terrible mistake and has to fix his error. In the Mashpee version, however, the heroine is tempted three times, and does not succumb to the ghostly sailor's insistent pleas on the third and final time. Instead, she heeds the cry of her children, and when she searches for the ghostly sailor's treasure the next morning, someone else had already dug it up.

Ghost stories that offer hope, in the form of a message or prophecy, or the location of a treasure are common among Europeans and Natives. However, Europeans will probably attribute these messages to the devil, demon, or witch while a Native will not automatically assume that what they're seeing is evil. Though Europeans once believed in fairies and spirits like other cultures, their world is mired in Christian beliefs, and the tenets of their faith — regardless of which sect they belong to — have an impact on the stories they share and

what they're comfortable admitting. Thus, while a European might attribute a malevolent force to "the" Devil's influence; a Native's response would vary according to the beliefs of her tribe and her people. To a Native, a story is deeply personal and might involve an Algonquin Mikumwess, a Mi'kmaq Chenoo, or an animal spirit like the Rabbit.

Though there might be differences in the interpretation and details of a legend or piece of folklore, the reason for telling such stories in this era is the same. They are valuable tools to help Native Ghost-Talkers and European Sin-Eaters warn and instruct the people around them who might not understand what they're facing or, more importantly, which locations they need to steer clear from. While many stories do include an element of morality, to serve as a cautionary tale about how to act, most Sin-Eaters are more concerned with the truth that lies buried in these stories, as opposed to scolding sailors and colonists about the dangers of drinking too much rum.

More often than not, storytellers and singers pass down tales from generation to generation, like the passages from this ancient, untitled Native song that were collected centuries later in *The Algonquin Legends of New England: Or, Myths and Folk Lore of the Micmac, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot Tribes (1884).*

There was a woman, long, long ago:
She came out of a hole.
In it dead people were buried.
She made her house in a tree;
She was dressed in leaves,
All long ago.
When she walked among the dry leaves
Her feet were so covered
The feet were invisible.
She walked through the woods,
Singing all the time,
'I want company; I'm lonesome!'
A wild man heard her:
From afar over the lakes and mountains
He came to her.
She saw him; she was afraid;
She tried to flee away,
For he was covered with the rainbow;
Color and light were his garments.
She ran, and lie pursued rapidly;
He chased her to the foot of a mountain.
He spoke in a strange language;
She could not understand him at first.
He would make her tell where she dwelt.
They married; they had two children.
One of them was a boy;
He was blind from his birth,
But he frightened his mother by his sight.
He could tell her what was coming,
What was coming from afar.
What was near he could not see.
He could see the bear and the moose
Far away beyond the mountains;
He could see through everything.

Ghosts vs. Spirits

The word "spirit" resonates throughout the deeply-held religious beliefs and folklore belonging to Native American tribes and indigenous peoples, and it often has a different meaning than "ghost." Alternatively, "spirits" may be what a Christian European during this time period might refer to as "ghosts", e.g. the soul of a deceased person, but they could also represent natural essences, or nature spirits, that manifest in various forms. Thus, a lack of shared terminology can result in confusion at your gaming table. For example, the Pukwudgie associated with the Ojibwe, Algonquin, Abenaki, Wampanoag, and Mohegan tribes is a knee-high creature that shares many descriptive similarities to a European fairy or gnome. Thus, this chapter heavily relies on the word "ghost" to avoid confusion, prevent harm that may arise from religious or cultural misinterpretation, and firmly keep the terminology grounded in the vocabulary first used in **Geist: The Sin-Eaters**.

Native Ghost-Talkers, like ghost stories, are thought to have been around for centuries. Though there is no written history that has compiled the origin of Native Ghost-Talkers or European Sin-Eaters, a few glimmers of truth might be found in a ghost story that involves a helpful or malevolent monster among tribal myths and European folk tales. The story of the vampiric Skadegamutc Ghost-Witch, for example, warns members of the Wabanaki tribes to steer clear of this undead, shapeshifting monster that takes the form of a zombie by day and a vengeful, formless ghost by night. The evil Skadegamutc is thought to have been born from the corpse of a sorcerer who practiced black magic and spurned death, and must consume the warm flesh and blood of the living in order to remain undead and ambulatory.

Though most Native peoples do not know that Ghost-Talkers exist, they do believe in magic and ghosts. Thus far, Native Ghost-Talkers have maintained a tenuous tie to the world of the living, and often operate in pairs or on their own to collect stories and information while tracking down a ghost in a town, village, or their surrounding areas. Ghost-Talkers are not tribe-specific and tend to wander from tribe to tribe or out into the wilderness. They also tend to tread very carefully when it comes to tribal politics, for getting in the middle of warring tribes such as the Secotan and the Neuiok would distract a Ghost-Talker from her duty.

Some Ghost-Talkers pay close attention to paranormal activity, for they believe that an increased number of ghosts is an auspicious sign, and are convinced that their appearance is a portent that precedes great change. Few even go so far as to profess that the first Ghost-Talker was a mythic being that took its first steps before the Great Flood. While these stories are rooted in myth more so than fact, ghosts are appearing



Native Americans and Your Game

The colonization of Native Americans was a bloody, centuries-long chapter in American history, and its effects still resonate through to today in the form of harmful stereotypes, racist treatment, and the continued fight for rights. Many of the tribes encountered during the 1500s and 1600s, like the Croatan, no longer exist as a unique tribe because the colonists wiped them out, either intentionally through acts of war and cultural erasure, or unintentionally through the contraction of foreign diseases and decimation of local resources. Should you decide to introduce a Native Sin-Eater in your game during this era, remember that while there might be similarities between two tribes, Native Ghost-Talkers do not represent a monolithic people. Each tribe tends to have its own culture, structure, values, intertribal politics, language, and beliefs that are not rooted in the Eurocentric viewpoint commonly found in texts and history books. To give you an idea of the cultural landscape, though it is unknown how many tribes existed in the 1500s, in the modern era there are over 550 federally recognized tribes, and an additional few hundred that are not.

Please also keep in mind that **Geist: The Sin-Eaters** is a storytelling game set in the Chronicles of Darkness. At no point has the material been presented in this chapter with the intent to promote harmful stereotypes, nor to follow along strict gender lines or cultural boundaries apropos of recorded history. This chapter was also not designed to present an era where you're encouraged to pit Europeans against Native tribes and slaves for the sake of repeating historical events or atrocities, nor is the information provided to encourage or condone cultural appropriation. The material provided is, however, written to facilitate a realistic feel to your game and to help you address the challenges your characters might face during this time period in order to deal with ghosts, geists, abmortals, and other paranormal entities central to **Geist**.

If you find that you're fixating on the specifics of one Native tribe or European faction in your game, we recommend drawing yourself back into the mysteries and horrors of your ghost story that, at its core, is what *Foreboding Lands* is all about.

all up and down the Eastern seaboard more than they ever have before, and this has not gone unnoticed — especially by the Secotan and Croatan tribes that often first encounter European travelers.

In the past, the vast majority of stories passed from tribe to tribe over many generations had less to do with ghosts and more to do with the treacherous monsters that waited to prey on those who misbehaved. Otherworldly sightings that once may have been attributed to a cannibalistic ogre or a frog-like creature like the Aglebemu, however, are now being clearly associated with a marked increase in ghost sightings and supernatural activities. As a result, there is a shift in the number of ghost stories that are being told, and this has some tribes, like the Weapemeoc, Chowanoke, and Moratuc, wondering if the reason for this change is due to the great ships that sail across the vast ocean and land on their shores, carrying ghostly pale men and women from another land across the sea. The fear of change is beginning to have a ripple effect, as Native Ghost-Talkers are crossing paths and comparing notes more than they have in a long, long time. Some Native Ghost-Talkers who belong to allied tribes are starting to wonder if it makes sense to band together to track down the cause behind this bizarre uptick in sightings, while others are turning further inland where they feel their needed the most.

While Native Ghost-Talkers are puzzled by the arrival of settlers to their shores and frightened by the increase in paranormal activity, European Sin-Eaters are just as confused when they realize that Native Ghost-Talkers exist and their supposed "New World" isn't new after all. Though they both call themselves by different names, both Native Ghost-Talkers and European Sin-Eaters have the same abilities, but because their faiths and values are unique to their cultures, they might approach ghosts in separate and distinct ways.

Though they may be diverse, both Ghost-Talkers and Sin-Eaters tend to set aside their discrepancies and conflicts to deal with ghosts, regardless of whether or not that ghost was once a member of the Croatan tribe or an Englishwoman that drowned at sea. The same can not be said for colonists, settlers, explorers, sailors, and indigenous peoples, which often puts them at odds with the unstable world around them.

Boats, Sails, and Ports

Sailing is not only one of the oldest occupations, it is also the most prevalent and devastating during this time period. Deaths by drowning from stormy seas crashing across the deck of a ship or a well-placed cannonball during a naval battle are so common they're expected. Cheryl A. Fury writes, in *Tides in the Affairs of Men: The Social History of Elizabethan Seamen, 1580-1603*, that: "Ghost ships, mermaids, and sea monsters were a part of every seaman's belief system. Seafarers had always been a superstitious lot, and strange sights in foreign lands only reinforced this." Sailors on Spanish, French, and English ships sail across the ocean for supplies, to transport colonists, or to trade before moving on to another port. Their vessels take them across the Atlantic beyond the borders of Roanoke deep into the Caribbean and back again, and everywhere their ships can be found, ghosts are sure to follow.

Kanaima's Insatiable Vengeance

Cariban-speaking peoples from the Carib, Akawaio, Macushi, Patamona, and Pemon tribes native to Guianas, northern Brazil, and Venezuela believe in a terrifying spirit of vengeance that can be invoked and set to destroy a specific, named enemy. A Kanaima is a shapeshifting spirit that can take human or animal form, and brutally kills its victim. When it does, the supernaturally-caused death leaves an unusually-colored bluish mark behind on the corpse.

Attempts to control the Kanaima have often ended in disaster, however, for the summoner may call the spirit of vengeance in response to a family tragedy. Unfortunately, the Kanaima's hunger is so ravenous, one death is not enough to fulfill its dark, brutal appetites and the summoner is forced to choose another victim or risk being attacked or possessed by the spirit.

Some tribal laws are in place to try and curb the temptation to give into vengeance. When a mysterious death occurs, for example, members of the tribe examine the body to determine if the Kanaima is responsible, and justice is meted out according to their laws. Tribal leaders fear what would happen if the summoning of a Kanaima becomes so commonplace, their people look to the darkness for answers instead of them.

Often, seafarers carry more than cargo and colonists with them, for they are not always welcome in foreign lands or uncharted waters by either the living or the dead. Some sailors dread stepping off deck to trade or visit with local populations, for there are many legends of the brutal and violent deaths that await them should they travel too far inland into the unmapped wilds. Such legends are spoken in fearful whispers and chill every sailor to the bone. Their only consolation is to rely on the rituals and good luck charms they bring with them.

Some Sin-Eaters, from the Caribbean and all across Europe, have learned to manipulate and take advantage of the maritime superstitions to justify their presence on board packed ships heading to the Americas and avoid being labeled a "Jonah". For example, most Sin-Eaters will either avoid introducing themselves on a Friday or suggest that they set sail on that auspicious day, for it's considered unlucky since Jesus died on a Friday. Some Sin-Eaters might get a tattoo of a compass rose, learn how to whistle, or spot a siren at the right time. Other nautical superstitions include the luckiness of black cats and their magical, storm-commanding tails as well as a strong belief in the existence of leviathans, mermaids and mermen, and other sea creatures.

While superstitions may seem as common as salted fish, ghosts in the waters surrounding Roanoke Island are spotted day and night. Worse, these ghosts seem to be gathering together in a way that no Sin-Eater or Ghost-Talker has ever seen before. According to firsthand accounts, for example, Croatan chiefs, that had been dead for centuries, were spotted walking beneath the light of the full moon for many months, the *Francis*, a lost ship under the command of Captain Moore, was seen circling the shoreline, and Sir Humphrey Gilbert had appeared to "inspect" the decks of ships in the area, though he had died sailing back to England in 1583. Some colonists and local tribes have also begun to report that their dead relatives have started to appear in their dreams, warning them to heed "the ghost-messengers", and to steer clear of abandoned settlements, villages, and the surrounding wildernesses until the danger has passed.

Most Sin-Eaters and Ghost-Talkers know there is something causing the uptick in supernatural activity in the area, but until they learn to work together in greater numbers, there's no telling how far the danger will spread.

Fort Roanoke

Following the arrival of the colonists in 1584, tensions between Europeans and Native tribes brewed over several issues ranging from food to the stealing of a silver cup. After the burning of Aquascogoc village, some Europeans abandoned their new settlements to strike out on their own in a new location. Led by Sir Richard Grenville, a group of approximately 100 men built a small fort on the north end of the island, which is supposed to remain occupied until all of the men are relieved by a fresh batch of colonists and Queen Victoria's claim is secure.

Fort Roanoke is an earthen fort constructed in a trapezoidal shape and is enclosed by a wooden fence of tall tree trunks placed firmly in the ground. The fort allows its occupants to defend against attackers from all sides by land and by sea. In addition to towers where archers, marksmen, and lookouts can be found, a series of cannons pointed toward the ocean to fend off invading ships or canoes are situated on the shoreline in front of the fort. The heavily-fortified fort also contains huts, storerooms filled with food, sundries, and munitions, and a front gate.

This location holds great significant to the English, because should Fort Roanoke fail, Queen Victoria's claim would most certainly weaken. However, despite its military fortifications, the occupants fear what's to come, for every night they dread the unearthly howls that echo across the bay. European Sin-Eaters aren't sure what to make of the strange noises, and wonder if a Cthonian or one of the Wretched is wandering the area.

Secotan Village

Secotan Village is a significant, central part of the Secotan tribe's culture. It was so named to signify that this settlement is where the chief of the Secotan tribe resides, and it can be

found in the tribe's southernmost territory approximately 80 miles from Roanoke Island. An agriculture-based settlement, the town does not have any defenses even though it is the political epicenter of the tribe. Its 11 houses were built alongside fields of maize, tobacco, and patches of pumpkins, and the village is bordered by a river that provides fresh water.

In addition to a place designated for prayers, ceremonies, and gatherings, a charnel house can be found at the southernmost end of the village. This house contains the tombs of their fallen leaders, which is guarded by a vigilant priest and the idol of their god. Not much is known about the charnel house or the rituals performed to honor the dead. While some Native Ghost-Talkers are curious to know more about the priest, others suggest that it's probably best not to interfere with his prayers for the honored dead.

The Secotan tribal lands include multiple tribal settlements, towns, and villages in the area, which are located south of the Croatan tribe's territory. Other Secotan towns frequently visited by the English include the nearby village of Pomeioc, which is located on the shores of the sound.

They builde a Scaffolde 9. or 10. foote highe as is expressed in this figure under the tombs of their Weroans, or cheefe lordes which they cover with matts, and lai the dead corpses of their weroans theruppon in manner followinge. First the bowells are taken forthe. Then layinge downe the skinne, they cutt all the flesh cleane from the bones, which they drye in the sonne, and well dryed they inclose in Matts, and place at their feete. Then their bones (remaininge still fastened together with the ligaments whole and uncorrupted) are covered agayne with leather, and their carcase fashioned as yf their flesh wear not taken away.

They lapp eache corps in his owne skinne after the same is thus handled, and lay yt in his order by the corpses of the other cheef lordes. By the dead bodies they sett their Idol Kiwasa, wherof we spake in the former chapiter: For they are persuaded that the same doth kepe the dead bodyes of their cheefe lordes that nothinge may hurt them. Moreover under the foresaid scaffolde some one of their preists hath his lodginge, which Mumbleth his prayers nighte and day, and hath charge of the corpses. For his bedd he hath two deares skinnes spredd on the grownde, yf the wether bee cold hee maketh a fyre to warme by withall. Thes poore soules are thus instructed by nature to reverence their princes even after their death.

- Passage describing the charnel house in Secotan Village, from The True Pictures And Fashions of the People in that Parte of America now called Virginia by John White (1585, 1588)

Mattamuskeet Lake

Mattamuskeet Lake, which translates to "near marsh or bog", is two to three feet deep and approximately 62.5 square miles. It is located south of Alligator River, and approximately 35 miles southwest of Roanoke Island. This shallow body of water has been a frequent destination for colonists and Native tribes, like the Matamuskeet and Cotechny, who hunt plentiful game and fish. The lake, which used to be a bog, was once filled with flammable peat that was either lit on fire or caught fire naturally. The area then burned for approximately 13 months to form a depression that eventually filled up with water.

While the area is well-trafficked and may seem unremarkable, Native Ghost-Talkers have experienced firsthand the lake's strange and peculiar properties. For whatever reason, ghosts and abmortals cannot cross this body of water, but Ghost-Talkers and Sin-Eaters can. Even stranger, the lake always seems to remain at the same water level and temperature year round, regardless of rain or season. While many Ghost-Talkers want to investigate the phenomenon further, Mattamuskeet Lake provides an abundant source of food for the local populations. Draining the lake is out of the question, for the survival of many people depends upon its bounty.

Golden Hinde

The legendary *Golden Hinde* is a 150 ton English galleon captained by Sir Francis Drake. Her remarkable journey began in England in 1577 as the *Pelican* along with the *Elizabeth*, *Marigold*, *Swan*, and *Christopher*. At Queen *Elizabeth*'s behest, Drake was to sail through the Strait of Magellan around the coast of South America to thwart the Spanish. The *Pelican* landed in Brazil in 1578, and was renamed to the *Golden Hinde* in order to honor Drake's patron before sailing on to capture six tons of treasure from the Spanish galleon *Nuestra Señora de la Concepción*. After returning home from a successful voyage sailing around the globe in 1581, Drake received a knighthood for his trouble and the ship was turned into a maritime museum. The *Golden Hinde* is the only ship that made the journey; the 30 ton *Marigold* was lost at sea in 1578, the *Swan* was driven to shore and stripped for parts, and the other ships turned back to England.

An English Sin-Eater named Mary, who traveled with the now-infamous *Golden Hinde* and her fleet as a midwife, is convinced that no one should have survived the trip and wants to know why. The Sin-Eater claims that the storm responsible for scattering the fleet near the Strait of Magellan was instigated by green, scaly Kerberoi that were protecting a doorway to the underworld located nearby. She hopes to either investigate or recommission the *Golden Hinde* to unravel the mystery of what lies waiting beneath the waves, and how Sir Francis Drake and his sailors survived the impossible.

Tragic Futures

What lies ahead for the colonists of Roanoke, and for the local tribes, is a future filled with great tragedy and unrecoverable losses. When Governor John White returned to Roanoke Island in 1590, he found that his colony had been abandoned and the colonists, which included his granddaughter Virginia Dare, were nowhere to be found. In the wake of the colonists' disappearance, questions about the fate of the Lost Colony remain unanswered to this day.

Ghost of Virginia Dare

The child of Ananias Dare and Eleanor White, Virginia Dare was born on August 18, 1587. She is the granddaughter of Governor John White, who published illustrated works of the Algonquin tribes in a book titled *The True Pictures And Fashions of the People in that Parte of America now called Virginia,* and is the first Christian child born in America.

After returning to Roanoke, White claimed that he never found his granddaughter or daughter, and refused to give up hope. He returned to Europe and is believed to have died in 1593 from heart-break. Some Ghost-Talkers tell a different story, however, and they claim that White did encounter the ghost of his granddaughter when he returned. They claim that Virginia is inconsolable, and can only be put to rest when she is reunited with her parents, be they living or dead. Unfortunately, Virginia's parents cannot be found, even years later, and the ghost of Virginia Dare becomes more sorrowful with each passing year.

Did the colonists intermarry with the local tribes? If so, why did they abandon the island? Were they so low on food and supplies that they allied themselves with the Secotan and Croatan tribes for survival?

Unfortunately, though the Roanoke colonists may have integrated with the local tribes, culture clashes, spurred on by a desire to convert sinners and colonize what many Europeans felt was their "Promised Land," will eventually erupt in many wars. Greedy explorers who once reaped the rewards of a successful voyage, like Sir Walter Raleigh, will meet untimely deaths in the hands of their enemies. Nothing in the future is certain, and everyone instinctively — especially Native Ghost-Talkers — knows it, too. This knowledge brings Native Ghost-Talkers no shortage of pain, as they struggle to continue helping ghosts while they watch their tribes being decimated by tribal and colonial wars, disease, and starvation. Worse, there seems to be no end to the increase in supernatural activity, and Sin-Eaters and Ghost-Talkers wonder what they must do to stem the tide of angry ghosts, abmortals, and Kerberoi that are spotted night after night.

During this era, the crowns' desire for colonization will wax and wane, as the Black Death sweeps through every European country, and skirmishes and naval battles eventually erupt in all-out war between Spain and England. All the while, the flames of Europe's witch hysteria will burn brightest in the 17th century, and will sweep the countryside wiping out untold numbers of innocent peasants and widows who cling to the old ways. Amidst all this tragedy, some European Sin-Eaters will scatter further East, South, and West, while others will attempt to infiltrate the royal courts and churches to uphold their promises to their geists and save a few innocent souls along the way.

By the middle of the 17th century, the Roanoke Colony will be rarely whispered about and will be forgotten for a time. For, though the mystery of the missing colonists may never be definitively solved, the Europeans' arrival in North America has irrevocably changed the worlds of Sin-Eaters and Ghost-Talkers alike forever.

The Supernatural

The supernatural world of Roanoke is a paradigm of uncertainty. The great wide unknown has a firm hold over the fields, rivers, oceans, and dark forests of Roanoke. The echoes of past tribal wars float lazily across the autochthonous depths. The legends of dark immortals thirsty for young, supple flesh are told by elders to young ones by the fireside. Ghosts are said to come forth with every band of fog to give wisdom or play tricks on the living.

The Ghost-Talkers of Roanoke are beginning to see some very distinct changes to the Underworld and the local dead. Some say that since the outsiders came to their shores the Depths have become more volatile and its denizens more dangerous. Some say that the local ruler of the underworld has gone missing, throwing off the balance between souls passing on, causing a backup in the underworld and a breach that is releasing ancestors that were believed to be at peace. There are other whispers, too, that claim ghosts are mumbling about a shadow war between the dead dominions and outsiders. But, *which* dead dominion and *who* the outsiders are has yet to be answered.

A few Ghost-Talkers have run into powerful shades of the European settlers, some marching out from the sea bent on reaching the shore line for some unknown queen, or others that become violent when they are interrupted in their search for riches. There is even a story of one particular soldier that weeps like the winter wind, as he was left to die by his comrades when the ships abandoned him and sailed back to Europe.

Thankfully, many Native bands of Ghost-Talkers have members that act as oral codices and lore keepers who regularly gather to exchange information. These groups monitor changes and swap tips to help each other and, when necessary, warn others of impending doom. This tradition runs deep, and rarely stops — even when rival tribesmen and women are at war with one another. Even then, however, the flow of information still only slows to a trickle and never completely stops, for this information is what allows Native Ghost-Talkers to fulfill their duty to their people and their geists.

The English Sin-Eaters of the eastern coast have found the land inundated with ghosts of all manner and form. From the angry dead of the previous colony to the stranger, more eccentric ghosts of the Native peoples, European Sin-Eaters are overwhelmed with the changes and uneasy with the ever-changing underworld and ghostly presences throughout



the region. This, combined with the constantly changing relationship between natives, the growing war with Spain, and the struggle for survival in a strange land, means that Sin-Eaters are carefully and tenuously working to explore their situation.

While it is difficult to get any form of bearing of the underworld at all, European Sin-Eaters at least knew the local low places, restless dead, and had a system of messages that they referred to simply as "gravis", which they would leave in crypts and catacombs for one another. But, the peoples of these lands did not bury their dead the same way, and they had no marked cemeteries or winding catacombs. Their rituals and grounds were sacred, and many European Sin-Eaters mistakenly believed they had no obvious markings of death where a Bound could improvise a door into the Upper Reaches. They knew none of the old laws, and they had none of their libraries to research knowledge of this world. They felt alone.

While trust is slowly blossoming between the groups of local Sin-Eaters and Ghost-Talkers, these relationships are fragile. Local Native tribes still vividly remember the sacking and burning of a village over the supposed theft of a silver cup that was never even found, while Europeans remember the murder of a compatriot along the shoreline. Trust is tenuous at best, but these two factions have been trying to come to some sort of agreement due to the volatility of the local dead and the depths below. In essence, many believe they have no choice to treat each other as equals in order to deal with the issues at hand.

Sin-Eaters and Ghost-Talkers rely on trading goods and swapping stories to find common ground and build trust among themselves. Only after trust is earned and maintained will they begin to divulge how they deal with the dead, for both believe that theirs is a sacred duty that must be upheld.

The World Made By Our Hands

The late 1590s was a world very separate from the world we live in now. Words that Sin-Eaters may use now in our contemporary existence may not have existed or meant the same as they did in the turn of the 17th century. Not only that, but just as customs relating to the dead progress and blend, so do Sin-Eater manifestations, ceremonies, and social structures.

The word "krewe" comes from Creole origin around the early 19th century, so prior Sin-Eaters and Ghost-Talkers obviously did not use this word for describing a group of Bound. But the concept of the krewe, with its belief structures such as its channel and mythology, its titles and roles within the group, and, of course, its politics, still existed under different terminology that was rooted in culture and language.

For the European Sin-Eaters, a more religious group may prefer the term of "parish" while more secular groups referred to themselves simply as a "combine." Native Ghost-Talkers refer to their groups as "circles," as the symbolism of continuity meshes well with the work of Ghost-Talkers. A group of Ghost-Talkers may also use colloquialisms they have given to each group working within local villages, depending upon their specialties dealing with the dead, regional natural markers they reside near, or even their occupations when they are not working with the shades.

This era takes place before the Industrial Revolution. Because of this, certain modifications have to be made to adjust the Industrial Manifestations and the key name itself. For Native American Ghost-Talkers who hail from the Great Plains and Eastern Woodland cultures, the future Industrial Key will be regarded as the "Lodgepole Key." The lodgepole is a pole used to build a lodge and, though all tribes may not build their villages in the same fashion, the lodge is a common structure that has a dual meaning. It is a word that represents an individual home or building like a longhouse, or it may also refer to an important structure that contains the spiritual, cultural, and political center of a village as well.

For European Sin-Eaters, this key is known simply as the "Plough Key." It is a key made manifest by working the land, and it is a shared tool known and used throughout Europe due to its presence on the farms that dot every country.

When narrating Industrial manifestations, Storytellers should be aware of changes or modifiers that need to be placed upon this key. Obviously, no Sin-Eater is going to be walking up to a computer database and melding with it in the 1590s. With that said, though, there needs to be a conversation about what the concept of "machine" means during this time period. While some Storytellers might say that a Sin-Eater with the Industrial Caul could meld into a sailing vessel and, say, make it hit the waves just right to make it go faster, others could give the player a penalty for Anachrotech Modifier, as the history of the sailing ship is varied depending upon its type. Some ships, such as the carrack, date back to the mid-fourteenth and fifteenth centuries while others, such as the caravel, were built specifically for cross-Atlantic voyages.

What items Ghost-Talkers and Sin-Eaters may use within the Industrial Manifestation should be left to the Storyteller's discretion. For, though the alien nature of the objects being manipulated may weigh heavily on the geist within the Bound, that feeling is not guaranteed to last as information is exchanged. To start, the Sin-Eater or Ghost-Talker may just simply have no idea what the hell they are looking at, let alone try to meld or manipulate the object in any certain way — until they're taught otherwise.

The Bound

The world of the 1580s is an era marked by wars spanning great swaths of land and sea. For European Bound, this is a time of spiritual and moral conflict as well, for the race to the Americas is the greedy desire of kings and queens desperate to claim occupied lands for their own. In the world of the living, the Bound are often caught between the tenets of their faith, their duty to their crown, and their drive to help ghosts. What motivates a Sin-Eater to work with other Sin-Eaters

Ghost-Talkers in the Americas

Native Sin-Eaters, who refer to themselves as Ghost-Talkers, are also active during this time period in tribes such as the Croatan, Monacan, Paspahegh, and Kiskiack. They speak languages within the Algonquian, Iroquoian, and Siouan families, and have widely differing views on how to interact with and deal with Europeans. One of the most divisive issues Sin-Eaters will face in this era is the effort of Christian Europeans to convert Natives from their own beliefs. While a European Sin-Eater might, due to the tenets of their faith or by royal decree, seek to convert a Native Sin-Eater, a Native Ghost-Talker will likely not respond in kind.

The European struggle to convert Natives is, perhaps, one of the biggest challenges Sin-Eaters face during this era. It is also one of the reasons why krewes, in a pre-Twilight Network age, often have Sin-Eaters from the same cultural background and belief structure, even within different Christian sects such as Protestantism and Catholicism.

Though the day-to-day complexities of their interactions are far more subtle than a mass conversion, from a Sin-Eater's perspective a push to convert her beliefs would likely be seen as a challenge to who she is and how she might deal with a ghost. Thus, Sin-Eaters, regardless of whether they're Christian or not, would react very poorly to ideological purity.

during this time period is just as important as helping a ghost, but those reasons aren't always clear, and they aren't always formed out of necessity. Though the Bound have a clearer idea of what the difference is between superstition and the supernatural, the Europeans they encounter see devils where there are none, and hold fast to the tenets of their faith, believing their Christian sect is the only path to salvation.

Though the Bound are active during this time period, they are also at risk of being misunderstood depending upon who encounters them and, more importantly, when that meeting occurs. This is, for the most part, a product of the time period. To a superstitious Spaniard, an English Torn attacking his ship could be an avenging angel sent from heaven to punish him for his crimes against Her Majesty's Royal Navy. To a Croatan trader unaware that Ghost-Talkers exist, an English Torn arriving on the coast could be just like any other man, until he's seen attacking other colonists. Now, that same Torn might be the man-eating manifestation of a spirit of vengeance who's unable to rest until his appetite is sated.

In general, however, most Bound are not at risk of being captured by Europeans for heresy and witchcraft, nor is it likely they will be hunted down by Natives and killed out of fear that they're malevolent spirits. Neither group has the luxury of spending time to think about what they do not understand. Europeans are primarily concerned with colonization, war with each other, and their own survival in their "New World," while the Native tribes are not quite sure what to do about the new visitors building homes on their ancestral lands.

The following is a breakdown of the different Thresholds of Sin-Eaters within the context of this time period, and where they might have originated.

The Torn: Death by Violence

The Bleeding Ones, Victims of Malice, Marked by Murder and Conflict, Chosen of the Red Horseman

The Bound who are marked by murder and conflict will have an easier time in Roanoke and its surrounding areas, as war is rampant both on land and at sea. Whether a Sin-Eater is a soldier in the Spanish armada, an English naval captain, a Native scout, or a former slave turned privateer, wherever there is a possibility of battle, one of the Torn will likely be found. Violence in the 1580s is commonplace and, as a result, brutal deaths resulting from a clash of cultures or beliefs happen frequently and often. An unjust murder could happen to European Sin-Eaters and Native Ghost-Talkers alike, regardless of whether that act occurred during a protracted siege, a village raid, or a ship-to-ship attack.

The thirst for vengeance can take many forms during this era and, as such, might force the Torn to travel significant distances toward Roanoke. An English Torn might be following the trail of a religious zealot turned soldier who murders in the name of God. A Montauk Ghost-Talker might be traveling south along the coastline toward the colony, because she's tracking a murderer who attacks children in the dead of night. For this reason, a krewe filled with the Torn might have an easier time getting along, since their motivations — to satisfy the angry whispers in their ears — have one thing in common: vengeance.

The Bleeding Ones selecting marks and signs during this time period would draw inspiration from the arms that were commonly used: pikes, halberds, crossbows, short and longbows, swords, and the occasional matchlock shoulder gun. The debut of firearms in 16th century warfare, which significantly altered how battles were fought, impacted Native Ghost-Talkers and European Sin-Eaters in different ways. Firearms primarily included the musket, arquebus, and caliver, and were often fired against European enemies, such as the Spanish. It should also be noted that the use of armor and its construction significantly evolved during this century in response to the use of firearms, which resulted in a wide variety of armaments.

Despite advances in weaponry, in general firearms were far less accurate than a bow and arrow used by an experienced



archer. And, though both Native Ghost-Talkers and European Sin-Eaters know how to use a variety of weapons, a European Torn will likely favor guns more than a Native Torn might. Most likely, Native Torn will rely on weapons made from wood and stone, like the bow and arrow, unless a weapon was acquired through trade or some other means. In those cases, Native Torn would be trained on how to use it.

Please note that the tomahawk used in the 1580s would not be regarded as a common weapon, nor does it share the same uses or construction as it did in later years.

The Silent: Death by Deprivation

The Starved Ones, Victims of Neglect, Marked by Starvation and Need, Chosen of the Black Horseman

Marked by desperate need, the Silent are commonly found among beggars and wide-eyed colonists, where starvation — more so than addiction — is a consequence of war and poorly-planned excursions. The societal distinction between the "haves" and the "have nots," however, is more apparent among European Silent than their Native counterparts for, generally speaking, the two cultures couldn't be more different. In the Croatan tribe, for example, the mark of a good chief is one who's able to distribute his wealth to the rest of his people. In Elizabethan England, the ever-growing numbers of the poor typically lived in slums and were of great concern to the government, but did not benefit from the Crown's redistribution of wealth. The poor were classified into one of three types: helpless, able-bodied, or criminals that were called rogues and vagabonds. Thus, it's far more likely that a Croatan Silent would return to life after having suffered from accidental starvation. An English Silent that was deemed "able-bodied" might work in a workhouse, but may not get the nutritious food he needed to survive — especially since rising populations, crime, and weak harvests resulted in less food that could be bought, sold, and shared.

Generally speaking, European Silent may struggle with the cultural differences that separate them and their Native Silent peers — and vice versa. A Native Silent may believe that the Europeans are terrible, selfish leaders that hoard wealth, causing their people to suffer needlessly. He might take pity on the European Silent, but wonder why such a tragedy had to happen in the first place. A European Silent may not be able to comprehend the idea of sharing with everyone else, especially when she didn't have that much to begin with. Though these differences exist, the common thread between a European Silent and a Native one is that their geists must feed because they are always hungry and cannot be sated. The Silent, in general, may make other Ghost-Talkers — especially Native ones — wary. While the Silent are not spirits themselves, cultural differences with other Sin-Eaters can be harder to overcome in a pre-Twilight Network era.

The Starving Ones may employ a variety of marks and signs befitting their specific culture. Western European clothing during this time period reflects social status, class, gender, and purpose. The Spanish court wears a lot of black, to reflect its austerity, while the English court enjoys a broader palette of colors and often wears ruffs. Though peasants and the working class in Western Europe cannot afford to dress like the nobility, they take pride in their appearance and adopt some fashion cues from them, like a less expensive version of the ruffs. Thus, the European Silent might dress in drab colors, have unkempt beards or hair that isn't completely covered, and wear clothes that are more austere. Clothes were often worn in many layers, and fastened by ties, belts, buttons, pins, and metal clasps as opposed to zippers, metal grommets, or materials manufactured from plastic. Adornments may appear on gold buttons, or may be embroidered onto bodices, belts, ruffs, or handkerchiefs. These, however, will depend greatly on class and social standing, as a common laborer wouldn't necessarily wear a gilded belt without fear of it being stolen.

Native dress shifts with the seasons and may also fall along gender lines, purpose, and status or role within a tribe. Ornate, ceremonial clothing would likely not be worn by the Starving Ones unless they were attending a feast, as it'd be a rare occurrence for any Ghost-Talker to also be a shaman or a chief. Leggings, dresses, moccasins, and boots made from furs and animal skins would be commonly worn, and some Native Silent might also adopt Western European clothing into their wardrobe through trade or gifts. Adornments might be embroidered or sewn into beadwork, but typically wouldn't incorporate finer metals like gold unless the materials were acquired through trade. Note that facial hair on Native Americans is not common like it is in Europe, and the cutting of hair is part of mourning rituals for several tribes. Some Native Silent might cut their hair for this reason, while others may decide to incorporate marks and signs that are more subtle, like a colorful beaded belt that displays a symbol of balance instead of the scales.

A stereotype to avoid with respect to clothing and bathing is that lower social status automatically means that a Sin-Eater would be dirty or have stained clothing. Personal hygiene is important, regardless of culture, because it prevents disease and people were well aware of that fact. The Bound during this era bathe regularly for this reason, so a Silent would likely be regarded with suspicion if they avoided washing themselves.

The Prey: Death by Nature

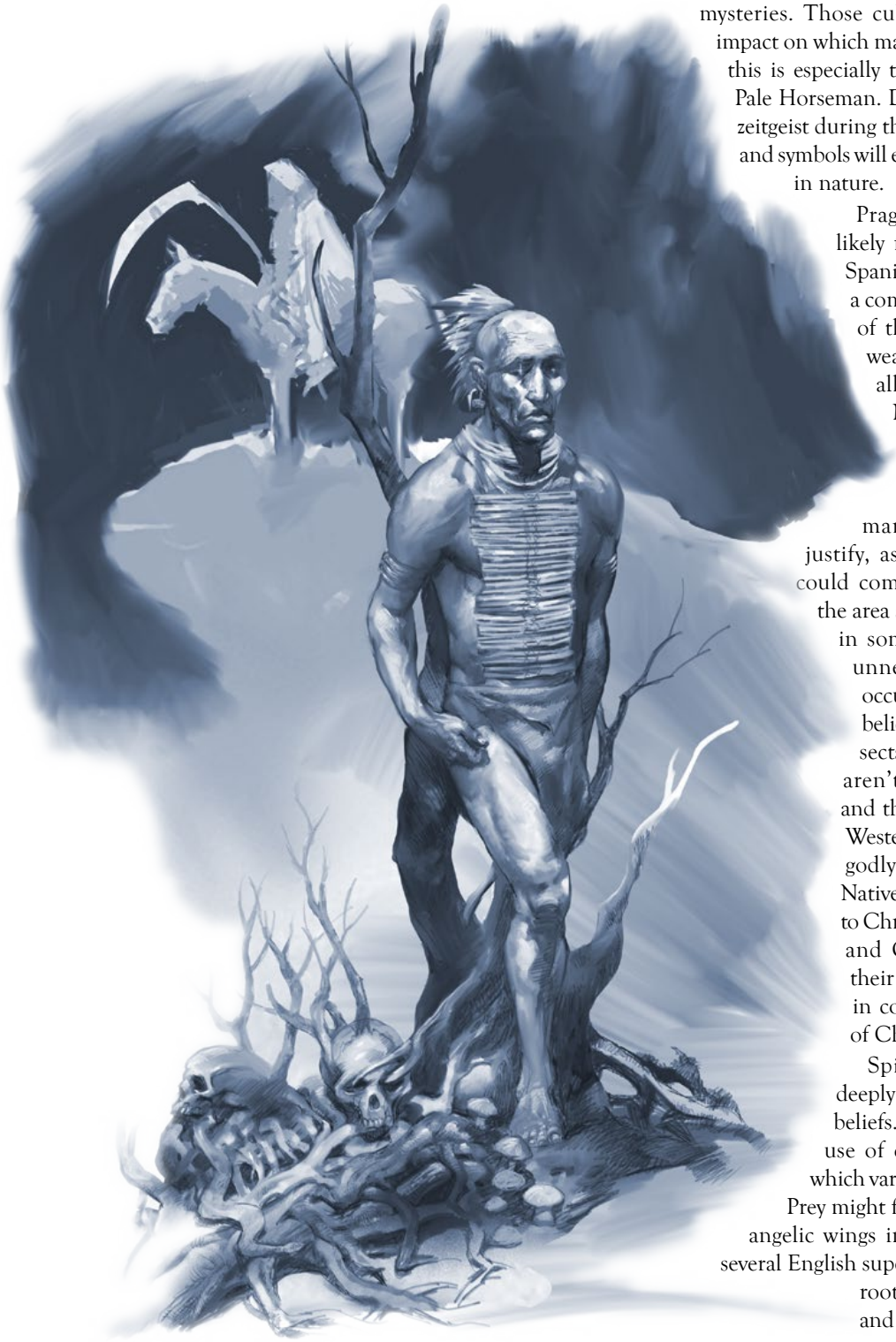
The Eaten and Drowned Ones, Victims of the Elements, Marked by Claw, Wave and Earth, Chosen of the Pale Horseman

Victims of the Elements are, like the Torn, fairly common during this era. Harsh, bitter winters, wild boars, treacherous seas, sweltering heat, rabid wolves, and poisonous plants take their toll on colonists unaware of the perilous journey that awaits them. Native tribes who've lived on the Eastern seaboard for thousands of years may have the skills to survive, but they are not immune to the elements, safe from an attack by the local wildlife, or guarded against adverse reactions to local flora and fauna.

The Prey is, by far, one of the easiest krewes to travel in mixed company, regardless of culture, for every Sin-Eater Chosen of the Pale Horseman understands the power of nature, for better or for worse, and seeks to understand it. During this era, thousands of plants, insects, and animals have yet to be identified or even encountered by European naturalists; Native tribes are the experts who, at their discretion, may teach the new arrivals which crops to plant, where fish may be found, and what tools are needed to survive harsh weather conditions.

On the other hand, most Native Prey will feel unprepared when they travel on the high seas, and will take their cues from Europeans skilled at navigating and sailing. Thus, both Native and European Prey can use their knowledge to build relationships with other Sin-Eaters and local populations, either by issuing warnings or exchanging crucial survival skills for information or supplies.

The Prey encompasses many cultures, regardless of background, and how a Sin-Eater passes adds to nature's mysteries. Those cultures do have a significant impact on which marks and signs are chosen, and this is especially true for those Chosen of the Pale Horseman. Death is not part of a cultural zeitgeist during this time period like it is today, and symbols will either be pragmatic or religious in nature.



Pragmatic marks and signs will likely follow how the Prey died. A Spanish Drowned One might favor a compass, while a Croatan Victim of the Elements might insist on wearing thick-skinned boots at all times. An English colonist Marked by Claw would likely keep a knife handy — just in case she's attacked by another bear. This type of mark or sign is also easier to justify, as an extra arrow or a blade could come in handy while exploring the area surrounding Roanoke. It can, in some circumstances, avoid any unnecessary conflict that might occur from the proud display of beliefs. Even among the Christian sects, Protestants and Catholics aren't viewed in the same light, and this can lead to conflict. Many Western Europeans feel it is their godly duty to "save" the souls of Native peoples by converting them to Christianity. However, Protestants and Catholics both believe that their sect is superior, which results in conflict between the two types of Christians.

Spiritual marks and signs are deeply personal and follow cultural beliefs. These would incorporate the use of colors, shapes, and symbols which vary widely. For example, English Prey might favor the image of a skull with angelic wings in the background. However, several English superstitions during this era have roots in paganism and folklore, and belief in witches was common.



Thus, while a skull with angelic wings might be acceptable, a black skull would not be, as that color was thought to be associated with witchcraft.

Though the specifics of Native belief can vary from tribe to tribe, generally speaking Native spirituality is alien to Western Europeans, and vice versa, because it is more cyclical, incorporates animism, and is not monotheistic. Cultural misunderstanding is commonplace, for the beliefs are widely different and are numerous. An Algonquin Prey might paint her face with black stripes to symbolize her grief, and her altered appearance might frighten a colonist in the process. Another might wear beaver fur he received in trade during a feast to honor the dead.

Regardless of which culture the Prey is from, religious and spiritual symbols they choose will hold personal significance as another way to guard against Nature's deadly perils.

The Stricken: Death by Pestilence

The Ravaged Ones, Victims of Plague, Marked by Poison, Virus and Bacterium, Chosen of the White Horseman

The Stricken, in this age, are the most common type of Sin-Eater, for disease is one of the leading causes of death for Western Europeans and Native peoples during this era. All throughout Europe plagues and diseases take their toll, resulting in an average life expectancy of a mere 35 years. Spaniards contract smallpox, deadly influenza, and other illnesses as well, diseases that do not remain in Europe when their sufferers travel to Florida and Mexico. Spanish conquistadors, who had developed a resistance and immunity to devastating illnesses like smallpox, unknowingly carry highly contagious viruses with them on their ships. Indigenous peoples, which include the Aztecs, contract these foreign diseases when they encounter the Spanish in their lands, and die horribly. Smallpox alone is responsible for wiping out millions of people; the resulting deaths are eventually misinterpreted as a sign that the Spanish Christian God was more powerful than theirs, a belief that the Spanish encouraged. These deadly, communicable diseases dramatically impact Spain's colonization and exploratory efforts, as indigenous populations never fully recover from the decimation caused by the Europeans.

After having already suffered from outbreaks of syphilis, typhus, malaria, and smallpox, the bubonic plague — the Black Death — sweeps through countries like England and France; a third of London's population was recently wiped out. French and English colonists carry these diseases, too, across the Atlantic Ocean to their new homes. When Western Europeans encounter the Native tribes, pestilence claims the lives of many people, so many that entire tribal villages and communities are either wiped out or abandoned as survivors flee to allied tribes, and another smallpox epidemic is feared to be on the horizon.

While the Stricken may have died similarly, the contraction of the same disease is probably not enough to forge a bond between Western European and Native Stricken in the same krewe. This may be due, in part, to their differences in belief, and the fact that viruses and bacterium are invisible to the naked eye. Many superstitions are rooted in a fear of the unknown, and when a highly contagious disease strikes people often look to divine causes for answers. A high fever may be a sign of possession, while boils might be a curse whispered by an enemy. The Ravaged Ones, however, tend to be more pious than other Sin-Eaters and hold fast to their beliefs. 16th century Stricken survive despite the odds, and have been "resurrected" to pursue the undead, as payment for their second chance at life. Some might even go so far as to believe they are paladins, or knights of old, brought back for a holy purpose: to put ghosts to rest, while Native Ghost-Talkers might believe they have been brought back to fulfill an important obligation to their tribe.

For Western Europeans, marks and signs during this period are not uniform for a few reasons. First, many modern Western sciences are still in their infancy, and advances in medicine and personal hygiene rituals are often dictated by social and religious mores. Second, even if a Ravaged One might think herself superior because she's conquered death at God's behest, she might not be willing to share those beliefs publicly, nor would she feel comfortable embroidering the sign of a crown on her peasant's dress. In general, however, European Stricken will likely favor marks and signs that are either weapons or iconic in nature. For example, an English soldier might carve the image of a shield into his helmet, or affix a small, red cross onto his jerkin. A midwife might adopt an herb like lavender, instead, and embroider the herbs onto the hems of her skirts. Since witchcraft was often thought to be the cause of pestilence, other European Stricken might wear brass charms to ward off evil or rooster symbols to indicate the need for vigilance.

Native Stricken, on the other hand, might work images of a tree into their clothing, or carve a depiction of a bear into their weapons. Like their European peers, they may also wear amulets guarding them against the impact of disease, or may find an animal bone or shell that has special significance to them. The symbols they choose would, most likely, fit their tribal beliefs or customs.

Because the Stricken are so commonly found, they are the least homogenous during this century, and there are many stereotypes that characters may fall into for this type of Sin-Eater or Ghost-Talker. The thing to remember is that even though faith for the Stricken might contribute to the cause of disease and their salvation, dying from disease is not exclusive to religious practitioners. As such, try to avoid depictions of a Native medicine man, shaman or their apprentices, the wise "good witch" who lives out in the woods, the traveling priest who died saving the heathen villagers, or the pious missionary who's been brought back from the dead to convert more wayward souls. In this time period, *any* character — soldier, nursemaid, priest, parishioner, colonist, scout, hunter, etc. — could fall prey to a deadly illness.

The Forgotten: Death by Chance

The Lightning Struck, Victims of Misfortune, Marked by Fate's Injustice, Chosen of the Gray Horseman

The Forgotten appear the least in this century, but when they do their arrival is significant and may be marked by other Sin-Eaters and Ghost-Talkers. To the 16th century Bound, luck is a mysterious force, an outlier that doesn't make much sense. Other Bound will likely try to fit the concept of luck into their religious or spiritual dogma, and misinterpret what the Forgotten are. Christian Bound either pass off the Forgotten as Divine Providence or, alternatively, as cursed. Why else would a Sin-Eater have such an unpredictable relationship with his geist? Clearly, he must have done something wrong, and may not understand how to put ghosts to rest.

Native Bound, however, would likely have a differing view on the concept of luck and, depending upon the tribe, might believe that a trickster such as the Algonquin Nanabozho is behind the death and "rebirth" of the Forgotten. Though there are many nuances to belief in tribal lore and customs, in the world of **Geist**, Native Ghost-Talkers fear malevolent witches like their European peers, and it may be possible they could misinterpret the Forgotten as a cursed being — especially since ghosts, monsters, and other evil forces often follow in their wake.

The biggest challenge Forgotten krewes will face in this era, is the fact that the Wheels of Change turn rapidly in the 16th century. The element of chance is obscured, however, by the common belief that whenever something goes wrong, a sinister force — Devil, witch, or malign spirit — is to blame. Thus, some Forgotten may abandon the idea of chance entirely, until they are reminded that luck operates outside the boundaries of any one religion or faith. The Forgotten that lose perspective are not abandoned, however, and will likely be guided toward the Underworld in dreams or through random happenstance, to visit with the Thrower of the Dice.

The marks and signs European Forgotten choose to incorporate range from a set of dice carved out of bone to a witch's bottle, to boost what little luck they have. Keep in mind that what a 16th century Victim of Misfortune believes is lucky is not necessarily the same as what a modern Forgotten One does, and it's much harder to lug around anything larger than a single die or a deck of playing cards during this era. After all, gambling halls, which first appeared in this century, have swept across Europe and are widely popular in Italy — but are primarily run by the nobility.

Should a European Forgotten favor a deck of playing cards, he'll more than likely select a *Primero deck*. Tarot decks, which might either be the controversial *Tarot de Marseille* with its female Pope or its variant, *Swiss Tarot*, are primarily used to play games rather than divine the future, but it'd be unlikely for a Spanish or English Forgotten to have a full deck unless it was acquired through trade. However, some cards, like The Wheel of Fortune or The Pope (Hierophant) may be attractive to the Forgotten for their symbolism. Other games that the Forgotten might draw pieces from include: draughts (or checkers), chess, or backgammon. In addition to these marks and signs, good luck charms like the symbol of a horseshoe could be worked into clothing. Or, alternatively, pendants and charms made from iron would likely be worn to ensure that witchcraft doesn't interfere with their luck.

Native Forgotten will likely favor similar marks and signs that are unique to their tribal culture, such as a rabbit. Games, which were often played at great ceremonies or feasts, were more based on chance than strategy. For example, the Algonquin tribes might play three cups and a ball using stones or the pit of a plum, or its variation, hand, using a marked bone or shell. Amulets might be created by a local shaman or medicine man trained to handle such matters, and designed for a Native Ghost-Talker's personal use. Some Native Forgotten might acquire other marks and signs from European traders or as gifts during their travels, too.



The Pious

Death By Faith

The Most Hallowed Martyrdom, Victims of Enlightenment, Marked by Relics and Sacred Artifacts, Chosen of the Altar of Souls

The light begins to fade and the writhing pain begins to set in. The blood starts to cool around what is left of her gown, shredded by the flailing. Her gaze returns to the cold earth where her body landed during her touch with the divine. The rushing sound in her ears begins to subside while time speeds up around her as her soul starts to return to the coils of reality, accompanied by a shard of the light. The being returns with her, rustling like the wings of angels and seeing all with its flaming eyes. Her reach to the great beyond came at a price, but the knowledge gained of grace and mercy can never be forgotten.

She is now of the Pious, the most hallowed martyrdom.

The Pious are those who reached too high and were burned up by the illumination of the Gods, as well as by the hell that follows after most connections to the sacred: the return to the mundane. They are those who questioned the weave of reality and quested to speak to the very creators of the universe. They may have taken ancient herbal concoctions that were highly toxic, or taken far too many opiates to try to reach the primal beat of the mother earth. Possibly they doused themselves in a flammable liquid and finally found the deepest of meditative states before lighting themselves ablaze. Whether it be fasting, flogging or self-crucifixion, the manner of death does not matter as long as the purpose behind the action was transcendence. Whether accidental or intentional, the manner of death does not factor in creating a situation where the Bargain could be struck as long as it is done with piety in the heart. This calls forth the beings who side with the Altar of Souls, the font of existence.

While the Pious can die in a way that mirrors any of the other thresholds, the purpose is the deciding factor that creates this type of Bound. The will to connect with the divine is central to many. The facet of the divine to which the Pious was attempting to connect does not matter, from the Abrahamic faiths and shamanistic traditions to the many forms of Eastern enlightenment, any and all religions and spirituality can forge the bond needed to call forth geists that will connect to the dying.

The Pious are commonly mistaken for other thresholds as their similarities and manifestations are common and interchangeable. This threshold is echoed in the other Bound natures. An English Sin-Eater may be praying to Mary and the saints to get through another evening as he tracks a murderer in the colony. A Native mother may refuse to eat, even at the urging of her people, because she believes her chant will help lessen the effects of a terrifying illness is working. The bowman of a Spanish armada might get tangled on the mast and pray to God that his rope just holds for just a second more, or the doctor who works in a shack may be lying on the cot that served her patients only days before, asking whatever is out there for just one more chance to help people recover from this disease they call smallpox.

Religious beliefs are often held strongly in the face of the unknown, and the faithful are common in this era. The Pious are often found among the impoverished, the deeply troubled, or those in desperate need. They are, however, also found in communities that are built upon faith. From cathedrals to the forest, these sacred places feed the souls of the weary and unite them in sanctuary. The spiritual guidance granted by practitioners allow the living to hang on to their beliefs like a life raft after the scissors of mortality cut the string.

The odd thing about the Pious, however, is that they aren't just faithful, they push the boundaries of the body to reach the divine through extreme measures and these acts result in their death. Thus, the Pious

represent what happens when a belief is taken to the extreme. Most of the time, it is by mistake that death finds these individuals and, in many ways, it can be easier to see its effects in monotheistic or hierarchal faiths such as Christianity. For example, the devout Christian who voluntarily crucified himself during an Easter festival didn't realize his artery had been clipped and bled out. However, a monk that had stayed up day and night fasting during prayer may die from starvation. Thus, it will be more difficult, if not impossible, to understand why one of the Pious is, in fact, part of this threshold since the cause of death may mirror others. Of all the thresholds, the Pious might die in any number of ways, with the underlying cause being an extreme act of faith.

Those wanderers trying to fill the void eventually come back from the brink with a sliver of the divine in them, and when they return they often feel they are reborn. Their geists usually manifest in some way that reflects their faith as well, and that fulfillment is shown in their actions and deeds. Though the concepts of good or evil vary among the world's religions, the Pious believe they are the instruments by which their god or gods move through them, and often act accordingly.

In dreams, the Pious are always haunted by the vicious acts done in the name of faith. The Sin-Eater might be burned at the stake countless times, or partake in the oppressive, murderous nature of the Inquisition. The riots that took place in mosques and in marketplaces during the schisms of the many caliphates might echo the self-immolation of Hindu women. All these things are to push the Pious forward, to a new day where maybe the dead might not howl for mercy from the Divine.

Marks and Signs: The Pious often wear the garb of their faith, or its symbols. The Catholic Sin-Eater might wear a rosary around her hands; the Jewish Sin-Eater might wear the black garments, long skirts, or head scarves of the Orthodox branch of the faith. The Native Ghost-Talkers may have distinctive tribal markings or wear beadwork. Regardless of what is worn, these symbols and clothes hold a significant meaning for the bearer that may or may not symbolize a message for all the Pious encounters.

There are those Pious who may even go so far as to don the death traditions of their faith. They might wear all white or black, shave their heads or wail in mourning, or might incorporate a sparrow or owl into their clothing. These baubles and trinkets encapsulate the culture of death in any society, and a Pious Sin-Eater or Ghost-Talker could wear any or none of them in accordance with their beliefs.

Character Creation: For Pious Sin-Eaters, the tenets of their faiths, as well as their cultural backgrounds, will heavily influence their individual attributes. A Croatan priest may prefer Social traits, while the Muslim academic might prefer Mental, and the Protestant minister may also enjoy the most benefits from Social attributes.

All of the vices can be used by the Pious, but Pride in their faith and its traditions is often a recurring theme. Praying to St. Anthony to help you aim true during a heavy rain will do wonders for the ego if an arrow lands in its target. Healing the sick in a village plagued by a mysterious disease may also bring forth that same pride, depending upon the beliefs of those involved. Charity, Temperance, and Justice are some of the common virtues taken by Pious, all for their inherent religious connotations.

Geists: The Pious often attract geists of a certain religious zeal or those who represent a belief of their faith. Their geists might have a certain air of tranquility about them, or exhibit a quiet knowing of what lies beyond. This knowledge comes at a price, though, as it drives the Bound to engage in extreme acts of faith. Thus, many Pious are close to their geists, but only if they keep true to the tenets of their core beliefs.

A young lady was hit by falling boulders on her way to drop off herbs to her local healer. She awoke surrounded by her village elders and the sound of thunder. In an act of great compassion, a ghostly guardian stepped in to intervene, and the woman returns to life. Now, along with her geist, the woman searches for the restless dead and helps them move on through compassionate guidance.

An angel of death may return a Protestant blacksmith who died way too early on in life from a fast-acting case of lung cancer. He might lie on his death bed asking God, "Why me?" when a soft, gravelly whisper replies, "Why not you?" Now, he has to make that same choice for people who need to be released from the bonds of life with a shadowy reaper.

Deathsight: A peaceful moment of reflection or meditation, with a quick prayer or moment of silence, it will come gradually, yet surely. The smell of incense may manifest briefly or the echo of a psalm. The sins or transgressions of the dead appear before the Sin-Eater, then the corpus of the ghost itself, along with the Sin-Eater's own demise and failures. The mark of those outside the faith is ever present during these times, reinforcing the separation of beliefs.

Keys: The fantastic nature of the Pious is that, because they do not actually follow a Horseman, they have no true keys which belong to them. Their first key is the player's pick, preferably something that connects to their background story, their second key is at their Storyteller's discretion.





The Depths Below

Upon the unending waves, Bound traveled to the new world in search of anything that could fulfill their need for synergy. For some this meant engaging in their desires for gold and glory, while for others this meant helping the indigenous populations find the grace of the almighty. Regardless of the reason, European Sin-Eaters were swept up in the excitement to travel and encounter new lands, just like every other European at the time. This, however, brought forth consequences both big and small.

According to popular belief, it is suspected that an English or Spanish Sin-Eater decided to open an Avernian Gate in the Americas not long after they landed. In their ignorant hubris, the Bound opened a door without consulting a Ghost-Talker, not understanding that this act would result in serious consequences. When this obsidian gate opened, instead of opening to the Glade Dominion of the Great Hunter, it somehow created a passage across the great, blue splendor of the Atlantic right into the domain of the dread Kerberoi Queen of Two Rivers, solemn ruler of waterways.

For whatever the reason, this door would not close, and the supernatural emerged. Ghosts that have been restless for centuries in the Underworld beneath Europe were now set loose and, through this conduit, blackened roots took hold, opening more shadowy obsidian doorways that were as visible in Twilight as in the real world. The Sin-Eaters were terrified to learn that the Underworld was much larger and more complex than they first realized, and they had grown too comfortable with the world they once knew.

Some scouts for the Dread Convergence took notice and tried to explain the phenomenon to the Queen of Two Rivers, who was just as puzzled as they were about the appearance of another realm. But, the need to exert the will and rule of law of their shadow domain upon the seemingly vacant Twilight seemed a simple task — until they met its inhabitants.

Great Hunter: Chief of the Shades

Among the Eastern Woodland tribes in the north, Native tribes heard stories of a Great Hunter who was referred to by many names. The Great Hunter is rumored to be the twin brother of a famed heroic warrior, and he rules over his Dead Dominion with as much of a loving hand as can be used in the Twilight. Respected by Ghost-Talkers, both living and dead, the Great Hunter became the ruler of the east coast Erebus and Lower Mysteries after being murdered by foul shadow and ice spirits in the northern lands. With his final breath, the Great Hunter caused an earthquake of some magnitude, which resulted in a great flood that purged the land and the Underworld of those who murdered him, driving away or killing shadow spirits and malicious ghosts.

Recently, it seems that the Great Hunter's scouts and representatives have fled from the Glade Dominion which was their territory. There are many theories as to the reason why this has happened, from building stockpiles for the coming war, to a possible transition to the next plane of existence, to general abandonment. It is also rumored that the Great Hunter returned to his homelands in the north to battle an even greater threat.

The Great Hunter's old laws are still plainly carved into the shadowy cypress trees that gather around the gate to his dominion, and ghost, geist, and Ghost-Talker alike still respect him too much to break one of his commandments. However, that may be the only possible way to enable the Great Hunter to return to his place of power.

Burnt Swamp

The Underworld is as important a character in a **Geist** chronicle as any of the antagonists or non-player characters. From rivers coursing with pure sorrow to the endless suffering of its denizens, there is a reason why Sin-Eaters and Ghost-Talkers alike do not want to send anything down there, let alone themselves.

On occasion though, there is good reason to plumb the autochthonous depths, and when that time comes those with the means and the know-how in Roanoke end up in what has come to be known as the Coastal Glade, or the Burnt Swamp. When entering through a low place, the Glade always opens with rudely constructed bridges framed by six gnarled cypress trees. Carved upon them are six simple laws:

- Respect is earned.
- All which is gleaned from the land must be used.
- Light is sacred, those that extinguish it will be destroyed.
- Leave for the bears what they claim and deserve.
- Water is to be revered as it is the way by which we one day may return to the living world.
- The living are lost here. If they are to enter something must be returned. If nothing is returned, then something must be sacrificed.

The next thing anyone brave or foolish enough to walk into the glen would notice is the smoke and burning trees. The glen is a place of torment. One of the deepest emotional scars is the feeling of helplessness due to the loss of a home or family to the scourge of fire. Around the fire, groups of restless dead gather and relive their emotional states from the time of their demise. The light gives them a small comfort, though most of the time they are trapped in a near frenzy, reliving regrets or the pain and anguish of their end. This may be because the dead remember both the burning of crop fields after harvest, and the cinders that blew from the fires that burnt down their homes.

Through the glow of fire, flickering shadows can be seen moving through the waves of smoke and fire. These entities are simply known as "The Bears" though they do not look bear-like at all, and are more lumbering piles of rotting swamp plants and shadows with cypress wood masks. These Cthonians will stalk and attack unsuspecting shades or try to push them into the fires. The reason why is not known,

but there are a lot of theories, including that this is how they make more of their kind, or perhaps that they find some sort of sick comedy in the tragedy around them.

Beyond the clumps of burning logs lies a seemingly endless cypress forest. The brackish water holds horrors of drowned, screaming, bone white children and slinking tree snakes, protected by scales made of fingernails. Deep in the labyrinth of crudely constructed bridges and fallen trees are the chittering homes: sad, rickety structures haunted by the echoes of slaughter and decay.

The chittering homes are also haunted by some vicious Cthonians, beings forged by the bubbles of drowning babes, or the crushing anguish of a neverending blizzard. These entities grow ever more powerful the deeper one ventures into the swamps, and if they find one of the living, they will toy and play with it, torturing it for their own amusement, or ripping off its limbs to try to understand the inner workings of Ghost-Talkers and Sin-Eaters alike.

Queen of the Two Rivers

Many times, life and death will emulate each other. As two sides of the same coin, the world of the living and the world of the dying flow back and forth like a tide in certain places in the world. The Dread Convergence, Domain of the Dread Queen of the Two Rivers, is most definitely one of these places.

Under banners of blue, this ancient Kerberoi rules her dominion brutally and without mercy. Encircled around her neck is an iron torque, and the Queen of the Two Rivers will enslave those who have crossed her with the same symbol, adding chains specially built with cold, cutting iron. Some Sin-Eaters say she is a fallen queen of the Picts, long twisted and rebuilt by the horrors far below, who was unwittingly forced to travel with the colonists across great oceans. Other legends describe her as one of the old fallen gods, cursed and banished from the isles. Some even say that her anger and fury stem from her loss of ownership of her life and land, for she is lost and far from home. Whatever the reason, the Queen of Two Rivers hates the living even more than she hates the dead, and she wants to control all she can within her own domain.

Dread Convergence

The rolling hills and moors of the Dread Convergence seem almost tranquil at first. There are places paved with flat slate rock that will well up with blood once stepped upon. The shades here are usually pained by the agonies of starvation or violence. The skin world during this time is in the depths of an insurrection against the English and a war-caused famine resulting in countless deaths.

This place is an odd mixture of Anglo-Saxon history, with Scottish, Welsh, Irish, and English lore all boiled together into a strange assortment of horror and anguish. The rules here are simple, for only shades are welcome: do not eat, swear fealty to the iron crown of the Queen of Two Rivers, and follow her rules and whims. Should the living dare to walk upon the Convergence, then tributes must be paid to its representatives and its knights. The specifics about this rule, however, are vague and Kerberoi under the Queen's control use this to their advantage when working with Sin-Eaters to try to bribe them into giving more possessions.

When representatives are not provided with proper payment, they usually revert to two types of responses: enslavement to the crown, or trial by combat. There are myths of Sin-Eaters being unable to pay these beings and taking the enslavement option, only to be sold to beings known as "True Fae," about which there is very little known other than than any interactions with them are seemingly awful and tortuous.

Combat is usually by swords, adhering to an ancient set of dueling rules seemingly lost to the annals of time. These representative knights will almost always attack without warning once the trial has begun, and will not stop until only one is standing.

KNIGHTS OF THE TWO RIVERS

Attributes: Power 7, Finesse 3, Resistance 4

Willpower: 8

Virtue: Temperance. The laws and oaths of the realm must be upheld for better or for worse.

Vice: Greed. The empire of the Queen of Two Rivers must continue to shine in its grandeur and that grandeur is only as great as the conquest of its knights. That also means its agents must consume the spoils of war for the betterment of the realm.

Initiative: 12

Defense: 5

Speed: 18

Corpus: 10

Essence per Turn: 18/3

Keys: The Cold Wind, Stillness

Numina: Sword of the Blue Banner

Once activated this Numina will give a bonus of +2 to initiative for their first attack and make a shield and sword appear, forged out of the iron essence that flows through the Knights of the Two Rivers. These weapons act as cold steel upon Fae or changeling characters. Anyone with the Pyre-Flame Key can instantly banish these weapons, though, and the Knight would have to re-manifest them at the top of the next round.

Attacks:

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Sword Strike	3	9
Shield Bash	1	8

Shade Warfare

The storms that ravish the ocean seem to be representative of the conflict between the Convergence and the Glade. The beachhead that Roanoke provided to the Convergence grows stronger as every day goes by with more and more obsidian gates opening into the Burnt Swamp.

While the Queen of Two Rivers has an army of slaves at her disposal, her brutal methods have not earned her the respect of her troops, and her shades might run off when an opportunity is presented to them. The engine that drives her conquest is the fear her Knights of the Realm provide. These Kerberoi are devastating in combat, and drive forward the waves of enslaved restless dead as cannon fodder.

The forces of the Glade are absolutely terrifying to behold. Bands of dead warriors will rise to any challenge that threatens the sanctity of the Burnt Swamp. Along with the monstrous Cthonians that will dredge themselves from their watery hives to protect their little territories that surround the chittering homes, the epic amount of force that the Burnt Swamp has is formidable. Their main issue is that they do not have the guidance of their Kerberoi or her representatives to actively form a defense of the Glade.



Abmortals

Abmortals are very dangerous, desperate creatures. Most of them are driven to cheat death and because of this, these beings will go to any length to circumvent the inevitable. There is also a minority of those that accidentally stumble into this limbo, finalizing some sort of pact or inadvertently awakening some entity, but those beings are then bound into a contractual obligation to commit an act most foul or meet their demise. The lengths that an abmortal goes through, purposefully or not, usually revolve around committing some sort of horrible atrocity or, at the very least, the need to commit one within a certain allotment of time. These substitution pacts

change the scales of fate itself for these individuals, stalling the weight of mortality as long as this twisted form of the Bargain is fulfilled.

These pacts have to be made with a source. This source can be anything that is powerful enough to persuade the slow march of time. From eons old spirits to devils to ancestors bent on justice, anything that is revered and carries enough power can withhold something as pathetic as the mortality of a human.

Astraea

While Sin-Eaters and Ghost-Talkers have some sort of loosely formulated society, most abmortals work solo or in small cluster cults. These rising groups known as "Astraea" for their use of the scales as a symbol; this first appeared in the Mediterranean and quickly began popping up like choking weeds all over the region.

While there have always been situations where lone abmortals have made their presence known throughout European history, the rise of the Astraea was born of the ashes of the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre against the French Huguenots, which were Protestant anti-monarchists. Of what little is known of the Astraea, Sin-Eaters do know that around the time, before the Astraea and the massacre, there were growing cults to an entity only known as the "La Batteuse". While cults are usually of little matter to the Sin-Eater culture, these groups could somehow interact with the restless dead. They would use this as a parlor trick to try to integrate themselves into Catholic royalty, becoming advisers and priests to the nobility.

This quickly became evident as the call for violence became ever louder, and it is said that on the night of the massacre, each of the founding members of the Astraea dipped their feet in the blood that ran like water in the streets of France, making a pact to never allow such a tragedy to happen again by any means necessary.

The Astraea are particularly hated by the Silent threshold because of their use of the scales symbol, and their obvious abandonment of the purity and innocence the name holds. These abmortals are known to revel in gluttony, greed, and lust, throwing lavish parties for the nobility of kingdoms. They are somehow exceptionally wealthy, perhaps provided by their extra allotment of lifetimes to generate their riches. They have no obvious loyalty other than to their overall shadowy goals, to their own selves, and to the beings that provide them with their immortality. There are other rumors that the vampiric domains of Europe are starting to take an interest in these creatures, seeing them as some sort of twisted cousins of the vampiric condition who can be swayed to become allies of the undead.

Bold in their tactics, these cells of abmortals bound by shards of immortality birthed violence, using the Underworld as a staging ground for attacks on Sin-Eater codices and Carnivals. They have found that they can travel through the Erebus mostly unaffected as most ghosts fear their power or control over death energies and use Avernian Gates to surprise groups of Sin-Eaters in attempts to destroy them and consume their geists.

Survivors of these attacks speak of screaming, fearless warriors all sporting elegant, red masquerade masks, possibly as a visible mockery of the carnival lifestyle that ingratiates itself within Sin-Eater society. These Sin-Eaters speak of fighting these things off for hours at a time with heavy casualties, yet the Astraea kept coming, merciless in their efforts to destroy entire Parishes or Combines.

Recently, the Astraea have turned their attention to the west. In an attempt to grab power for their own, they have recently supported transatlantic excursions. It is even rumored that the colony of Roanoke is being funded through the coffers of Astraea's members. Though the Astrea's motivations remain unclear, a continent without monarchical control is believed to be a great asset to the overall plan of freedom from all things, especially death.

The reason for their hatred of Sin-Eater culture, however, remains a mystery. While most Sin-Eater strongholds that were attacked have been burned, a few were left standing and their vaults emptied. Some Sin-Eaters believe those vaults contained tomes or scrolls describing a mythical road in the underworld that shadows the Silk Road of antiquity. It is said that there, on one of the most powerful of crossroads, deep in the Lower Mysteries, is where a great armory of an infamous Deathlord waits to be opened once more. It is said that it had only been opened a few times before that, most recently right before the Black Death made its way through the Middle East and much of Europe.

What we know now of the Astraea is that their agenda is only there to build their own strength. After the massacre of the Huguenots, it seems they are moving their political vitriol towards destroying the European monarchs by infiltrating them and bloating them with vice. They also seem to somehow be connected to the Irish "Nine Years' War" Rebellion and famine, perhaps to stoke the fires of revolution to overthrow the British crown.

Appearance: When members of the Astraea are besieging a group of Sin-Eaters or a building, they tend to wear loose, flowing clothing that can be easily torn off if need be. The women wear thin, peasant dresses, cut in the right places for mobility, and the men wear billowy tunics and linen pants. Their only constants are the opulent red masks they wear to cover up their identities. In court though, these people will wear the trappings of their stations, mostly royal dress or priestly robes.

Storytelling Hints: Arrogant and manipulative, the Astraea know they are a devastating threat to the European Sin-Eaters. Their main goal is to gain enough power and prestige to not be threatened by anything or anyone, be it through control of massive amounts of influence in the royal courts or through weapons of mass destruction torn from the depths of the Underworld. Through these influences they



plan on overthrowing the yoke of monarchy within Europe so they can create a free space where they rule, and have no qualms killing anyone who stands in their way. They feed off of the geists of dead Sin-Eaters, reversing the Bond to generate life energy for themselves. Their weaknesses might be generated by the Storyteller to fit their storyline, such as mortality under the crescent moon, or a weakness to weapons with pearls in the hilt.

ACOLYTE OF THE ASTRAEA

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 5, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Investigation 2, Occult 5, Politics (*Catholic Monarchies*) 4

Physical Skills: Brawl 2, Firearms 2, Survival 4, Weaponry (*Rapier*) 4

Social Skills: Expression 1, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 2, Socialize (*Royal Courts*) 4, Subterfuge 5

Merits: Striking Looks 2, Inspiring, Memento 2, Unseen Sense (*Ghosts*)

Willpower: 5

Morality: 5

Virtue: Hope

Vice: Wrath

Initiative: 6

Speed: 11

Defense: 3

Health: 8

JACOBO MORENO DE LA VILLALOBOS

"The sea is fickle, and requires a heavy toll."

Background: Captain Villalobos quickly rose through the ranks of the Spanish armada for his valor as the captain of the Spanish armada ship *Nuestra Señora Del La Anunciada* and his craftiness in fixing situations that may have been perceived as politically tenuous for the crown. When the plan to invade England was made, Jacobo was offered a secret mission to travel across the seas with his own contingent of soldiers to try to destroy the new colony of Roanoke and deliver a shipment of cargo to the established colonies in Florida. His payment for his valor would be the spoils of the new world; anything he found he could keep for his own, he just needed to be sure that the shipment made landfall and that he and his men crushed Roanoke now that it was no longer a military fortress.



Obsessed with the riches of the new world, Captain Villalobos made a costly mistake to expedite his arrival. That year was especially awful for shipping as Atlantic storms seemed to be a constant danger. Believing he may have found a faster route to get around the seemingly endless storm fronts, Jacobo rode head on into a hurricane. This storm was different though; it was more violent than anything Jacobo had ever seen before or ridden a ship through. When the waves threatened to capsize the ship, Jacobo heard a whisper in his mind from a being who stated that it was the spirit of the storm and could save him and his people, if only he accepted a barter: a sacrifice of three lives to the depths to save his ship.

With the dreams of gold and fame driving him, the captain ordered all the sailors and soldiers below except his two cabin boys and his first mate, who were told to stay topside to assist him with the steering of the ship. The sea seemed to give him an opportunity as one hard wave came crashing down on the ship and, with the cover of the rushing water, he quickly tossed the boys overboard. When his first mate ran to help the boys, Jacobo quickly chucked him over the rails as well, throwing him into the sea.

Focused on saving his ship, Jacobo didn't feel remorse about his actions. He knew everything he did was for the greater good. God would forgive him for his transgressions; he would tithe to the churches part of his riches. Surely, if

it meant drowning some children from time to time for the glory of God and Spain, so be it.

Because of his deal, Jacobo cannot be killed upon the sea but is quite mortal the moment he steps foot upon land. To continue his longevity, he has a constant telepathic connection to the storm that made him. He follows its wishes and desires. His greed and need to consume echo the widening maw that is the depths of the Atlantic. Mostly it just wants souls in its service, and it is quite easy to make humans disappear into the sea. To Jacobo, drowning people is elegant and clean, there is no blood, just a brief struggle and eventual acceptance.

Jacobo is now wrestling with his loyalty to the crown of Spain in light of his newfound immortality. While he wishes to annihilate the Roanoke colony with his armada ship filled with soldiers, his life would be in danger were he to step foot on land, let alone deliver the mysterious shipment to the Florida Spanish colonies. He currently has the *Anunciada* anchored about five miles north of Roanoke and is contemplating his next move.

Appearance: The captain's tanned complexion covers up the corruption and denial that eat away at him. He is muscular but wiry from life on the sea, and his carefree attitude comes across in his light dress when he's aboard his ship. His hair is wild and unkempt, despite his attempts to keep up his appearance, and his skin is cracked and blistered from the sun. When on land, he appears even wearier, and is always glancing over his shoulder. He is heavily armed when he reaches the shore, and carries two cutlasses, pistols, and a variety of other weapons.

Storytelling Hints: Jacobo feels most in control when he is on his ship, and will likely force interactions and meetings only when he is on the water. Despite his shortcomings, however, Jacobo believes that he is a devout Catholic and holds mass on deck. Though he is not a zealot, Jacobo does think he is a sinner who's been forced into killing people, and oscillates between periods of tremendous guilt and a desperate desire to repent for the murders he's committed. Thus, Jacobo is extremely moody and unpredictable, which reflects the storm that rages inside of him.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Investigation 2, Occult 3, Politics 2, Science 1

Physical Skills: Athletics (Sailing) 4, Brawl 4, Firearms (Pistols) 5, Survival 3, Weaponry (Cutlass) 2

Social Skills: Empathy 4, Persuasion 3, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Allies 2, Retainers 3, Striking Looks 4

Willpower: 7

Morality: 5

Virtue: Charity

Vice: Greed

Initiative: 7

Speed: 12

Defense: 4

Health: 7

MARGARET WALKER

The daughter of a poor London cobbler, Margaret Walker grew up amidst fears of contracting the plague that took the lives of her mother and younger siblings. After her mother passed, the family's fortunes soured, and Margaret was forced to seek a better life by marrying the son of a merchant. Not long after she wed, she began training as a midwife, and became pregnant herself.

Though she knew she should be happy, Margaret's pregnancy was difficult, in part because she was afraid of losing her child to the plagues that ravaged her beloved city. Forced into bed rest, Margaret began having nightmares about giving birth to a monstrous devil child riddled with witch's marks, and bright lights she couldn't explain. Not long afterward, a terrible fever overtook her, forcing her into a state of delirium where she envisioned herself walking through tunnels of slick, white bone, through rooms of ever-watchful eyes, with walls



made of the smiling mouths of clients covered in slick streams of blood. When she awoke from these fevers, Margaret would always hear voices that seemed to be just beyond her hearing, as if they were in another room, too muffled to be understood.

When it came time to give birth, her labor was so difficult she begged for death. In agonizing pain and desperate for relief, Margaret prayed for her life to end. Through the fog of anguish, a gentle hand reached back, and a woman draped in white offered her a bargain. Believing her to be Margaret the Virgin of Antioch, the mother-to-be saw no malice in the woman's words. For the life of her child, Margaret's pain would be erased, but she would need to continue her sacrifice in order to remain alive and deliver future children.

Desperate for relief, Margaret took the deal and was released from the ability to feel anything at all. This contract, however, was a ruse, for the Woman in White required tribute to keep Margaret alive — the death of her child, a baby boy. While she knew that she should feel something, anything, about the child's death, Margaret was completely numb to the world. Afterward, Margaret told her husband that she wished to take the child to a local church to be buried in private, but never did.

As she swaddled her dead baby, Margaret listened to the White Woman's instructions to prepare the body to become her vessel. When the baby was deemed unworthy and unclean, Margaret was terrified, but fell prey to the White Woman's ominous, seductive whispers. Promising her power and protection from the plague, the White Woman gave new instructions, to find venerated husks of dead children that would serve as vessels for her to inhabit.

Not long afterward, Margaret and her husband were recruited to make the voyage across the oceans to help colonize the Americas for the glory of Queen Elizabeth. Though her husband died en route, she survived the trip to Roanoke Island, and served the colonists as their midwife and cook.

Appearance: Well-kempt and garbed in white or gray dresses, Margaret protects herself with an air of piety and the glowing kindness of a new mother. She professes to be a devout Protestant, and wears a small cross around her neck. Though other colonists rarely pry into her personal belongings, Margaret carries the mummified bodies of the children she kills, for she believes they not only house the spirit of the White Woman, they are keeping her alive. These horrors are usually wrapped in heavy blankets, placed in a basket, and carried by her side. It is said that the mummified children's corpses will make the noises of a newborn, cooing and even crying.

Storytelling Hints: Margaret appears kind, helpful, nurturing, and sympathetic. She will help players in any way, pretending to be a loving, caring pillar of the community. However, Margaret has never allowed herself to grieve, and she sometimes slips into a dreamlike state where she cares for her "children." Unable to feel physical pain, the midwife is easily bruised and sometimes cannot feel the difference between hot or cold. As the White Woman's whispers get louder and louder, urging her to kill another child, Margaret will have flashes of overwhelming grief over the loss of her boy, and will become more and more frantic to try to find a newborn to kill.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 4, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Investigation 2, Medicine (Mummification) 4, Occult 5

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 4, Survival 4, Weaponry (Knives) 4

Social Skills: Empathy 3, Intimidation 4, Streetwise 5, Subterfuge 4

Merits: Direction Sense, Holistic Awareness, Language (French)

Willpower: 6

Morality: 7

Virtue: Charity

Vice: Pride

Initiative: 6

Speed: 9

Defense: 2

Health: 7

CROOKED MAN

There are some things in the world that are not meant to exist, and the Crooked Man is one of them. The Crooked Man is eons old and surrounded by the mantle of death and misery; he is so old he has forgotten his true name. The Hooded Man, or Mowcottowosh (Black) as some Native tribes refer to him, is a walking nightmare and bane to most Ghost-Talkers on the eastern seaboard.

It is rumored that he traveled over from a far distant land, on a bridge that has since long been swallowed by the sea, and has been wandering for so long he has forgotten his name. The Crooked Man's memory is fragmented, and yet he remains lucid and aware, a cunning predator bent on maintaining his immortality. To stay alive, he feeds off of corruption, and nudges rivals into full-blown enemies, hoping they will come to blows.

While this walking embodiment of sin is immortal, the Crooked Man's power waxes and wanes during times of war and peace. Though he is not a god, he believes himself to be one, and feeds off of chaos to replenish his life force. His manner is not that of a deity, but a crafty criminal. His true talents lie in pitting sister against sister by creating imagined slights and fabricating transgressions. Though his methods



are not known, wherever the Crooked Man is sighted, there is sure to be a brawl that, if left unresolved, would soon lead to a battle, if not a war.

Appearance: Draped in the skins of his victims, tanned and blackened by ash and pine tree sap, the Crooked Man is unnaturally tall with longer than normal limbs. He is gangly, yet uses this to his advantage, by grappling opponents from a distance and using his teeth to rip out their throats. In the physical realm his presence will spoil food, and his shadow in the underworld is hearkened by the sound of screaming coyotes. A black pitch will float off from his form and burn through ghosts and underworld material with purple and green flames and clotting smoke.

His wake also brings forth the ghosts of his victims, souls incapable of passing on while he continues to exist. These restless shades follow the Crooked Man as his servants. Though they scream for vengeance, they follow his commands, and are anchored to the skins he wears.

Storytelling Hints: The Crooked Man cares only about his survival, and little for humanity. He is an ancient, terrible being, but he does not attack indiscriminately. Due to his age and his reputation, the Crooked Man encourages wild tales describing his deeds, and thrives off the fear caused by the mention of his name. He is an expert survivalist who knows every hill, river, and valley in the land, and will use his environment to his advantage. Though he relies on his cunning to stalk his victims, he remains superstitious. While the Crooked Man is hunting his targeted prey, he will kill innocents wandering in forests and fields, and disembowel them to read their entrails and divine the future.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Investigation 3, Medicine 2, Crafts 3, Occult (Haruspicy) 5

Physical Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl 4, Larceny 3, Stealth 4, Survival (Tracking) 5, Weaponry (Clubs) 5

Social Skills: Animal Ken 3, Empathy 3, Intimidation 5, Persuasion 3, Subterfuge 4

Merits: Danger Sense, Fleet of Foot 1, Unseen Sense, Weaponry Dodge

Willpower: 9

Morality: 2

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Gluttony

Initiative: 8

Speed: 14

Defense: 4

Health: 10

Story Hooks

Foreboding Lands offers Storytellers the opportunity to run action-centric chronicles or nuanced sessions that focus on the many challenges European Sin-Eaters and Native Ghost-Talkers face in this era.

The Haunted Forest

Recently, a group of colonists were ordered to explore Roanoke Island and its surrounding territories, to categorize the local flora and fauna and seek fresh water. It's been three days and they have yet to return, prompting the colony to investigate. Before they set out, however, the settlers receive word from the local tribes to be on the lookout for rabid animals in the area, and they offer to help if needed. Faced with the possibility of two threats, the krewe volunteers to pick up the trail.

What follows is an exhaustive search through a haunted forest just off the shoreline unlike anything the krewe has ever seen before. Everywhere they walk, they step in shallow puddles of blood, and a thin, high-pitched wail follows them. The trees are gnarled; their ropy branches droop, forming shapes that look like swaying nooses and wriggling snakes.

Even odder still is the omnipresent stench of the salty sea, and the keening cry of an otherworldly sea creature.



Suicidal whispers goad the krewe, attempting to drown out the warnings of their geists. When they stumble across the bodies of the colonists, the krewe realizes that the haunted forest isn't just scary, it's murderous. What could be behind such a threat? Is it an abmortal who has taken over the area or a Kerberoi that's infected the land?

Lost in Translation

Rumors have begun to spread among the many Native tribes about the fresh batch of colonists who are arriving on Roanoke Island, and the others who are likely on the way. Native Ghost-Talkers are concerned about the uptick in restless ghosts, but if the European Sin-Eaters could shed light on possible explanations, this could serve to help everyone. The question, however, is how to give both groups the opportunity to trust each other, when they are fractured and pointing fingers at whoever is most convenient.

Though both Native Ghost-Talkers and European Sin-Eaters want to solve the mystery, the factions are more fractured than either group realizes. Native tribes are not a unified, singular people as many Europeans believe, and vice versa. In order for them to work together, they must come to grips with their newly-formed krewes and learn how to compare notes despite their different Thresholds, beliefs, and cultures.

Krewes might connect in a few different ways before addressing the major threat. They might call a meeting, deal with a less threatening ghost, do favors for one another, or exchange members as a sign of trust. Whatever they decide, the only way forward is to collaborate and focus on their duty. Can they broker a truce to cleanse the land of this taint?

Ancient Horror

While venturing inland, the krewe uncovers a bizarre, runic seal etched into a rock. This boulder is marked with layers of dried, crusty blood and empty, hand carved, wooden bowls surround it. Something or someone lives nearby, but figuring out what it is means the krewe will encounter the Crooked Man, an ancient abmortal unlike anything they have faced before.

Finding it will not be easy, however, for the krewe has already been noticed. The grass withers wherever they step, for the Crooked Man stalks them, hunts them, watches their every movement. The krewe suspects they may have run afoul of something terrifying, but is not sure what or who. The longer the krewe investigates the abmortal, the more time he has to play with them, forcing them to question each other's motives and cause discord. Will the krewe fall into his elaborate trap? How will they deal with a cunning abmortal who predates human civilization?

Lost at Sea

The eastern seaboard is long and filled with many possible places for ships to land. Native Ghost-Talkers have seen the great ships land before, and are amazed at the sight, while European Sin-Eaters take their vessels for granted. Only Europeans, however, have witnessed the blackened, charred ruins of a ship decimated by naval battles, or a capsized boat that falls into the ocean, drowning all aboard.

The sight of a most recent occurrence, however, is the mysterious appearance of a derelict Spanish ship, left adrift a few miles off shore. Soft moans can be heard, echoing along the beach, and a ghostly fog rolls in during twilight. The krewe must head to the ship to investigate it, but this presents a challenge for them, for the derelict vessel is treacherous to walk upon. While on board, the moaning cries lead them to a renegade group of ghosts upset that they died so suddenly. Dispatching the ghosts and getting off the ship may prove to be harder than they thought, but if the krewe is successful, the ship's booty is theirs for the taking.

Inspirations

Materials produced during the late 16th century were filled with strange accounts and rampant speculation, as many settlers and colonists were shocked to learn their promised "New World" was already occupied. Religious viewpoints, loyalties to the crown, economic struggles, and a desire for power and status impacted how this material was written. In this time period, beliefs in the supernatural tend to be more culturally and spiritually distinct, even among the different Christian sects.

While many letters, articles, and essays are available through websites like and www.virtualjamestown.org and university archives, there are a number of books that examine what happened in Roanoke through a modern lens. These books include: *A Kingdom Strange: The Brief and Tragic History of the Lost Colony of Roanoke* by James Horn, *A Voyage Long and Strange by Tony Horowitz, The Head in Edward Nugent's Hand: Roanoke's Forgotten Indians* by Michael Leroy Oberg, *Roanoke: The Abandoned Colony* by Karen Ordahl Kupperman, and *The Race to the New World* by Douglas Hunter. Additionally, you can find a few documentaries as well, and these include the *Wraiths of Roanoke* produced by Rainstorm Entertainment, and *Roanoke: The Lost Colony* from BSDS Productions.

Should you wish to incorporate more First Nations Ghost-Talkers into your game, please keep in mind that the late sixteenth century is a challenging time period to find source materials from a non-Eurocentric viewpoint, and it is next to impossible to adopt renditions of tribal cultures from popular media without reinforcing harmful racist stereotypes. Many of the firsthand accounts describing the Americas were written by European settlers, colonists, and historians in languages such as Spanish, French, Dutch, and English for their fellow countrymen and women. Thus, it was extremely rare for any European to learn one of the First Nations' languages like Algonquin, and even rarer still for a native speaker to publish in her mother tongue.

Because many, if not all, European countries had a religious, economic, and military interest to settle the already occupied lands in America and her surrounding territories, treatises were not typically favorable toward the people that comprised the First Nations, and some were written by authors who had never encountered a tribe or set sail across the Atlantic. Thus, many accounts are not favorable toward indigenous populations, and very rarely — if at all — do the colonizing forces regard Native peoples as their equals.

One of the best ways to gain insight into the First Nations point of view, however, is to hear what happened in their own words. To get a feel for their cultural viewpoint, there are books written by Native authors in the modern era that may help facilitate cultural understanding. For example, the acclaimed writer Joseph Bruchac has a series of books that includes *Our Stories Remember: American Indian History, Culture, and Values through Storytelling*, and *When the Chenoo Howls: Native American Tales of Terror* which was co-authored with James Bruchac. As another, websites like www.indigenouspeople.net offer inspiration for further research.





"Mary?" Percy's voice came, muffled, through the attic door over the roar of the thunderstorm. It brought to mind the distant aromas of tea and flowers, salt water and honest sweat, the scents of dalliance that seemed a lifetime away. Now all I could smell were the cloying, bitter odors of brimstone, mildew, rot, and chemical potions, the names of which I could not remember.

"Mary, what are you doing up there?" he called again with a cheerfulness dissonant to the morbidity before me. "You've been so scarce these past weeks, ever since…well, are you coming to dinner or not?" *Ever since the fire,* were the words he wouldn't say.

"Don't let him in," said John, as he scribbled feverishly in his book. "He'll stop us, don't open the door!"

"No," I murmured, stepping close to the mortuary slab and threading my fingers through the chilly dead flesh shaped like a hand. My own were stained with blood and ash beneath their clean facade, and only this miracle of life could cleanse them in truth. "No, he shan't stop us."

John looked up at me, his furious eyes bloodshot, his dark curls a nest of tangles, his face like damp parchment. "Good…good," he stammered. "Then we're ready."

I stroked the leathery hand and put it aside, taking up instead my coil of wire and standing poised above the voltaic pile at the foot of the slab. My heart was calm, not hurtling toward faint as I'd expected. The flickering embers of complacent destiny had lured me here, and I, as God once did, had simply to apply the spark and bring events full circle. I, a mere thespian, recited a script written in my own hand while John pulled up the curtain and all the eyes of the universe fell upon us.

"Now, Mary," said John, a sullen whirlwind of bottled rage and fierce activity, "when I give the signal, you—"

"I know how it works."

"Yes, of course." With a surgeon's care, he connected wire to wire and all to the pile, completing the first circuit. A low thrum sounded throughout the house entire and made the wooden door below rattle in its hinges, mingling with the rain's deafening clatter.

"Mary?" Percy called once more, notes of concern now apparent. "Mary! Is everything all right? Answer me!" I spoke not. He began to pound his fists and feet upon the door, but the lock held. "Byron, help me!" I heard him shout.

"No," I whispered, dropping the coil and turning toward the voices. "No! They mustn't see!"

"Finish it!" John snarled.

I took up my coil once again, and fixed my gaze upon the figure, given shape from formless pieces by my needle and thread. A hot flush found my cheeks as I imagined my poor ardent Percy, laying eyes on this, the great work of passion between John and me. Though he would have given me all blessings to lie with the doctor if I chose, *this* was another world of treachery completely. What could I say that wouldn't fall like sad, wet platitudes on his ears? But perhaps the story would move him, this work of ours a healing elixir for transgressions past. Yes, Percy, with his innocent's heart, would forgive me.

"Mary! Now, damn you!" John's exclamation and the renewed thumping on the door below recalled my thoughts to the task, and I completed the second circuit. From me the pulsing fire of life flowed into this new Adam of our making. As God made us in His image, so too had we made an image of ourselves.

The figure shuddered and convulsed, and I stepped back as John stepped forward, reaching out with a trembling hand. Sparks lit the dim attic and gave counterpoint to the mounting cacophony all around us. Finally, a moment of stillness came upon us and I despaired. First, to see that it wasn't moving. And then, to see that it *was.*

"It's alive," I breathed. "God in Heaven, John, it's alive!"

"Now at last is our day, Mary," he said to me, shaking with a mad ecstasy. "No more will they toast only the name of *Byron* in the halls of the learned and free-thinking. Now when they raise a glass, it will be Polidori and Godwin they cheer!"

Then the door burst open. Percy and Byron fell over themselves to clamber up the stairs, shouting my name, John's name. Their words died in the air when they saw the figure lift its arms, turn its palms over and over, and slowly rise to sit on the slab.

With a shriek, I hastened to stumble down the stairs and through the house, out into the lightning-streaked night. Percy cried out, "Mary!" But I ran and ran, until I stood soaked to the bone and half submerged in the glutted lake, rising as the monster had risen, flowing past its boundaries to overtake the shore. But for all the rain and tears and surging water, nothing could quench the fire still burning in my mind. Always burning.

The Year Without a Summer (1816)

A fearful hope was all the world contain'd;/
Forests were set on fire—but hour by hour/
They fell and faded—and the crackling trunks/
Extinguish'd with a crash—and all was black.
—Lord Byron, "Darkness"

1816. The height of Romanticism, when brooding iconoclasts and revolutionary heroes are admired and reviled in equal measure. The early 19th century in Europe is the era of Napoleon Bonaparte, the invention of the electric battery, and the birth of the Gothic horror genre. It's the breeding ground for a passionate movement in the liberal arts toward exploring the depths of the human emotional landscape and the awe-inspiring grandeur of nature, and using poetry and journalism as platforms for radical antiestablishment reform. Great composers, painters, and writers express Romantic ideals in such iconic works as Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9*, Fuseli's painting *The Nightmare*, Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* – and, of course, Mary Shelley's famous novel, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus.* Political upheavals reshape the face of Europe, while the United States fights the War of 1812 and continues to carve up its settled land into recognized states.

For all the individualism and outrage that characterize the Romantic period, the summer of 1816 is a dismal one filled with despair for many. The cataclysmic eruption of the volcano Mount Tambora in the Dutch East Indies (later Indonesia) one year earlier triggered a chain reaction that engulfs much of the world in a climatic disaster, bringing about economic turmoil, religious fervor, and an awful lot of death.

That same summer, five free spirits change history on the shores of the swollen but still beautiful Lake Geneva. The infamous Lord Byron and his personal physician John William Polidori spend the summer in self-imposed exile there, joined by Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, her lover (later husband) Percy Bysshe Shelley, and her half sister Claire Clairmont. Together, they set fire to the world's imagination with their stories, all the while wrestling with their personal demons and making a dreadful discovery.

Themes

For the Created, and indeed for most of humanity, *The Year Without a Summer* embodies many dualities:

- *Poverty vs. Privilege.* Failed harvests and the subsequent skyrocketing prices of food dig a massive gulf between the haves and have nots of this era, leading to widespread riots and deepening political divisions all over the Western world. Most of the Created are, by necessity, on the have not side of this coin, although some Galateids or those desperate creatures willing to sell their own Vitriol to alchemical societies make out like bandits.

- *Empathy vs. Disdain.* In many countries, the ruling classes see the hardships of the working classes as a minor phase that will work itself out given time – which is to say, they think the famine and disease aren't their problem. As Victor Frankenstein says in Mary Shelley's novel, "I compassioned him and sometimes felt a wish to console him; but when I looked upon him, when I saw the filthy mass that moved and talked, my heart sickened and my feelings were altered to those of horror and hatred." Thus do those with

everything to lose and nothing (so they think) to gain from selfless acts shut themselves up in ivory towers while the masses starve. On the other hand, many of those who survive during this time of hunger and misery do so through the charity of others. Neighbors band together to support each other and keep their communities alive — or to strike out and find new homes. The Created of this time, much hardier and better equipped to survive than humans, are often moved to help; but just as often, Disquiet paints them as the cause of the problems, and their Wastelands only worsen the situation.

- *Stagnation vs. Progress.* In many ways, the productivity of the time grinds to a halt. Employment rates in Europe plummet and agriculture fails spectacularly all over the world. Entire villages and towns cease to exist, either through Mount Tambora's direct destruction, or due to famine, frost, and mass exodus. On the other hand, the creative thinkers in this era generate an astounding body of artistic and philosophical works that still ignite inspiration in the public centuries later. Prometheans are treated to the best and worst extremes of humanity in this era. Some take it as revelation, while others lose faith in the Pilgrimage altogether.

- *Occultism vs. Science.* In the late 17th century, chemistry was established as a separate science from its predecessor, alchemy, and over time took its place as a widely accepted practice. By the early 19th century, alchemy has become popular again, but this time as a more spiritual art, a mystical metaphor for the perfection of the soul rather than a literal attempt to transmute metals. Science is not yet so advanced that the dismissal of occultism is mainstream — indeed, in another few decades it will enjoy a widespread revival — but advanced enough that it has begun to solve the mysteries of the natural world (at least, as far as most people in the world of Chronicles of Darkness are aware) and fascinate dabblers to the point of spreading ideas into the popular culture of the time. This new concept of popular science convinces some that humanity will — and should — triumph over nature once and for all. Of course, there are alchemists and then there are *alchemists*, and those who know the secrets of the Created straddle the line between purely spiritual alchemy and experiments with proven results. Prometheans are often the unfortunate victims of this renewed interest in combining science with mysticism to produce wonders.

Tying this all together are the *ripples* that run through this era – a series of triggers largely invisible to those who live through them, causing upheaval and strife continents away. Prometheans are familiar with the idea that one act powered by Pyros can spiral into all manner of change, as its transformative properties work their will. Here in 1816, the dominoes are the size of whole nations, and the fingers that topple them belong to both the ravages of the natural world and the supernatural monsters that lurk in their shadows.

This is also an era of transformation for the Azothic memory that connects all of the Created through the Divine Fire. In the summer of 1816, a Lineage sputters and dies out forever, and from its ashes a new one rises. Themes of destruction followed by renewal and growth are an appropriate reflection of the times as well, as the world figures out how to recover from Mount Tambora's tragic legacy.

Moods

Isolation, despair, and depression — both emotional and economic — characterize the year of Eighteen-Hundred-and-Froze-to-Death, as it became known in New England. At the same time, the spirit of freedom and the romanticisation of the human condition that grip the Western world during this period in history cannot be quenched altogether by hardship, and who romanticizes the human condition more than the Created? As the era that gives rise to the first Gothic horror literature, the Year Without a Summer is a time uniquely Promethean in mood: a flickering candle of hope and a mad obsession with explaining the inexplicable struggling amidst a landscape of horror, melancholy, and desperate outrage. In a way, the mood of this era reflects the temperament of the Frankenstein Lineage itself — its progenitor is, like anyone, a product of his time.

What Has Come Before

In 1809, an unknown volcano erupted violently, spewing ash and sulfur dioxide into the Earth's stratosphere. At the time, meteorology and data analysis couldn't definitively link volcanic activity with climate change, so no one then understood that this eruption — followed by several other smaller ones over the next decade across the world — cooled temperatures all over the globe. This set the stage for the eruption of Mount Tambora in April 1815, the most lethal volcanic eruption in recorded history. By the time the fallout from Tambora began, the climate was already shifting.

Mount Tambora was the primary navigational landmark on the island of Sumbawa in the Dutch West Indies. When Tambora belched its toxic payload miles into the sky, it destroyed itself in rivers of molten lava that scorched the mountainside and buried most of the island's inhabitants under fatal layers of ash and pumice. Villages with diverse cultures, fertile land, and prosperous trade were laid to waste in a single day, including the Tambora people themselves, an entire culture and kingdom lost. In the months afterward, many more islanders died from starvation, or sickness from water poisoned by ash. The planet's stratosphere became choked with volcanic waste that slowly spread across the world. It reflected sunlight away from the Earth, caused uncanny storms, and turned summer into winter.



By the spring of 1816, Europe and the northeastern United States knew something was wrong, though they could only stab blindfolded at its cause. From New England all the way down to Tennessee and the Carolinas, the unseasonable cold brought frosts and drought that persisted off and on for the entire year, and famine reigned. Very few of the crops planted by American farmers could be harvested come fall, and most European countries had banned the export of food to deal with their own troubles. The poverty and dismal living conditions brought down the spirits of a nation that had been so recently optimistic, after what it perceived as a victory in the War of 1812 against British troops. Animals, too, felt the sting of the yearlong winter; Vermont farmers were reduced to tying shorn fleeces back onto sheep in an attempt to save them from the cold, and people routinely discovered the corpses of dead wild birds in their barns and homes. Failed crops meant no fodder for cattle and no hay for horses. Worse, it meant no seed to save for the next year's crop. So many Americans migrated southwest in droves from New England to barely charted Ohio and newly recognized Indiana, leaving behind abandoned ghost towns.

In Europe, the volcanic winter brought endless rain and snow instead of drought. Their crops were just as dead, though, washed away by floods or molding and rotting in the ground, and many countries found their economies spiraling into dysfunction. In Britain, the working classes rioted over rising unemployment, high wartime taxes persisting into a time of peace, and prohibitively high grain prices, while Parliament and the Prince Regent printed reassuring statements and spent their money extravagantly, asserting that it wasn't the place of the government to aid the poor. France saw even more turmoil, the whole country in massive debt already thanks to the recently ended Napoleonic Wars and forced to pay for food and shelter for thousands of Allied troops still stationed there, while King Louis XVIII clung to his crown for dear life. The famine and growing poverty in Ireland were compounded by laws that discriminated against the Catholics that made up most of the working class, and a lack of proper representation in its British-led government. Germany and Switzerland fell victim to massive flooding all summer long, overflowing lakes and rivers and killing crops, while the import of cheap British machine-made textiles deprived many workers of their jobs.

In July, a dense portion of the volcano's global dust veil settled over Europe, causing days as dark as night. In Italy and elsewhere, people were alarmed to see red, brown, or yellow snow falling from the sky. Once it became clear that the late summer and early autumn harvests were doomed, many of the rural poor left their homes in search of warmer weather and work, often with nothing to take with them but the clothes on their back and mouths to feed. The majority were forced to walk under the constant downpour, unable to feed horses or mules.

Eastern lands weren't immune to the influence of Tambora, either. Drought and cold followed by an absurd

snowfall in typically mild Yunnan Province, China, made the rice crop that sustained the entire population dwindle severely in 1815 and then fail completely the next year. The poor were so desperate they were forced to eat soil and clay in a doomed attempt to survive starvation and malnutrition. When that didn't work, parents sold or even killed their own children to spare them starving to death.

Epidemics

As if famine and starvation, freezing to death, and being flooded out of their homes weren't enough, people in 1816 also feared succumbing to disease. In Ireland, the intense cold and nonstop rain, combined with the failure of potato crops which normally provided most of the nutrients Irish peasants needed, and extreme poverty which led to unsanitary conditions, all provided the entrée for a widespread outbreak of typhus.

Worse, though, was the nigh-global cholera pandemic. The egregious drought during what was supposed to be monsoon season in Bengal, India, was followed by the opposite extreme of unseasonable flooding, which created the perfect conditions for a new strain of brutal cholera to rear its head. Over the next few decades, it spread from India across the Middle East, then to Nepal, the Philippines, Japan, China, Russia, western Europe, and the Americas, killing hundreds of thousands.

Unexpected Progress

While the poor of the era toiled and starved and died, those with the money to coast along through the hard times and bizarre weather, and those who were dedicated to their craft regardless of hardship, produced amazing works of art, literature, and scientific innovation. The Romantic period spawned several of England's most darling poets, including Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and John Keats. In China during the summer of 1816, a writer named Li Yuyang resurrected an ancient form of Chinese poetry known as Seven Sorrows to document the suffering of his people in verse. A German baron by the name of Karl von Drais invented the *Laufmaschine*, later called the dandy horse or velocipede, as a human-powered alternative to horses since the animals were so difficult to feed — the two-wheeled "running machine," operated by walking or running while straddling the device, was the precursor to the bicycle. Artists such as J. M. W. Turner produced spectacular paintings depicting the ethereal light and deep color of the awe-inspiring red sunsets and red or pink tinted clouds of 1816, brought about by the volcanic debris in the atmosphere. Other artists painted the ferocity of the year's savage storms.

At the Villa Diodati in the Swiss village of Cologny, Byron was stirred by the gloom blotting out the sun to write his poem "Darkness," and to instigate a "ghost story" competition with his friends. The latter led to a tale called *The Vampyre* by Polidori, which was the first Gothic vampire story and inspired Bram Stoker's *Dracula* in 1897. But none of these was so viscerally wrenched from the ill-fated events of that summer as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

Looking for a Reason

Scientists bickered over what was causing the catastrophic weather. Many thought that sunspots, more visible than usual due to Tambora's ash cloud veiling the sun, caused the cold weather and heralded the return of an Ice Age. Some in the United States argued that deforestation was to blame, while some thought that *more* deforestation would warm the East Coast back up. Others thought it was because of a series of earthquakes a few years prior, or a solar eclipse, or the movement of Arctic ice floes, or a disruption of the electric charge between the Earth and the atmosphere.

An astrologer in Bologna, Italy published a prophecy claiming that the world would come to an end on July 18, 1816, upon the impending failure of the sun. He wasn't the only one to see the strange weather and dark times as signs of the apocalypse, but he was the loudest. In the wake of his prophecy, Christians all over Europe prepared for the Book of Revelations to come true, rioting and praying in the streets or committing suicide. In America, too, a religious revival swept the fledgling nation as people turned to faith when science could not provide answers. The damning weather of 1816 seemed like the latest of a series of apocalyptic heralds along the Midwestern frontier of the United States, including massive earthquakes, an epidemic, and mass migrations of animals.

What Really Happened?

No one knows for sure. Alchemists' records and Promethean Rambles of the time identify Tambora and its smaller erupting cousins as the nominal cause for the extreme weather and its consequences, and they both recognize the provocative hand of the Divine Fire in the Earth-spanning crucible, but they disagree on why the volcanoes erupted in the first place. Azothic memory vaguely suggests that something badly agitated the world's Divine Fire in 1816 and it lashed out. But what was the catalyst?

A Ramble in travelogue form kept by a follower of Mercurius contains jotted notes about a journey she undertook over the course of several decades at the turn of the 19th century. Tracking large concentrations of Pyros and Flux around the world, she formulates a theory: that over the course of years, a number of potent *qashmallim* appeared near volcanoes that erupted soon after. She makes no suggestions as to what their individual missions were, but she speculates that they might have been related somehow, or at least that their cumulative result was a slow worldwide buildup of Pyros agitation leading up to the cataclysm on Sumbawa. She suspects that it all culminated in the fearsome manifestation of a powerful arch-*qashmal* at Tambora in 1815, setting off a chain reaction of Pyros that sent the whole world into tumult.

Later Promethean scholars and alchemists who know where to look put together a seemingly unrelated series of



pilgrim marks from hidden places all over the globe, written by many different Created, that may piece together a cautionary tale. The theory goes that a Promethean on the island of Sumbawa tried to force New Dawn too early, and failed so disastrously that a ferocious Firestorm rose up from the volcano to teach a lesson to those who would dare take more than they deserve. Whether or not this theory is true, it's inarguable that some Prometheans at the time considered the atmospheric changes a worldwide Wasteland and a sign that *all* of the Created were doomed — that the Earth was finally taking a firm hand with abominations that never should have graced its surface in the first place. The same apocalyptic fervor that gripped humanity affected Prometheans just as strongly.

A collection of half-burnt notes salvaged from a fire at the headquarters of a secret alchemical brotherhood known as the Golden Thorn tells a third potential story. Proponents of this theory claim that the Golden Thorn, a black alchemy offshoot of the Order of the Golden and Rosy Cross which itself was a German Rosicrucian society dedicated to the tenets of spiritual alchemy, embarked upon a blasphemous project to create a new fire-based Promethean Lineage since, for all they knew, the previous line had died out and no new one had yet been discovered. Notes indicate that they may have provoked volcanic activity using alchemical formulas and forbidden rituals in their attempts to create life, and that their experiments at various volcanoes over the first two decades of the 1800s bore no fruit, prompting them to reach beyond their means at Tambora in a final grasp for godlike power. The experiment backfired calamitously, killing every member present and generating a disfigured, flame-powered Pandoran horror along with the eruption of the volcano. Those who subscribe to this theory like to say that this Pandoran set the fire that destroyed the brotherhood once and for all.

Other rumors come and go over the years, based on similarly scanty evidence and vague Azothic suggestions. Students (or revisionists) of history among Prometheans, alchemists, and even *sublimati* have occasionally cooked up their own unsubstantiated theories to further a cause or prove a point.

The Shelley Circle

Two poets and those who loved them came together in a series of individual decisions that blossomed into astronomical change for the Created. Through their desires, their dreams, and their sorrows, each of the five had a hand in the tragic story that birthed a Lineage.

Mary, Percy, and Claire

Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, later to become Mary Shelley, was the daughter of freethinking rebels against societal norms and champions of the individual. Mary Wollstonecraft, her mother, was a great advocate for women's rights ahead of her time. She died soon after young Mary was born. Her father, William Godwin, was an anarchist and vocal proponent of what he called "political justice," and had many admirers among the younger generation in England. Mary had two half sisters, Fanny Imlay and Claire Clairmont, among a few other half siblings. Godwin ensured that intelligent Mary had a vigorous education at home and in Scotland, and she developed a dedicated love of writing and philosophy.

One of Godwin's admirers was iconoclastic poet and atheist Percy Bysshe Shelley, who preached free love, had an amateur's fascination with science, and suffered from a laudanum addiction after using the narcotic to treat frequent panic attacks. Mary, then 17, and Shelley, then 21, fell in love. Shelley, however, was already married, creating a scandal that Mary's father tried unsuccessfully to shut down. After Shelley threatened to commit suicide if he was not allowed to be with Mary, the couple eloped and left England along with Claire, leaving Fanny — who herself harbored a secret love for Shelley — and Shelley's child and pregnant wife behind.

During their trip across France to Switzerland, Mary became pregnant with Shelley's child. This exacerbated an already miserable journey, as Claire became a third wheel, Shelley ran out of money, and the plight of postwar France impressed upon Mary an even stronger hatred of war than she'd already had. They returned to England when the financial situation turned intolerable, only to find that Mary's father refused to see — or fund — them. The child was born prematurely and died soon after her birth, planting seeds of grief and survivor's guilt in Mary's heart.

On the way home, the trio passed through the Odenwald mountains in southwestern Germany, a region teeming with local legends, stygian forests, and imposing castles. Traveling down the river Rhine, they stopped for a day to tour Frankenstein Castle. Rumors surrounded the place like lingering smoke, including malevolent stories of the infamous alchemist Johann Conrad Dippel, who had lived there a century before. Fascinated, Shelley and Mary dragged Claire along to see where the alchemist — said to have made deals with the devil — mixed his forbidden oils and worked his macabre experiments with freshly exhumed corpses, trying to transfer souls into the dead. Mary spent hours studying the notes and apparatuses left behind there, unable to tear herself away from the idea of creating life from death.

Byron and Polidori

Meanwhile, British baron George Gordon, better known as Lord Byron, was already an accomplished poet by the time he met Claire in 1816. Byron was born with a clubfoot birth defect which gave him a slight limp, but didn't stop him from developing a love for sports and, later, combat. Within the first two decades of his life, Byron racked up considerable debt, became a celebrity for both his poetry and his countless scandals, and took a grand tour of Europe and the Mediterranean to find a place where he could pursue both men and women without the eyes of England's strict laws against homosexuality upon him. When he returned, he married mathematician Annabella Millbanke, but she sued for legal separation and custody of their daughter Ada after his

numerous affairs — including one with his half sister Augusta Leigh. Byron loved many but had true loving relationships with few over the course of his life. Augusta was one of the few, and the social pressure to stay away from her ate at him.

Watching his life spiral out of his control as rumors flew and his creditors became more aggressive, Byron agreed to meet with Claire Clairmont at her insistence that she wanted a mentor for her writing. They had a brief affair in the spring of 1816 during which Claire became pregnant with his child. Soon after, Byron sent himself into exile from England along with his personal physician, another aspiring young writer named John William Polidori. They traveled Europe and, in May of 1816, rented the Villa Diodati, an estate on the shores of Lake Geneva in Cologny, Switzerland. Byron's publisher John Murray offered Polidori a significant sum to write a journal of their travels which he accepted happily, hoping that between the publication of the travelogue and Byron's support, he might make a true literary name for himself.

Polidori was only 20 years old when England's royal doctor, Sir Henry Halford, recommended him highly to Byron. The two physicians had mutual connections in the secret society of the Golden Thorn. Although Polidori himself wasn't a member, Halford hoped he could recruit the young man, who displayed a fascination with poisons, potions, and the nature of consciousness. Throughout Polidori's time at university, he attended semiregular meetings of the brotherhood and studied alchemy under Halford's attentive tutelage.

Polidori had adored Byron from afar and was overjoyed for the opportunity to travel with the English poet and spend every day looking after him. Polidori soon fell in love with Byron, viewing them as equals in intelligence, philosophy, authorial prowess, and social graces, making them a perfect match — all opinions which Byron didn't share. Nonetheless, Polidori became Byron's confidant and a foil for the noble's sadistic sense of humor as they traveled together.

Storms

By the summer of 1816, Shelley had become quite close to both Godwin sisters and sometimes shared a bed with both, although Mary remained his true love. Upon hearing that Byron had gone from England, Claire convinced Shelley and Mary to spend the summer at Cologny, determined to force Byron to love her despite his assurances that he didn't. She assumed that the child she carried would change his mind. She was wrong.

In May, Mary and her entourage arrived to rent the small Maison Chapuis, just down the waterfront from the Villa Diodati. The group spent most of its time at the larger estate letting Byron play host. They enjoyed sailing together and even occasionally made a competition of it, though more often than not they were cooped up inside by the storms that ravaged the Swiss countryside nearly every day. They whiled away the indoor hours talking, reading, writing, having sex, playing music, and imbibing the opiates and other pleasure drugs that Polidori expertly prepared. Servants sent into Geneva driving carriages on muddy roads to purchase food brought back news of absurdly high prices and stories of the gaunt and hungry poor, begging on all sides while the chill rain fell unceasingly.

Soon the tempestuous lake mirrored loves and wars just as fierce, most of them centered on the charismatic yet brooding Byron. He and Shelley hit it off immediately, prone to long and passionate conversations that sparked each other's poetic creativity — and Polidori's obvious jealousy. Byron showered Claire with lustful attention to satisfy his own cravings, only to turn her away with indifference whenever his interest waned. Undaunted, she continued to treat herself as his mistress, even through his disdain and mockery. When he insisted that the only way he would ever provide for their yet unborn child and bestow the privileges of his lordship upon it was if she gave it up to him alone, she gritted her teeth and agreed. And despite her tears and shame, she pursued him still, no longer able to see who she would be without him.

Polidori didn't escape belittlement at Byron's hands either. His pride was torn to shreds by Byron's dismissal of his literary talents and tendency to treat him more as a beloved but moronic pet than a cherished friend. But each time he considered quitting Cologny and returning home, to hell with Murray's money, the poet would sense his dark humor and come to his bed with reassuring words and intense love.

The Origins of the Frankensteins

The story presented here of how the Frankenstein Lineage came to be is only as true as the Storyteller makes it for her own game. She should feel free to change anything she likes to fit her needs. If the characters are meant to be involved in the creation of the new Lineage, perhaps *they* are the visitors that introduce Mary and the others to the Created. Perhaps they're instead the Amirani's killers, or perhaps they protect him from the Golden Thorn only to face his determination to be destroyed and end his line forever, and they must decide whether to let him. What if they interrupt what's happening at Diodati, and become entangled in a host of human dramas they barely understand? Or, if the players' characters aren't involved, maybe Victor Frankenstein really exists, and competes for Mary's or Byron's affections by performing the impossible. The account that follows is just one of many possibilities.

For a time Polidori would revel, certain that this time things would change and Byron would see his true worth, until the cycle inevitably began again. He grew increasingly passive aggressive and resentful as the weeks passed, to the point where he challenged Shelley to a duel over a sailing contest. He regretted it when Byron stepped in to say that though Shelley had qualms about dueling, Byron had none, and would gladly step in to take the other poet's place.

In the meantime, Mary — the only one of them to make no designs of any kind on Byron's affections — became the unwilling target of his obsession for the very virtue of having no interest. He was drawn especially by her intelligence, her quietude, and her pursuit of a traditionally male endeavor like writing. While Shelley had no objections, Mary would not allow Byron to make of her a pining plaything as he had of so many others, and had no desire to share her love with anyone but Shelley. She spent as many nights in their storm-wracked bedroom consoling Shelley after a hysterical fit brought on by nightmares as she did waking up in cold sweats from her own.

The Last Prophet

Over the millennia since the dawn of civilization, as a plethora of wars and diseases ravaged humankind and people oppressed other people with alarming regularity, the Amirani Lineage of the Created (see p. 98) have been on the front lines of righteous fury. Over time, in Rambles, they became known as those with the shortest projected lifespans; some joked that a Prophet on the Refinement of Phosphorum might as well never have existed at all. Despite the stereotype, the bodies of those who died in agony were never in short supply and the Lineage survived — if in small numbers — through countless tragedies and battles, until the summer of 1816.

As June arrived riding the coattails of thunder, a stranger came to Diodati, dressed in old Spanish clothes and soaked to the bone. He requested shelter from the storm and willing ears to hear his tale, giving his name as Vates. Byron was immediately fascinated by the visitor's swarthy, handsome face and mysterious demeanor, and insisted that the company listen to the story offered.

Vates told his Ramble in fits and starts, often descending into a brooding silence after some great confession or declaring that he could speak no more that night. He spoke of a past filled with violence and dark epiphanies, of a long life spent burning and killing for the sake of all humanity, though he looked to be only in his early 30s. Little by little he revealed the picture of a noble sufferer who claimed to have eagerly extracted confessions for the Spanish Inquisition until the church turned on him and he was forced to murder a dozen men before fleeing into solitude, realizing the monumental error in his judgment. Since then, he'd fought in wars and revolutions, inciting downtrodden souls to rise up against their oppressors and leaving bloody hatred in his wake.

Finally, one moonless night, knowing that his Pyros had already begun to seep into the bones of the Villa Diodati, Vates unveiled the greatest secret of his heart: that he was



not born, but Created. That the strangest of alchemies worked in him, had raised him from a lifeless thing. That the Inquisition betrayed him because they learned of his origins in blasphemy, and tried to destroy him. That the hypocrisy of his existence plagued him still, though he now knew that the Church was not the answer. He described his lifelong visions of creating another like himself, and how time after time he had failed. He had journeyed the breadth of the Earth to find one, but though he'd found other Prometheans, he had never once found another Prophet. He became convinced that he was the last of his kind, and looking back on all the pain and chaos he had wrought, decided that he *should* be the last. Now, with a worthy audience for his final Ramble, he could die with a peace he'd never before known.

Before the Promethean's arrival, the Diodati crew often turned to literature to entertain themselves, particularly when the weather was raging like a beast outside. They favored the macabre poetry of Coleridge and German ghost stories. Confronted now with the bizarre story of a corpse coming to life and spending a century bloodying his hands for the freedom of all, not from the pages of a book but from the mouth of a living, breathing person, they could think of nothing else.

During the several weeks of Vates' stay, Byron remained transfixed by his company, and spent long hours alone with the Prophet after the others had taken to bed. Once the fantastical tale had been told in full, Byron insisted that the rest of the group would provide "ghost stories" of their own, in an attempt to vault the high bar their visitor had set — believing that it had all been a fanciful, if intriguing, lie. Claire readily agreed, her hatred of the stranger that had immediately enticed Byron waking vicious competition in her. But Mary, beset by nightmares that only intensified after she heard the Promethean's Ramble and vividly recalling a dank castle workshop in the Odenwald, had no plans to participate in such a contest and tried to keep her distance from him, convinced of the truth in his words. Shelley, too, believed the story but was elated, taking it as proof that God did not exist and praising the enlightenment of this created being and whoever made him. Polidori, on the other hand, *knew* the story was true. He had heard rumors among the Golden Thorn of such creatures, brought back to life by alchemical miracles and producing rare reagents of immeasurable power. The methods were unclear — some traditionalists held to legends of necromancy or divine intervention, while those of a more modern bent claimed that practices such as galvanism and phrenology were the key — but their existence was certain. Polidori quietly resolved to discover Vates' true secrets, whether by word or by scalpel.

In the days after Byron's proclamation, the storm outside lashed against the house with such impossible fury that Vates knew his time was almost up. The Wasteland had begun, a drowned land fighting to extinguish his tortured flame, and the fate that he had come to meet was soon to follow. He watched as the attitudes of the people around him warped into extremes. On the night of the third day, Polidori's naked greed inspired him to enlist Mary's help, playing to her terror of the creature to persuade her that it was a threat and needed to be destroyed. They cornered the Promethean in his guest room as the clock struck midnight, bringing torches and hot pokers. Their bloodlust, fueled by Disquiet as much as by fear and avarice, disguised their victim's final relief from their eyes, and they believed that they triumphed over the monster who had actually given his life freely to bring a long-awaited end to a Lineage born in suffering.

The story, though, had just begun. Polidori allowed the fire to consume the room before he extinguished it, later claiming to Byron that an accident with a lantern had caused the tragedy. Byron held a funeral for the deceased Promethean, although Polidori hid the body and insisted that it had burned to cinders. Mary refused to speak about it to anyone, feigning grief to hide the guilt gnawing at her. In Disquiet's aftermath, she saw clearly that she had been accomplice to murder. Shelley's genuine despair at the loss of what he saw as a symbol of truth only served to deepen her remorse, and it mingled with the lingering pain of her infant daughter's death until it burst from her heart in a torrent of desperate action.

A Lineage Is Born

Mary came to Polidori's room late at night, a week after the fire. She insisted that surely, a man who knew so much about potions and medicines could discern the method of Vates' making, together with her notes on Dippel's work. She knew, she said, that he had hidden the body for his own secret study, and she demanded that he put it to good use, determined to bring the Promethean back. If alchemy could instill a corpse with living vigor once, she reasoned, it could do so again. And perhaps, in bringing another life into the world, she would make up for the baby she let slip into oblivion. For his part, Polidori realized that, were he to unlock the mysteries of the Created and produce his own self-sustaining source of alchemical ingredients, his unmitigated renown and his revenge on a Byron who spurned his love and scorned his talent both would be assured.

So he shared the secrets of the Golden Thorn with Mary, those to which he'd been privy, and he sent letters to Halford asking for materials and tomes to research, saying that he was finally ready to join the brotherhood as a full member. Halford was delighted to comply, and soon Polidori and Mary had a makeshift laboratory in the attic at Diodati. For weeks they toiled in secret, meeting whenever Shelley and Byron were at their habitual opium pipes, or out sailing on the lake, or deep in philosophical discussion. Mary surreptitiously made off with the electrical machines and other strange scientific instruments Shelley always carried with him, while Polidori prepared mixtures and paid servants to cross Lake Geneva and unearth corpses from the newly opened Cimetière du Petit-Saconnex. Vates' body was too burnt and mangled to use wholly, so they extracted its fluids — its yellow bile — and its heart for their new creation.

Together, Mary and Polidori labored, skipping meals and



eschewing sleep, overcome by obsession with their endeavor. Claire, abandoned by everyone and humiliated by Byron's persistent contempt, departed Switzerland to return to England, alone and knowing that she would have to give up her child as soon as it was born. Shelley expressed concern for Mary's health, noticing her paling complexion and sunken cheeks as the weeks passed, but her reassurances were excuse enough for him to return to Byron's side, engrossed in the baron's company once more.

Finally, harnessing the lightning storm with Shelley's instruments and synthesizing the alchemical formulas from the Golden Thorn's ancient research with severed corpse parts and the humours and heart of the Promethean they'd murdered, Mary and Polidori brought their creation to life. In a fit of biblical awe at the child they were crafting, godlike, with their own hands, Mary called the creature Adam. That very night, Byron and Shelley discovered their hidden laboratory. Adam, confused and overwhelmed as the two poets bombarded him with questions and Polidori pronounced his victory with a boundless zeal, appealed to Mary for help. But Mary, irrevocably confronted with the enormity of what she had done, seeing the mad undertaking now through Shelley's disbelieving eyes and unable to reconcile it with her view of herself, fled the attic.

In the face of Polidori's frenzied assertions of godhood and Byron's relentless scrutiny, barely comprehending his surroundings and already distraught at sending Mary running, the newly-made Promethean lashed out with his Pyros and inhuman strength, destroying the lab and all its equipment. Shelley saw his disfigurements in the stark white light of the storm and panicked. Badly shaken by the reaction and afraid of his own power, Adam leapt from the attic window and ran. Escaping into the rain-soaked darkness, under the cover of thunder's condemnation, the first Frankenstein struck out on his own.

Frankenstein; or, the Modern Promethean

Mary Godwin spent the last few weeks in Cologny penning a tale to satisfy Byron's continued perverse demand for a ghost story. With the events of the summer weighing on her mind still, she poured her guilt and despair and shame onto the pages in the form of a story about Victor Frankenstein and an ill-fated obsession that consumed everything he loved. Victor, in her mind, represented an unholy merger between herself and Polidori, torn between his guilt and his pride, his compassion and his terror. Her scant correspondence with Polidori afterward told her that he planned to hunt down their creation, and she couldn't escape regular nightmares that guided her pen. When she finally published the full novel in 1818, laying the existence of the Created bare to the public, it was in part a cautionary tale to dissuade others from making the mistake she and Polidori had made, and in part a deliberate fictionalization to conceal the awful truth. She aimed to convince the world — and perhaps herself — that the birth of the modern Promethean Lineage was just a fantasy. Just a ghost story.

7 May 1816

March has gone in and out with lion's teeth bared to the world, and April fared no better. I fear May will deliver us not to the den of the jungle cat but the doorstep of Hell. I smell Pyros on the wind wherever I go. Is it me or the world meant to transform? I have dreamed again of drowning.

13 May 1816

I see my nightmare reflected in truth. A child drowned here two nights ago. The river overflowed its banks and brought down the bridge. They're laying out her body now, dressed in white. No flowers for her burial wreath; they all washed away. She is so tiny. I could crush her with one hand. I'm so tired.

18 May 1816

Red snow fell yesterday. I don't know what it means. In my dream now, I am naked on a funeral pyre. All around me are weeping walking corpses. When I wake, I see them, too. Beggars that look like armies on the march from a distance. They would eat me, perhaps, if they knew me. Would I nourish their empty bellies?

25 May 1816

I don't understand what's happening to this land. It looks like my doing but its arms are flung wider than mine ever could be. Hailstones as large as my fist struck a man down on the road and broke his wagon. I took his burden back to his family, but now they have traded a father for bread. It doesn't seem a fair trade. In my dreams I am dying. The closer I come to the River, the more flowers bloom in my footprints. Perhaps they will spare some for the drowned child, when I am gone.

30 May 1816

Today a mob smashed the machines that make their clothes, and hurt the man who runs them. All of his people hid in the workshop while the rest bombarded the door and windows with rocks. Then they came back out with makeshift clubs and beat their neighbors. Everyone needs something. A job, money, food, medicine. But you can't rebel against the weather. Who would I kill to make this right? Whose rage is the purer, the truer? I can't tell anymore.

3 June 1816

This house, this lake, these people. They seem familiar. A faint scent of Pyros lingers here. But is it real, or a castoff from my dreams? These people are not desperate like the others. They have food and wine and silk dressing gowns and horses. Even so, I see sadness in their eyes, and weights on their shoulders. I will watch them, and judge for myself.

What Is To Come

The end of 1816 doesn't herald the collective sigh of relief the world hoped would come. Instead, the fingers of the Year Without a Summer continue to reach into the future, slowly ruining lives they couldn't take all at once.

After Tambora

The autumn of 1816 and the following winter are just as unforgiving as the summer was and bring no relief to the hungry, cold, and weary. England's leaders, faced with mounting outrage in the populace and resorting to violence to stamp out seditious gatherings, realize that if they don't step in to relieve the suffering of the people they could go the way of Marie Antoinette. On top of that, typhus continues to spread among the working class in Ireland and the peasants there rise up in arms to protect what little remains to them, as the government tries to export the meager fruits of their labor to London. Finally, in 1817, Parliament passes laws that enable the British government to provide loans in support of creating jobs and civic projects that can provide alternate income to farmers whose lives were shattered across the United Kingdom. But the typhus epidemic in Ireland doesn't end until 1819, having claimed thousands of lives in the meantime. Similar worries of uprising, bolstered by thousands of beggars flocking to cities and riots breaking out in the countryside, prompt the French king to issue a pardon for any criminal activity enacted during the previous year due to famine while the government imports grains from wherever it can.

In other European countries, including Switzerland, Germany, and Italy, the situation is even worse, with soaring property crime rates and massive groups of beggars wandering the country, along with a nearly-dead textile industry and rampant unemployment. The people have fallen into a despair so profound that they can no longer summon any respect for the authorities trying to uphold law, sunk into pure survival instinct. People skirt starvation by eating their own pets, rotten grain, and things that were never meant to be edible. Soup kitchens and private charities do what they can to alleviate the starvation of the people across Europe, but the task is daunting enough that even by the end of 1817, things aren't looking up. Christian religious fervor continues to spread, some now claiming that all who survive the troubles will be deemed worthy by God and saved, after all the corruption has been purged from the land. Thousands hit the road or the seas, bound for Russia or America, and many of them die on the way.



The weather finally returns to a semblance of normality in the summer of 1818 after another harsh winter, and economies in Europe and the United States begin to stabilize. But the consequences of the Year Without a Summer stretch on for the rest of the century. The British Parliament continues to violently quash uprisings and conspiracies to revolution in England and Ireland throughout the 19th century. Ireland never quite recovers, periodically suffering more poor harvests and more outbreaks of typhus until the Great Famine in 1845 that sends several million souls to the grave or fleeing for more hospitable lands. The religious revival in America leads to the founding of the Mormon Church. Heightened interest in meteorology paves the way for the invention of weather maps, the first global climate analysis, and expeditions into the Arctic that prompt innovations in navigating icy oceans and mapping the far north of the globe.

Life goes on, if only for the lucky.

After Diodati

Mary and Shelley rejoin Claire in England in September 1816. Though Mary has left Byron, Polidori, Adam, and the Villa Diodati behind in reality, they stay with her in spirit and hound her nightmares at every turn. As she obsesses over transforming her "ghost story" into a novel over the next year, death rips holes in her life on the one hand and sews them up on the other. In October, her half sister Fanny Imlay, lonely and bearing the burden of family troubles largely alone, commits suicide by laudanum overdose. In December, Shelley's wife Harriet drowns herself in a lake in London, and despite his aversion to marriage as an institution, Shelley marries Mary to stabilize his legal situation and reputation. Between the family's grief over Fanny's death and the marriage, Mary repairs her relationship with Godwin, only to lose her infant daughter Clara in 1818 and her young son William in 1819, both to illness. Then, in 1822, Shelley himself drowns in a sailing accident, leaving Mary alone with their one surviving child, Percy Florence. Though she suffers from depression and uncontrollable guilt, the memory of Adam haunts her still and she never tries to resurrect her dead husband or children through alchemy. Instead, she surrenders herself completely to her writing and her son, finally passing away in 1851.

Claire comes to loathe Byron once she gains some distance from him. She gives birth to their daughter Allegra in January 1817, and as promised, gives her up to Byron a year later. He refuses to see Claire at all and, a few years later, sends Allegra away to a convent, where she dies of an illness at the age of five. Claire's hatred for the poet is matched only by her grief, deepened by Shelley's death only months later. She herself dies in 1879, outliving them all — except Adam.

Byron and Polidori, once again alone together at Cologny after Mary and Shelley have departed, quickly turn on one another. Polidori claims full credit for the miracle of bringing the dead to life, dreaming that Byron will be impressed, and imagining that *he* will now be the one to spurn *Byron's* love. Instead, Byron guesses that Polidori killed Vates and gives him full credit for that, too, dismissing him on the spot in a rage. Byron travels to Italy at the end of the summer and lives there for a time, writing poetry, running off with a young married woman, and assembling an enormous coterie of exotic animals at his estate (rumors abound of zoophilia, but they're never confirmed). In 1823, he travels to Greece to fight in its war of independence from the Ottoman Empire, and dies of a fever in April 1824, mourned by the Greeks as a hero.

Still seething, and blaming Byron and Mary for Adam's escape, Polidori returns to England in September 1816 and immediately takes back up with the Golden Thorn. In 1819, he publishes the short story *The Vampyre*, starring the unabashedly Byronic villain Lord Ruthven. It catches on like wildfire, but is attributed to Byron's authorship despite both Polidori and Byron insisting it was the doctor's work, which stokes the fires of his bitterness and destroys any hope he had of a further literary career.

Instead, he throws himself wholly into his alchemy, and quickly rises to power within the Golden Thorn. He refuses to fully share the secrets of how he created a living man, instead diverting the brotherhood's attention to an expedition in Switzerland to find the errant Promethean and capture him for study. From that point on, he can no longer simply return to a life of mere medicine. He exceeds Halford's wildest dreams for him, delving into the blackest alchemies and most taboo practices in an attempt to recreate what he and Mary did in Cologny. His continued failure and increasingly horrific experiments send him spiraling into madness. His death in August 1821 is called a suicide by poison, but the Golden Thorn's records suggest that an alchemical ritual is involved, and possibly a Promethean or Pandoran as well.

And what of Adam? The Promethean haunts the Swiss countryside for weeks after fleeing Diodati, watching the Shelley circle deal with the aftermath and studying humanity from afar. Eventually, he openly returns to the estate, hoping to find Mary still there. He remembers the way she looked at him when he first opened his eyes, her own filled with melancholy and a compassion that he yearns for. But by the time he comes back, the place is abandoned and greets him with only the echoes of death and sex, love and ashes. He searches the house top to bottom, trying to figure out why he'd been made in the first place.

When he discovers and reads one of Mary's drafts that will become *Frankenstein*, he begins to understand. Her sympathetic treatment of the monster in the story renews his faith in her as a kind yet sad creator, the motherly counterpart, in his mind, to Polidori as the wild-eyed, possessive father who views his creation as a prize to be possessed rather than a child. Despite the book's intended message, Adam is inspired to create his own progeny after reading it. He calls his first creation Frankenstein in honor of Mary, giving his new Lineage its name (and inadvertently causing the public's later confusion over whether the monster or the creator was named Frankenstein, as stories about that Promethean circulate too). When the book is finally published, Adam passes his copy down to his first creation, who passes it down in turn; he never discovers how many generations of Created it survives.

Did Polidori Know a Vampire?

As the father of the modern vampire genre, couldn't it be that Polidori had met a vampire, much as Mary Shelley had met a Promethean? Maybe. It's up to the Storyteller to decide, if it's relevant to her game. Certainly, Polidori was neck deep in the world of the Chronicles of Darkness by the time the summer of 1816 was over. His alchemical endeavors might have taken him into a vampire's path. On the other hand, his character Lord Ruthven is so much like Byron that one might wonder whether the love/hate obsessions Polidori and Claire harbored for him were altogether natural...

The Supernatural

As well suited as the Created are to surviving the devastation across Europe in 1816, pursuing the Pilgrimage here is fraught with pitfalls filled with rainwater, corpses, and Disquiet. Any Promethean living in an area where people are starving and have no money to buy warm clothes for their children or fuel for their fires makes an attractive scapegoat. Those who escape by fleeing to a more prosperous area face exploitation and greed from aristocrats who intend to stay on top no matter what. Any Wasteland or Firestorm that crops up is an exacerbation of already inhospitable conditions, and the Promethean who causes it must face up to her complicity in its ruination — when unnatural flaming hail falls on land that's already struggling to produce edible corn, it's not just a minor setback. That crop is destroyed, and a lot of people who were depending on it may now starve to death or die of malnutrition and untreatable diseases. Disquiet, too, can cause more than just a bad day in a landscape already primed for riots, apocalyptic doomsaying, and a high suicide rate.

On the other hand, an era dominated by human emotion and the extremes of the mortal experience is a Promethean's playground, provided she can fight off the temptation to give up. Milestones lay just around the corner everywhere, from the fervent philosophical drama of a French salon grasping for a new future, to the everyday sacrifices and acts of kindness among suffering peasants with common goals. The outpouring of passionate creative works may serve as inspiration to the Created, and they can perhaps play a role in the turbulently shifting tides of political thought as empires begin to fall and new ideals of liberty take root.

Family Drama

The single event that defines this period for Prometheans more than any other is the final death throes of the Amirani Lineage paving the way for the Frankensteins. While the Amirani have not been seen in numbers for over a century already by the time Vates comes to Switzerland, their extinction brings confusion and a period of readjustment for Prometheans everywhere.

The Amirani Legacy

Scholars of Plumbum and Mercurius debate over whether the Prophets *had* to die out before the Frankensteins could exist. Was it just a matter of timing, the happenstance of one Lineage's destruction leading to events that birthed another? Or was it orchestrated by the natural order, or the Principle, so that only one choleric Lineage would ever exist at a time? Would the composition of the world's Pyros suffer an imbalance otherwise, leading to Firestorms and chaos? Lineages die out so infrequently that no definitive data can be collected on the subject, and asking *qashmallim* about it has never yielded useful answers. Natural philosophers among the Prometheans are left to speculate.

Evidence remains in this period to show what the Amirani were like, though. Vates himself had contact with other Created in the decades leading up to his death, telling them snippets of his story and leaving possessions in their care. He created several Athanors scattered across the Alpine countries, nestled away in caves or hidden in abandoned wine cellars and dusty catacombs. One of these he marked for Prophets only — so anyone now who finds it must figure out some alternate way to access its secrets. Other, older Amirani Athanors still exist here and there throughout the world, as well as the occasional journal or letter. But Vates burned everything he knew about creating one of his own kind, and evidence suggests that he was the only one in the world at the end of the 17th century when an Inquisitor made him. If any notes or formulae survive, the Prometheans and alchemists of 1816 haven't found them yet.

The First Frankensteins

Records indicate that Adam creates not one but several Frankensteins before breaking off contact with all of them and exiling himself to solitude. He wavers constantly between believing — as Victor Frankenstein eventually did — that creating more of his kind only brings more pain and suffering into the world, and believing that Prometheans have as much right to exist as anyone else and that the more he makes, the easier their Great Works collectively become. Relying on Azothic memory alone for guidance, having no contact with any other Created and thus no context for his own creation, Adam uses Mary's fictionalized version of him as a role model. One of the first Frankensteins he creates is



meant to be a loving companion for him, like the one Victor was supposed to have made for his creature, but the two don't stay together long. He soon comes to the conclusion that taking revenge on Polidori or plying Mary for sympathy would get him nowhere, and instead retreats deep into the northern Alps, abandoning all of his creations to fumble in the dark as he did.

As a result, the first few "generations" of Frankensteins are characterized by even more flailing about than most Prometheans do, making mistakes and revealing themselves with too much regularity to humanity. Concentrated in one area with the same few progenitors, they're often closer than many Prometheans are to others of their Lineage. They tend to uphold Mary's book as an inspiration rather than the warning she wrote it to be, viewing her as a mother of sorts to the entire Lineage, and taking comfort in knowing that a human is out there who knows about them and she isn't out to destroy them. They argue amongst themselves about whether they should travel to England to seek her out, or leave her alone to avoid risking her ruination.

When Adam departed the Villa Diodati the second — and final — time, he boarded up and hid the door to the attic, not wanting any servants or tenants to disturb the broken laboratory where he was born. Knowing that his descendants would likely come to find the place, though, he created an Athanor of the slab where he awoke for the first time. The room is dim and dusty, smelling of chemicals and rotted flesh, with broken glass and twisted copper instruments littering the wooden floor. If a Promethean lies on the slab and meditates upon its history and insights for a few hours, slowly absorbing snippets of the first Frankenstein's memories, she earns the ability to learn the Refinement of Cobalus.

The New Kid

Communication between Prometheans during this period is scarce and difficult. Azothic memory bears the brunt of the educational burden, since telegraphs won't be in common use in Europe for another 30 years or so, and postal services can be unreliable or expensive. Travel is slow at the best of times, relying on boats, carriages, and horses; during the Year Without a Summer, transport animals are hard to feed and boats are often dangerous to use on flooded bodies of water, so most travelers who aren't rich resort to walking everywhere. Prometheans certainly have the time, but just learning that another one of their kind exists can take decades, through rumor or happenstance.

The only way most of the Created know that the Amirani are no more and the Frankensteins are the new kid in town is through Azothic memory. A few read Mary Shelley's book and take guesses, but the book won't even be published outside England until 1823, and prior to that second edition it's published anonymously, making Adam's progeny the only ones who know who wrote it for some time. Practitioners of the Refinement of Lead are the first to notice the changes in their collective memory, gaining hints and feelings from their mastery of it that things are different, that the choleric humour has shifted somehow, and that the Amirani have been lost forever. Some feel it as a creeping melancholy that invades their thoughts whenever they're alone, while others describe the feeling of a yawning hole inside them that can't be filled. Students of Mercurius pick up the change soon after, sensing fundamental changes and slowly settling instabilities in the Pyros they study. Some Prometheans receive Elpis visions or visits from *qashmallim*, giving them cryptic hints that lead them to meet a Frankenstein for the first time.

Little by little, the change diffuses into widespread Azothic memory, gradually becoming common knowledge for Created who have never even heard of Adam or *Frankenstein*. No real mourning period can occur for the Lineage that was, as the news comes far too late for most Prometheans who knew any Amirani personally to have survived. Many take it as a grim event nonetheless — if a Lineage with such a long and colorful history could just fade away as though it never existed, what about their own? Will crafting a Promethean from clockwork and stone someday simply cease to work? When *was* the last time anyone spoke with a Tammuz, anyway? The enormity of a millennia-old line of Created just winking out of the world is a terrifying prospect. The anxiety prompts a mild spree of generative acts and Athanor creation, and some attempts to establish more reliable networks between Prometheans, especially among the Sentinels and Originists.

Reactions to the Frankensteins range from intellectual curiosity and warm welcome to disdain and suspicion. Some blame the new Lineage for the death of the old even without any knowledge of the events, postulating that the Divine Fire can only sustain one expression of each humour at a time, and that essentially the Frankensteins killed their predecessors by being made. Those who later research the affair find the theory a curious reflection of Mary Shelley's own guilt about her birth having killed her lively mother. The Frankensteins' choleric nature and quick tempers don't exactly endear them to their Created brethren immediately in many cases, either. Fitting into Promethean society often feels to the early Wretched just as wearying as fitting into human society. They also must deal with strange stereotypes from those who have read the book about their progenitor, assuming that all Frankensteins are predisposed to be lovelorn or murderous. Since most of the Wretched barely know Adam themselves, the questions and expectations get tiresome quickly.

Some Frankensteins also encounter jealousy from other Lineages, who view being "outed" to human society as a great boon with the potential to free them from their isolated lives. Unfortunately, as those Frankensteins keep trying to explain, all the book has really done is excite people's imaginations to conjure even more horrible presumptions about them than are actually true, and its publication certainly hasn't done anything to alleviate Disquiet or prevent Wastelands. Other Prometheans, including many Osirans, view the novel as a serious problem or a gauche mistake; now that the human public is aware of Created existence, they posit, it will become harder for them to move among the people unmolested.

Despite the controversy, most Frankensteins eventually



fit into their throngs just fine. Some other Prometheans actually express a sort of relief — an Amirani was an admirable throngmate, but his neverending quest for justice and evangelism made for a high-stress Pilgrimage that tended to sweep his friends up in its intensity. A Ramble of the time describes the writer's Frankenstein comrade as "a refreshing breath of Stannic flame, that expires as swiftly as it comes upon us, leaving such contrition as is welcome" and "... [our] wondrous companion, she who spouts nary a word of godley *[sic]* purpose, but simply speaks as anyone might to the matters of the day." Many of the more academically-inclined Prometheans of the time actively seek out these new choleric creations, hoping to form a throng with them and learn all about them in the process. Not every Frankenstein appreciates being treated like a fascinating specimen, but some are just glad for the company.

Pyros and the Principle

An excerpt from the journal of Cornelius X, Promethean scholar, February 1817.

Humans posit an ancient dilemma: was it the chicken that preceded the egg, or the other way round? I feel as though this dilemma is the perfect summation of my studies into the Pyros disaster thrust upon us. As I have observed for many years, the modus operandi *of the common* qashmal *is to nudge the course of history with a single action – an overturned ink bottle here, a spooked horse there, insignificant occurrences like lone embers that kindle bonfires. After many travels and interviews with my fellow Created, the events of our time are as I have just described, but in macrocosm. Oh, the average human scientist or chronicler may not see it as I do, but one must only ask the right questions to see the Divine Fire churning in a state of advanced* agita. *Self-contained Azothic phenomena abound! And I have noted Pyros pooling and shifting unusually – disturbed, perhaps? But by what? Or whom?*

The Rambles of the Frankenstein Lineage and their companions in particular report visits from odd strangers, cryptic warnings, and ominous Elpis visions in unprecedented numbers, far more than any other Lineage. Anecdotes tell of the countless political intrigues, violent rebellions, torrid scandals, and daring experiments they find themselves among, despite their best efforts. Factor in the stories of influential humans who claim to have encountered devils, angels, or simply moments of remarkable serendipity that have turned the course of their lives, again in greater numbers than before, and one must conclude that qashmal *activity now soars – in seemingly biased fashion, at that.*

Thus, I pose the question: which came first, the qashmal *or the metastasis? Are we seeing here the agents of the Principle stirring the world's Pyros and causing disaster, or the igneous agitation spawning these change-mongers as a side effect? What is it about our newest brethren that attracts these imbalances so? And how much of this remarkable overhaul of human society that I witness now blossoms from their catalytic hands? Was Napoleon's escape from Elba, or Mozart's untimely death, or the smallpox vaccine, the fruit of their enigmatic labor? I despair to think I may never discover the truth.*



In the decades surrounding 1816, the movements of the Divine Fire are expansive and unsubtle, at least from a bird's eye view, and its byproducts are everywhere — those of entropy and of progress alike. Whether the correlation of the myriad evidence implies any causation to suggest that some dread conspiracy is behind it all, though, is up for debate. For every throng subtly guided to meet one of the newly born Frankensteins, another is subtly guided away. For every Firestorm cloaked in the garb of auspice, another seems completely random.

Some Promethean scholars think that Pyros levels worldwide are rising drastically, and that more *qashmallim* are spilling out from sheer turbulence. Other theories mirror the human religious fervor of the time, claiming to bear witness to the end of all Pyros forever, or a reckoning from a higher power, or the birth of some new kind of being even more powerful than the arch-*qashmallim*. A few Savants try to catalog the *qashmal* sightings and count which seem Elpis-driven and which Flux, in an attempt to predict whether the world is doomed or whether this is all just the last gasp of a dismal past, making way for a glorious future. Perhaps the Frankensteins, they say, are the key to that future. None of these attempts have yet yielded satisfactory results, and most Prometheans must simply face the tumult of the times with no greater explanation than anyone ever has for the twists and turns of their lives.

The Golden Thorn

Come. Be my life's work, and I shall be yours.

In the 1750s, a Rosicrucian and Masonic secret society called the Order of the Golden and Rosy Cross rose to prominence among proponents of alchemical philosophy. It espoused alchemy-as-spiritualism, touting the mystical science's physical processes as a metaphor for the enlightenment of the human soul, and imagined that one day it would accomplish the ultimate "Chymical Wedding" — the unification of the mundane with the divine. Rosicrucianism began among doctors who viewed themselves as mystical philosophers on top of their earthly mandate to heal the body, and the trend continued; many of the Order were physicians as well as spiritualists.

At the turn of the 19th century, the discovery of a Tammuz tore a deep divide through the brotherhood. One side took the existence of the Prometheans as proof that the metaphor alone wasn't enough, and that alchemical processes using the potent ingredients these created beings could provide would lead to true enlightenment. The other side recoiled from the inhumane experiments their brethren proposed and refused to participate. The split soon resolved into an offshoot society even more secret than its parent. This was the Golden Thorn.

By 1816, the Golden Thorn has a well-established charter and plenty of money to back its questionable expeditions. Sir Henry Halford, the royal physician of England, is but one of the brotherhood's many aristocratic members. Based largely out of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, it recruits from the peerage and — more sparsely — from the independently wealthy and the nobility of other European countries. Most of its members have some background with the Freemasons, and through its Masonic connections it has begun to pick up branches in the United States as well. While its parent order recruited only men, the Golden Thorn accepts women also.

The Chymical Wedding

Like its predecessor, what the Golden Thorn wants more than anything is to achieve the Chymical Wedding. Unlike its predecessor, it views this ultimate enlightenment as a literal process. Its members believe that only by merging, body and soul, with other human beings can one achieve spiritual perfection. Each strives to find a person with whom he can create the most ideal amalgam, and then to mix an alchemical formula that they can both imbibe to complete the human compound. Not all Chymical Weddings are presumed to have only two components, and some in the brotherhood have spent lifetimes trying to find exactly the right set of people to make the compound work. So far, no successful Chymical Wedding has been confirmed, but rumors do circulate of those who have managed it. In the meantime, while they search for the right ingredients, rituals, and partners, they work to craft other potions to turn themselves into more suitable Reagents for the kinds of combinations they wish to form, whatever that may mean to any given member. An unspoken competition has sprung up among some members to create a tincture that will transform a person into an Alkahest — a universally potent ingredient that can merge perfectly with *any* partner.

Relationships between Reagents, as the members of the Golden Thorn call themselves, can be complicated. Some sets of potential Reagents are lovers and believe that sex is the way to reach enlightenment, but just as many subscribe to totally different theories and would never make love to or pursue romance with another Reagent, or don't see a correlation one way or another. Since the theory goes that only when all of the Reagents in a compound are ready to merge can the Chymical Wedding be achieved, anyone who's less than enthusiastic about a grouping is encouraged to break off and find a different way. Regardless of the nature of the relationships, though, intensity is inevitable in such intimate work, and the Golden Thorn takes pains to keep its purpose secret lest England's strict laws and the sharp eye of scandal misrepresent it to the public.

From the Prometheans' perspective, the Golden Thorn is a particular threat not only because it has vast resources at its disposal and significant political clout, but because its members never act alone. The experiments require multiple participants to be meaningful, and groups of Reagents pursue the Created together to increase their chances of compatibility.

Polidori the Alchemist

Polidori's first few forays into the Golden Thorn's philosophy led him to an idealistic dream of finding his soulmate and

convincing whoever it was to join the brotherhood with him. The minute he met Byron, he was devoted to winning the baron as his soulmate. Of course, that didn't work out, and later he would initiate Mary into the secrets of the Golden Thorn just to borrow her aid to produce a Promethean as an alchemical factory. His resentment of Byron's scorn went beyond the merely personal — it was a denial of what he imagined would be his life's work and his chances at enlightenment. To him, Byron represented an ideal that he couldn't find anywhere else, and his love for the noble was indistinguishable from that broken dream.

Once Cologny is a memory and Polidori has become a demiurge, the dynamics among the Golden Thorn's members shift drastically. Some buy into the doctor's insistence that only by creating another Promethean or finding the one running loose in Switzerland can the society get what it wants. Others are put off by his all-consuming obsession and believe that making their own Promethean would corrupt the ingredients. Still others quietly put together expeditions of their own, trying to find Adam before Polidori does and get a leg up. Eventually, he becomes so consumed by his failures that even those who still work with him are hard pressed to find enough common ground to view him as a potential partner.

Success or not, Polidori makes an indelible mark on the Golden Thorn's history. His descent into practices traditionally forbidden even among the brotherhood only serves to drive a larger wedge between the various sides of the issue, and eventually the fundamental ideal of harmony at the Thorn's core can't hold up under the strain. Over the next 100 years, the Golden Thorn dismantles itself, shattering into smaller disjointed groups that aren't big enough to keep the overarching organization going. By 1900, its last lonely member has perished.

A Land in Flux

Creatures of Flux are drawn to Europe during the Year Without a Summer in droves, as upheaval and chaos reign. They delight in making the tumult worse, and as they do, they create more of themselves. Prometheans abandon their Pilgrimages as they watch people lose their humanity to desperation and destitution. Pandorans rise from the ashes of failed generative acts, as the Created witness the death of the Amirani and scramble to preserve their own Lineages, too hasty to be as careful as they should. The rise of popular science and spiritual alchemy gives the Hundred-Handed ample unknowing human minions and innovative new inventions to use in their freakish experiments, and political turmoil presents easy opportunities to manipulate large scale events to their anarchic liking.

Just as typhus and cholera sweep the human world, a sickness of despair and festering rage sweeps the sparse Promethean population. What good is it, they say, to reach New Dawn when becoming human is just a way to commit suicide? Does humanity really have it any better than the Created do at this point? Some fall from grace out of a bizarre sense of compassion, thinking that if they dedicate themselves to being what they are instead of fighting to become something else, they can use their monstrous Azothic gifts to better everyone's lives. Of course, Disquiet and Torment inevitably twist that generous goal into something much ghastlier.

Whether they were already on the path of Dissolution when Tambora's legacy hit or not, Centimani now have plenty of discord to explore. Putting aside the myriad human tragedies they can exacerbate through the amplification of Disquiet and Wastelands, the Azothic radiance of an incautious new Frankenstein dogged by *qashmallim* is a shining beacon in a time when Prometheans are usually hard-pressed to find others of their kind — a young Lineage tripping over itself to find its place in the world makes an easy mark for Hundred-Handed predators. Some simply hunt down the Wretched for food for their Pandoran hordes, while others seek students to convert to their cause, or pawns in their disjointed schemes.

Centimani and *sublimati* both can benefit from the glut of Pandoran horrors Europe experiences during this period. Not only are many of them created in the widespread generative panic, but the increased Pyros activity in the region wakes broods of sleeping Pandorans that might have lain dormant for thousands of years. Some Centimani and *sublimati* embark on grand hunts across the continent to round up all the Pandorans they can find.

Places of Interest

The troubles throughout Europe during this period may make life hell for everyone, but that crucible produces or unearths nuggets of Azothic influence all over the continent. Prometheans trying to eke out Pilgrimages here can find many strange and wondrous things hidden beneath the misery.

The Road of Strings

In the foothills of the Süntel, a mountain range in northwestern Germany, lives a reclusive person made of ivory and wood, a marionette who achieved life through the grace of the Divine Fire. Ou calls ouself Der Popanz, and for many years ou watched over the rural town of Oldendorf on the Weser River and the villages nearby, seeing the lives of the people pass and taking up various roles in their lives as ou saw fit. Created originally to be manipulated by others' hands, ou resolved to turn the tide back on a humanity that saw ou only as a puppet. Ou enjoyed the feeling of making the villagers move to ous unseen strings.

The farming villages in the area lay low along the river. When the winter of early 1816 gave way to only more winter and the Weser overflowed under unnatural rainstorms, it killed crops, damaged property, and washed away livestock. Der Popanz became fascinated by the widespread death all throughout the Süntel, and found ouself pursuing the Refinement of Phosphorum, wondering what happened to people when they died — did they visit the same River ou had seen once? Did they abide in the Hel of the old tales, or the Hell of the new, or someplace else? Could it be that real





humans with real souls ceased to be completely? What about the chickens and the tiny chicks whose bloated, drowned corpses drifted down the river, did they have souls? Ou had to know, and now took up the strings of the people's deaths as ou had of their lives before.

Soon, the ancient beech tree that Der Popanz lived beneath had become a monument to ous understanding of human death, an Athanor that brimmed with wisdom that ou thought ou wanted to share. But the first time another Promethean appeared, having sensed the tree in her Azothic memory and come to seek it, Der Popanz grew jealous. Was this not ous work, hard won through trial and error, sorrow and joy? Why should it be given away for free? After that, ou hid the place from prying eyes and crafted a series of pilgrim mark clues that led from the banks of the river through every nook and cranny of the Süntel, until it finally revealed the location of the hidden tree. Ou would pull prospective students along by strings of mystery, doling out instruction a drop at a time and forcing them to dance to ous tune.

Now, Der Popanz refuses to leave the glade, standing guard over ous Athanor like a Schnauzer mastermind and jealously hoarding ous knowledge. Ou presents trials to any who muddle through the clues and discover ous home, and only those who emerge triumphant may at last benefit from the Athanor's teachings.

The Brink of Oblivion

No one lives here anymore. It's just rolling hills and dead cattle for miles. The sun never shines here. The farmers left weeks ago, packing what little they had left on their backs and trudging off to gamble their lives on a journey somewhere there might be food instead of fruitless, flooded fields. Now, the only one left here is one of the Created, lingering on the cusp of annihilation at the core of a savage maelstrom, trapped in a neverending moment of misery and longing.

In the remote French countryside, a Firestorm rages and never goes out. One of the Named hangs suspended at its riotous center, buffeted by cutting winds, pummeled by flying debris, pelted by brutal rains. The wild wolves of the area stand unlikely guard around the metamorphic disaster, mutated into enormous jagged-toothed monsters with unrecognizable weapon-like limbs. She thought she was ready to take the final step on her Pilgrimage and step into New Dawn. She was wrong.

This Promethean made an attempt at completing her Magnum Opus before she was ready. She had one more milestone to complete. When the alchemical working failed spectacularly, her violently transforming Pyros exploded into a Firestorm that consumed her. Just as she felt the light of her Azoth sputtering out forever, a luminous shape approached, bright even in her dimming eyesight. It reached out what seemed like a hand through the ravages of pandemonium, and touched her. In that moment, it ceased to be, a *qashmal* that sacrificed itself in a blaze of Pyros to sustain the storm as a frozen moment in time until the Tammuz could somehow complete her Pilgrimage. But trapped here, battered and gasping for life, aware but unable to act or escape, she needs help from her fellow Created to succeed — and anyone who tries must brave the monstrous wolves, the lashing gusts, and the baleful torrents to reach her first. Then it's just a matter of figuring out what her final milestone is, and finding a way to guide her through it without the Firestorm ripping them all to pieces.

The Unfinished Tale

In the city of Pressburg, called Pozsony by those who speak the Hungarian language instead of the Kingdom of Hungary's official Latin, snow is falling. Summer has not come, and a blizzard has swallowed the land. 33 years ago, this place was the proud capital of the kingdom. Since then, though, the throne has moved elsewhere, and the city is in shambles. In 1809, Napoleon's armies took the city, destroying its historic fortress, Devín Castle, and firing cannons at its erstwhile seat of power at Pressburg Castle. In 1811, the latter burned nearly to the ground in a fire. Now, with increasingly unaffordable food and a winter that won't end, Pozsony's prospects are dismal. But in the wreckage of its strongholds lies a tale waiting to be discovered.

In the ruins of Devín Castle, beneath piles of rubble and layers of foundation, a cracked stone wall juts up from a cobwebbed corner that until recently was unreachable. A strange inscription, written mostly in Old Hungarian runes interspersed with some abbreviated pilgrim marks, covers the wall's surface, telling the Ramble of a Promethean imprisoned within the bowels of one of the castle's ancient predecessors. It tells of the prisoner's torments and futile attempts to escape, and of the prison's cruel jailors. It speaks of lost alchemical secrets that ring only vague bells in the depths of Azothic memory when read. Perhaps it could impart valuable wisdom to the Created of today, if only it were finished. But the story simply leaves off partway through a sentence, mid-word.

Another similar wall picks up the tale almost seven miles away, buried under the exposed, burnt skeleton of what was Pressburg Castle only a few years ago. The prisoner is now the warden, and the Ramble details the fresh cruelties inflicted by its writer, the cold observations and conflicting feelings engendered by time spent here, and musings about morality and retribution. It seems to hint at yet more dim revelations about the Saturnine Night, but once more, the telling ends with no warning, and no sign of why.

Surely, the rest of the story is written somewhere, waiting to be unearthed. Pozsony teems with palaces that curious Prometheans can explore, if they're careful and clever, including:

- **Primate's Palace:** The site of important political and diplomatic events, lavish and grand, with crystal chandeliers, statues, and tapestries everywhere. Its Hall of Mirrors has played host to dignitaries and bishops, and in the 16th century, the alchemist Paracelsus stayed here a while. He once showed crowds of people that he could restore a burnt rose to its former beauty with

his potions, in the plaza where the palace sits.

- **Summer Archbishop's Palace:** Originally a summer home for the displaced archbishops of Esztergom when it was conquered by the Ottoman Empire. The palace's ostentatious gardens of old have been converted to a military training facility and the building itself serves as a military hospital for wounded soldiers.

- **Grassalkovich Palace:** A bastion of high society that belongs to the noble Grassalkovich family, advisors to the monarchy, and is situated close to the Summer Archbishop's Palace. Courtly balls and parties are held here regularly, and it's the seat of music in Pozsony. Popular and highly respected composers, some patronized by the crown and some simply invited, premiere their works here — at least, when the city's not languishing under a few feet of snow.

- **Pálffy Palace:** Constructed almost 70 years ago in its current state, but it was built on top of layers and layers of older buildings, betraying many lifetimes. It incorporates ruins from the Celts, a former mint, a medieval Roman palace, a breathtaking vaulted hall from the 15th century, and tombs in the lowest, oldest basement.

Playing the Game: Story Hooks

Below are hooks that a Storyteller can drop wholesale into her chronicle or adapt for her purposes. Each takes place in a different European city or town and contains characters and ideas for the Storyteller to use.

Geneva, Switzerland

A living creature formed by human hands haunts the ice-rimed Alpine countryside near Geneva. He is the shepherd of a Lineage, the Created-turned-creator, who has had enough of the fear and the rage. He is the misbegotten thing crafted by John Polidori and Mary Godwin, as much a self-imposed exile as Lord Byron, as unloved and humiliated as Claire Clairmont, with Percy Shelley's desperate faith in the fundamental goodness of mankind. All he wants right now is to be left alone, but his father wants him back.

Commence the Hunt

Geneva is a Francophone city-state, called a canton in Switzerland, at spitting distance from France's eastern border. The city proper lounges on the edge of the vast Lake Geneva surrounded by the looming, snow-capped peaks of the Jura Mountains, and prides itself on its progressive and tolerant philosophies. As a result, the Golden Thorn doesn't have much purchase in the area. Their old money reputation doesn't do them much good among a populace primed to rail against oppression, although the city's hypocrisy shows its hand as it caters to the French and British nobility who vacation here, high above the suffering of the poor. The alchemists' inconvenience is compounded by the curfew, as at ten o'clock every night the city gates are locked and no one may go in or out.

When the Thorn's hunt begins for Adam, they have no strong base of operations or extensive web of resources waiting for them in Geneva. They must painstakingly transport all of their alchemical instruments and tomes by boat and by carriage, a considerable investment of time and funds, and anything they need later they must send for. They take up residence in a sprawling estate at the base of Jura and plant their roots, determined not to leave until they have what they came for. It may seem like a lot of trust to put in a green young recruit, but Sir Henry Halford vouches for Polidori the whole way, and his word carries a lot of weight. Fortunately for the alchemists, the canton's government has its hands full dealing with mobs rising up violently against bakers to protest the high prices of bread and streets clogged with beggars around the clock, so any trouble the Thorn stirs up is unlikely to be scrutinized or punished much.

Thus far, they've found Adam once, but he escaped into the glaciers, taking a cue from his literary counterpart. Now they organize carefully planned expeditions to narrow the search, and they have the money to hire as many boats, guns, mercenaries, and bounty hunters as they need. Adam knows it's just a matter of time before they corner him, lock him up, and ship him back to England in a steel box for their mad experiments. His only hope is to find help, and humanity isn't going to offer it to him.

A Promethean's Plea

Adam actively courts Elpis visions and scours the rumor mill to track down any Created that might be wandering around Switzerland, France, and Germany. He doesn't care who they are or what they might think of him. He plans to do whatever is necessary to secure their aid. He'd rather just ask, but if that doesn't work, he's learned plenty of other ways to make people cooperate.

Any Prometheans who take on the task of protecting Adam from the Golden Thorn — and themselves, as soon as they get involved — must contend with alchemists who know how to track Pyros, are frighteningly good at teamwork, and aren't afraid to alter themselves with elixirs of their own making to stand up to Created Transmutations. Simply leaving the country is a poor option, as the only reliable way to avoid the worst of the wild weather is to travel on foot, and at that pace the Golden Thorn could easily overtake them. On top of that, Adam is reluctant to leave the region he calls home.

Fortunately, Created who take on the task have some advantages too. The constant torrential storms and, at higher elevations, blizzard conditions may be hazardous, but they're moreso to humans than to Prometheans. They

present more of a hindrance to visibility and mobility for the hunters than the hunted, as well. And the alchemists have holed themselves up in a single centralized location, so if the Prometheans can find it, they can take down the operation in one fell swoop — if they can bypass the alchemical traps and layers of defenses the Thorn has set up there. Whether their best bet is to go after the lion in its den, wait it out, or try to escape altogether, is up to the throng. Adam, for his part, eventually advocates going after them once his patience has run out.

The first Frankenstein wouldn't suggest this himself, but the Prometheans have a few other potential allies in their predicament. Just because Adam has chosen not to contact Polidori's Diodati compatriots, doesn't mean the throng needs to abide by his decision. Mary, Shelley, and Byron — perhaps even Claire, who never had much love for the doctor — might be persuaded to lend their assistance. Byron in particular could exert his influence over Polidori or at the very least serve as commanding bait, although the outcome would be decidedly unpredictable.

ADAM

I have done nothing to deserve their hatred! But if it's a hunt they want, I will give them one.



Background: His first memory is exploding into consciousness amid an overwhelming cacophony of lightning sizzling into him from every direction, with Mary and Polidori gazing down at him from above. In the days after he escaped from the Villa Diodati alone, he lurked nearby to watch them, to see what they would do. He lived all of their roller coaster passions with them from the shadows, their anger and grief, their love and jealousy, their joy and despair. When he wasn't watching the house or the lake, he ventured into the small hamlets of Cologny to see starving farmers struggle to keep their families alive. Now, after months of producing his own progeny, studying the best and worst humanity has to offer, and making mistakes, he lives on the run from the Golden Thorn, desperately seeking help from his fellow Created.

Description: The first Frankenstein is a tall, imposing figure made from the parts of many dead Swiss and French men. He dresses as he has seen Byron do, though his clothes are all castoffs and thus he always seems somewhat ragged and bedraggled, even with his air of stoic nobility. When his disfigurements flare, the stitches that join his parts together and the metal bolts that hold his skull in place are prominent, and his skin takes on a sickly greenish tinge.

Storytelling Hints: Adam seems taciturn and perpetually brimming with suppressed rage most of the time. Rare moments of compassion and vulnerability bring his better nature to the surface, though if these moments are destroyed by tragedy, he's likely to succumb to Torment and rip something apart. He hates nothing more than watching (or causing) the ruination of something beautiful, and his instinct is to fix it, though he usually can't without making things worse. To him, love is the most beautiful prize of all, and though he despairs of ever finding it himself, he can't quite smother the spark of hope that lives buried deep inside him. He sees Mary and Polidori as his parents, and though he'd like to despise Polidori, he sees too many similarities between them to give in entirely to it.

Lineage: Frankenstein

Refinement: Cuprum

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 1

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Investigation 3, Occult 1, Science (Galvanism) 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl 3, Larceny (Breaking and Entering) 1, Stealth 2, Survival (Cold Regions) 2

Social Skills: Empathy 1, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 3, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Brute Force 3, Danger Sense, Efficient Conductor, Giant, Repute 1, Striking Looks 1

Willpower: 5
Pilgrimage: 4
Elpis: Love
Torment: Passion
Initiative: 4
Defense: 6
Size: 6
Speed: 12
Health: 8
Azoth: 2
Pyros/per Turn: 11/2
Bestowment: Titan's Strength
Transmutations: Electrification — Arc (fixed), Imperatus (fixed); Metamorphosis — Aptare, Tegere; Sensorium — Somatic Humour

DR. JOHN WILLIAM POLIDORI

My creation is the key. Once I reclaim it, Byron will regret the way he treated me. I will make him see the man I have become!

Background: Still quite a young man, Polidori has always been the rising star, the prodigy. He's used to pats on the back and men in fancy suits expressing how impressed they are with his extraordinary work. While he was in medical school, his fascination with such esoteric subjects as poisons and sleepwalking attracted Halford's attention, and his feet found the road of the alchemist, although he hadn't yet committed himself to it. Given the opportunity to flaunt his talents for the man he adored, he was ecstatic, and lurking in the back of his mind was the notion that perhaps Byron was meant to be a Reagent too — *his* Reagent. His expectations crashed down around his ears with every snide remark and dismissive glance, though, and by the time he met Vates at the Villa Diodati, he was desperate to win Byron's attentions one way or another, hanging his entire identity on the notice of one man.

Once he left Switzerland, his obsession with Byron had a new playmate in his brooding mind: an obsession with Adam. His medical practice suffered while he spent all of his time completing *The Vampyre* and studying Prometheans, trying to track down his creation. When his publisher insisted on attributing his story to Byron before it was even published, he cracked. From then on, his days and nights were consumed with alchemical pursuits, and he departed on his expedition back to the Jura Mountains immediately. Now he hunts Adam with a single-minded fervor, pouring the Thorn's resources into it with no reservations, and any unfortunate Promethean to cross his path is fair game.

Description: Polidori is a small, dark-haired man of half-Italian, half-British descent, good looking but shifty and emaciated after long weeks of obsessive work and emotional distress. Only 21 years old, his youthful appearance is somewhat marred by dark circles under his eyes and a pallid complexion.

Storytelling Hints: Naturally inclined to both idealism and a macabre fascination with the strange, Polidori has twisted his dreams into nightmares that he pursues with gusto. He is an expert potions master, and can brew anything from deadly poisons to potent recreational drugs to fantastical alchemical elixirs. Hidden beneath layers of bitterness, envy, and ego is a remarkably lonely young man who fears that he will never find anyone to appreciate him, and who still loves Byron as much as he hates him.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 3, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 2
Mental Skills: Academics 4, Crafts (Potions) 5, Investigation 2, Medicine 4, Occult (Alchemy) 4, Science 2
Physical Skills: Drive 1, Firearms 2, Larceny 1
Social Skills: Expression 2, Socialize (Salons) 3, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 3





Merits: Contacts (Physicians) 2, Language (Italian, Greek, Latin) 3, Library (Occult) 2, Mystery Cult Initiation (Golden Thorn) 3, Resources 3, Sleepless, Tolerance for Biology, Unseen Sense (Prometheans), Weatherproof
Willpower: 6
Virtue: Idealistic
Vice: Envious
Initiative: 5
Defense: 3
Size: 5
Speed: 10
Health: 7
Magnitude: 2
Pyros/per Turn: 6/1
Alembics: Aqua Regia, Elixir, Eris, Indulgence
Dread Powers: Paralyze

Cork, Ireland

As the Year Without a Summer swung into full effect, the already vast gulf between the well-to-do and the peasants in Ireland widened like an abyssal maw poised to swallow all the poor and leave nothing but rags behind. In most rural areas of the country, the Catholic inhabitants spoke little English and never learned to read or write. Since their only representation in the British government that ruled them was an Englishman in faraway London, and the laws reserved many rights for Protestants only, the Irish peasantry were already scraping along at the bottom of the totem pole before famine, cold, and disease decimated their numbers.

After burying their families, crops, and livestock in the sodden earth, many Irish peasants now travel on foot over mud-soaked roads to the city of Cork to plead for help. Cork is a busy port city on the southern coast of Ireland in the county of the same name, interspersed with the ruins of several iterations of walls that fell throughout its history to invading forces. It now plays dubious host to a steady stream of desperate people who have sold their possessions — including their clothes and even the hair on their heads, in a year when thousands have frozen to death — and subsisted on soups made from barley and the blood of their own half-starved cattle, many of whom carry typhus-bearing lice. No government aid is coming, and Cork has barricaded its gates against these refugees, its newspapers proclaiming loudly that disease is not a threat to its citizens, and no one should panic. The few who do work to help, including physicians and clergy, fall ill themselves in short order. Outside the city, so-called "fever huts" of mud and straw crop up like a parody of circus tents, the only shelter the rural migrants can claim. Even those who aren't sick, only trying to leave the country, would need to get into the city to catch a ship, and the gates open for no one.

The Plaguemonger

Death by hunger or cold or murder is so passé, at least according to the Centimanus who makes her home at St. Mary's Cathedral, Cork's newly built Catholic church. She is called Dearbhail, and she believes that death by contagious disease is the truest expression of Flux. She's been studying the typhus epidemic, and she has no shortage of samples. Once in a while, the tall, scrawny church volunteer brings a tureen of soup out to the refugees. While officials are busy letting her out and back in again, her Pandoran brood smuggles one of the typhus victims through the gate and into the cellar of the cathedral. Dearbhail makes her poor sick visitors comfortable until it's time to start the experiments.

When other Prometheans come to Cork, perhaps to investigate the missing refugees, or to aid the poor, or just to observe the madness, Dearbhail makes them an offer. She's so close, she says, to cracking the mystery. Soon, she will be able to infect her Pandoran hordes with the disease and send them out among the people, to watch the epidemic work its chaotic magic. And, she tells them, once she discovers typhus' hidden secrets, won't they be able then to develop a cure? All she needs is their help, collecting more samples and extracting their livers and intestines while they're still alive. Her Pandorans are helpful little creatures, she says, but they can't perform these complicated tasks, and she's just one Freak. If she keeps picking off people from the fever huts, someone will eventually notice. She needs hands that can travel further abroad, intercept refugees before they arrive. Until then, though, she's got a pretty convenient cauldron of test subjects here.

Ultimately, Dearbhail would like to recruit other Prometheans to the Refinement of Flux, mostly so that she'll have better assistants for her work. Barring that, though, she'll take their help figuring out her current pet disease. She's brilliant enough that she just might be able to produce a cure, especially with the aid of other Refinements, and she doesn't seem to care whether her hard work is undone afterward. But will the other Created agree that the end justifies the cost?

DEARBHAIL

There, there, it's all right. No need for hostility, we're all on the same side. Now, be a dear and hand me that scalpel, will you?

Background: Once, a widow oft praised for her beauty and motherly kindness was struck down by scarlet fever. The local physician had secretly loved her but always thought it uncouth to try to take her dead husband's place, and so he never told her. Devastated when she died and desperate to find a treatment before the entire village succumbed, he delved into medical practices forbidden by the Catholic Church, and soon further into practices beyond medical. He abandoned his charges to their fates, forgetting about the spread of the fever in his obsession with the woman he couldn't save. With ancient secrets, he brought her back to life — or so he thought. She was not the woman he once knew,

though, and instead of returning to her family she begged him to teach her the medical arts. Once he'd taught her everything he knew, she thanked him by concocting an even deadlier strain of scarlet fever in his lab and then subjecting him and all of the village's survivors to it. Delighted by her success, she left the dead place behind to find and devour ever more knowledge.

Description: Dearbhail is tall and willowy, with long red hair and freckles. She speaks kindly even while threatening and has a gentle touch. Her beauty is that of a smiling, middle-aged matron, and she dresses in humble fashion, carrying a Bible and other trappings of Catholicism. Trappings are all they are, however, which she's happy to admit to any Promethean who comes her way. It's knowledge she craves, not faith, and in her traveling bag she stows a surgeon's supplies, strange medicines, and an apparatus for extracting all manner of fluids from all manner of creatures. When her disfigurements flare, her entire body is covered in an angry red rash and her green eyes pale to a stark, featureless white.

Storytelling Hints: Almost ecstatic in her quest for the perfect expression of Flux, Dearbhail views contagious diseases as precious and pure Pyros reactions, and she tries to cultivate and spread them wherever she can. Every new disease she encounters becomes an obsession until she fully understands it. Other Prometheans are aghast to find that she claims to never have considered herself to be on the Pilgrimage in the first place — learning immediately after her creation that humans were fragile things to be pitied and studied, she never aspired to be one. She bears no ill will toward those who do, but she searches for another of her kind to be her apprentice in Flux and in medicine, and tries to convince other Created to abandon their Pilgrimages in favor of working with her.



Lineage: Galateid

Refinement: Flux

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 2, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Crafts (Medical Instruments) 1, Medicine (Contagious Diseases) 5, Occult 2, Science 2

Physical Skills: Brawl (Restraining Patients) 2

Social Skills: Empathy 4, Persuasion 3, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Alternate Identity (Church Volunteer) 1, Interdisciplinary Specialty (Contagious Diseases), Residual Memory (Empathy, Persuasion) 2

Willpower: 6

Pilgrimage: 1

Elpis: Comfort

Torment: Obsession

Initiative: 7

Defense: 2

Size: 5

Speed: 11

Health: 8

Azoth: 4

Pyros/per Turn: 13/4

Bestowment: Unearthly Mien

Transmutations: Flux — Blight, Lordship

Bologna, Italy

20 years ago, Napoleon Bonaparte swiped the cultural hub of Bologna out from under the noses of the Papal States and established it as the capital of a republic. Now Napoleon is in solitary exile (again) and the Papal States have just returned, backing up their renewed rule by stationing troops borrowed from the Austrian army there to put down any thoughts of rebellion. Even in this state of disgruntled transition, though, Bologna remains a center of academic thought and regal architecture. Its majestic towers, stately porticoes, ancient university, and countless churches house

a trendsetting populace with a reputation for excellence in intellectualism, Catholic philosophy, and the arts.

As a result, when snow and skies the color of blood intrude upon the would-be summer months, any answer coming out of Bologna is predisposed to sway European hearts and minds. And an answer does come, from the lips of astronomer Durante Barzetti, who declares his scientific prediction definitively to the newspapers: the many prominent spots on the sun and this ominous weather presage utter doom, this very summer. The sun will sputter and die, leaving the Earth to rot as a freezing, lifeless ball of dust. Word spreads like cholera, and soon an apocalyptic panic grips Bologna in its desperate fist — a panic that travels swiftly across the rest of Europe. Its wake is littered with suicides, massive prayer gatherings, and people prostrating themselves in the streets to cry their despair to the malicious sky.

Bioelectric Horrors

In 1780, Bolognese scientist Luigi Galvani performed experiments with static electricity and frog corpses, and discovered that an electric charge could animate dead muscles. The study of galvanism was named after him, and his work led to the invention of the first electric battery — the voltaic pile — by Alessandro Volta. What Galvani refused to acknowledge was that his work also gave rise to a slick, jittering collection of amphibious body parts that escaped his laboratory to bury itself in the mud at the bank of the Reno River.

Galvani's experiments with bioelectricity attracted the attention of the Principle. In a fit of Flux and gurgling bodily fluids, a Lilithim infused a dissected corpse with Pyros the instant Galvani stimulated its muscles with a static charge. The shuddering mass of frog bits didn't just jerk once and fall still, as did most of his experimental subjects. It animated violently, flopping onto the floor and skittering around the room, growing extra limbs before the scientist's horrified eyes. As soon as it was gone, slipping out an open window, he promptly dismissed the incident as a fatigue-induced hallucination and forgot it ever happened.

For 30 years, the Pandoran lived its cycle of Dormancy, hunting, and feeding contentedly. Eventually, it consumed enough Vitriol to gain a measure of self-awareness, and grew into a *sublimatus* with enormous bulbous eyes and twisted, webbed limbs that calls itself l'Indovino, "the seer." It's drawn to scientists, stalking them with an eerie fascination, though it understands little of their work. When it comes upon an astronomer studying the dimmed sun of 1816, with its foreboding sunspots, l'Indovino lingers in hiding for days to watch him. Its Pyros seeps out through its permeable skin as it tarries there, its newfound power over Flux exerting itself to spill a Wasteland out into the city. Barzetti's paranoia mounts until he announces his dire prophecy to the world — the spark that sets the Wasteland afire with doomsaying and religious hysteria.

Prisoners

Panic-seized Bologna soon becomes a beacon of Pyros, drawing the attention of any Prometheans in the region. The Wasteland rages when they arrive, and tracking its source leads them to the Torre Prendiparte, a tower prison near the center of the city. A nervous, desperate scientist sits alone in his desolate cell...at least, at first glance. He insists the world is going to end any day now when the sun goes out, and he begs anyone who will listen to let him out so that he might spend his last days on Earth under the open sky, dismal and hazy as it may be. He complains that he's been arrested for inciting to riot, quite unfairly. Perhaps the authorities are just as driven to paranoia by the Wasteland as everyone else, or perhaps they did it for public safety.

But lurking, camouflaged and unseen, in the corner of the cell is l'Indovino. It's been waiting for just this moment, the Created coming to investigate its glorious Wasteland. It will use Barzetti as a hostage, insisting on a trade — a Promethean for this human. If the outcome doesn't satisfy it, it will slip through the bars after the Prometheans leave and follow them through streets seething with biblical frenzy until it finds an opportunity to ambush one of them. Of course, the presence of the Created in a city already lousy with Flux may presage true doom, after all.

L'INDOVINO

Hypothesis: Prometheans provide Pyros. L'Indovino eats Prometheans. Results: l'Indovino wins.

Background: Galvani's misshapen lab specimen spent 30 years making the alleys and ditches surrounding the university



its home. The city's reputation as a center for learning and building has attracted the occasional Promethean academic or artisan for decades, and one such doomed Created orbiting the university's circles at arm's length found himself simultaneously hunted by the creature and systematically shut out of the labs by Disquieted professors. The Pandoran eventually caught up with him at his lowest point and made a feast of his Vitriol. After years of observing the scientific method without truly understanding it, the newly grown *sublimatus* gained delusional aspirations of being a scientist itself, and has come to view science as a kind of preternatural divination that humans invented to rise above their base instincts and predict the future.

Description: L'Indovino resembles the dissected amphibian it once was more than it resembles anything human, although it stands on two legs at nearly six feet tall. Its round, bulging eyes take up most of its head, the rest dominated by a wide, gaping mouth lined with powerful suction cups that can latch onto a Promethean's flesh and hold tight to extract the Pyros. Its six slimy, contorted limbs protrude from its body at strange angles, making it unpredictable and unsettling in motion.

Storytelling Hints: L'Indovino approaches its entire existence as a series of experiments designed to predict how and when it will get what it wants. Since its mind is warped by Flux, however, its conclusions rarely make much sense. Its favorite tactics are to lie in wait and lure its prey with carefully calculated bait, and it resorts to coercion and manipulation once revealed. It prefers to feed on Prometheans who show an interest or talent in the sciences, but its definition of "science" is absurdly broad, and ultimately the preference is just an affectation that it sheds as soon as it's hungry enough. It speaks about itself in the third person exclusively, imagining that this somehow makes it an objective observer.

Rank: 3

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 9, Resolve 7

Physical Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 9, Stamina 6

Social Attributes: Presence 7, Manipulation 4, Composure 8

Mental Skills: Investigation 3, Medicine 2, Occult 3, Science (Galvanism) 4

Physical Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl 3, Stealth (Camouflage) 5, Survival (Aquatic) 3

Social Skills: Intimidation 4, Persuasion 3, Subterfuge 5

Merits: Ambidextrous, Double Jointed, Fast Reflexes 3, Parkour 5

Willpower: 15

Initiative: 20

Defense: 13

Size: 5

Speed: 19

Health: 11

Dread Powers: Armor (1), Beastly Mutation (3 — ranged attack/grapple with tongue, extra limbs give +1 to grappling rolls, suction cups give +1 to Consume Pyros attacks), Camouflage (5), Consume Vitriol, Divide, Malleable Form (2), Sense Vitriol, Track Pyros, Wall Walking (3)

Flux Transmutations: Aggravate Wasteland (as the Blight Distillation), Detonation (as the Solvent Distillation)

Darmstadt, Grand Duchy of Hesse

In the wake of Napoleon's sweep through Europe, the dust is still settling. A year ago, the Grand Duchy of Hesse and over 30 other small, independent countries (along with Austria and Prussia, major powers of the time) became part of the German Confederation. The capital city of Hesse is Darmstadt on the edge of the Odenwald, where actors, playwrights, and musicians ply their trades in its theaters and open stages, and towering castles dot the craggy landscape throughout the region.

The most storied of these castles is the Frankenstein Castle that looms like a watchful hawk over Darmstadt, dominating the view of the hilltop upon which it perches. The townsfolk stay away from it. They cite all manner of legends, from the ritual potency of the grounds once soaked in the blood of the knights who first fought over the land's ownership, to its densely wooded Path to Nowhere where compasses spin and wanderers are lost forever, to the gruesome remnants of Dippel's mad alchemical experiments. Dippel was rumored to have sold his soul to a demon, though the rumor was never substantiated. Lately, the people of the city have been locking their doors at night and keeping crucifixes near to hand, convinced that something more than legend has emerged from that fiendish place.

Incidents

It began with the teenager whose parents walked in on him scooping the insides out of the severed head of his beloved dog. They sent him to the psychiatric hospital Hofheim. After the fourth animal corpse was found emptied of its bodily fluids and missing bones, the city's authorities started looking for a connection. They found none, and still the incidents continue. In some cases, the perpetrators are never found. In others, they're locked up or sent home with instructions to stay in bed and recover. A few of them mumble garbled words about eternal life and cheating damnation, dismissed as heretical ravings.

During this era, bells are often attached to caskets to prevent premature burial — the logic goes that if someone is interred by accident before they're truly dead, the bells will alert the cemetery caretakers, who can rescue the poor soul. In Darmstadt, at the same time that pets and livestock are



turning up eviscerated, terrified people who find themselves alone in the vineyards or in secluded alleys after dark now report hearing coffin bells in all the wrong places. They can find no source for the sound and babble to anyone who'll listen that people are being buried alive all over town, or that corpses are rising from their graves. Some wonder whether the rain-drowned earth is coughing up its dead simply because of the weather, but these theories play second fiddle to the undertones of dread that hum throughout the city.

The Haunting of Darmstadt

Something has woken Johann Conrad Dippel's spirit. His ghost roams Darmstadt, ringing casket bells and haphazardly possessing the living to murder animals to no obvious end. The humans here have no way of communicating with or even detecting the spirit and, for its part, it seems too weak or confused to convey anything meaningful. But any Ulgan or Promethean Mystic, or a medium of some kind that enterprising Created bring along, could follow its clues to its lair at Frankenstein Castle and engage it to see what it wants. It's not powerful enough to speak with her directly or even to pose much of a threat, but clever Created can figure out ways to glean its purpose.

Prometheans who discover the truth will find a living creature buried beneath the castle, scrabbling desperately to escape. Those versed in the history of the place and who may have seen drawings or portraits can recognize the features of the dead alchemist in what must once have been a human corpse, but it's certainly not one anymore. The Created can sense Pyros at work in it, but it's not a Pandoran, and it's definitely not one of them. Dippel's ghost woke to lead someone to unearth his final experiment and set it free. In a way, he achieved the eternal life he'd always sought through alchemy, though the creature is nothing like human and can only speak in broken, stunted language.

If it's not a Pandoran or a Promethean, what is it? Is it kin enough to the Created to make them squeamish about killing it? Does it feed on Pyros? Did Dippel truly make a deal for the Divine Fire to work this last miracle, perhaps with a Hundred-Handed One or a *qashmal*? Will the creature terrorize the city as the spirit has done, or does it only want its freedom? And what does the ghost of Dippel do once that freedom is assured — or denied?

Ely and Littleport, England

In the east of England lie the Fens, a series of marshy lowlands turned farmland by artificial drainage some 50 years ago. The Isle of Ely (pronounced *ee-lee*), once a true island surrounded by oft-flooded swamps, is now a spot of high ground surrounded by damp farms, and on it perches the city of Ely itself, dominated by its ancient cathedral. To the north is the village of Littleport, separated from Ely by a mere five mile strip of fen. Ely and its neighbors had already been poor, eking out a meager living on the manmade farmland and sending its men out to fight in the wars against Napoleon and America, by the time the yearlong winter struck in 1816. The soldiers returned to find no jobs waiting for them and food their families couldn't afford.

Hundreds of impoverished, hungry villagers worked each other up into a fury over the desperate state of their lives in Littleport one evening. They looted, stole, vandalized, and terrorized their way through the village, and then, still not sated, they stormed across the five-mile gap to Ely and started unleashing their rage there too, joined by reinforcements from Ely's own gaunt, starving poor. But, for reasons no one understood, the fire soon went out of them and they just...stopped. They stood blinking in the rain, pitchforks and hatchets in hand, looking at each other helplessly as though they'd forgotten why they'd come, and shuffled off home. The next night, it all started again, only to peter out as soon as the rioters were poised to burn down Ely's largest farmstead. Now, months later, the people of Ely and Littleport have grown used to their bizarre new routine — enjoying a round of drinks, feeling their powerlessness and empty bellies overwhelm their reason, taking up arms, and turning on their own countrymen in a howling, bloody uproar, only to return home hours later exhausted and confused. The Ely militia has long since stopped sending pleas for help to the Royal Dragoons, with order sleepily restoring itself every evening around midnight.

A Disquiet that Never Sleeps

Vates, the last Prophet, passed through England during his wanderings just before his final journey to Cologny. Stopping for the night in Littleport, he saw the skeletal, idle hands of the people, the wet graves of the still-mourned hungry dead, the sunken eyes and listless stares of those who remained. It stoked the embers of his Azoth to a roaring flame, to see such suffering and know that the Regent and the peerage could help, if only they cared to. He stayed another night, and another, and another, walking among the people and listening to their tales, letting his Disquiet fester in their minds. At last, on the night they decided that their travails lay on the shoulders of the mysterious stranger in their midst and descended *en masse* upon the Globe Inn at which he had been sheltering, they found him already vanished into the mist. But by then there was no stopping their mounting Pyros-driven hatred, until they arrived at Ely and felt all their fury slip away like draining swamp water.

The last Amirani missed the opportunity to meet a *qashmal* that arrived in Ely just as the Promethean took his leave. It has no name, and manifests as a simple fog that rises from the sodden earth each evening to swathe the city. Whenever the wrathful rioters cross into it, it soothes their Disquiet, taking the agitated Pyros into itself and leaving the poverty-stricken folk calm and docile. Then, the next evening as the sun sets, it releases the Pyros again, letting it flow back to where it started to bestow its mantle of violence once more. It's waiting for Vates — or someone like him — to come back and finish what he started.

The Understudy

Vates isn't coming back, but the *qashmal* will accept any Frankenstein as an acceptable substitute. As soon as one of the Wretched appears, it nudges events so that the Promethean finds herself in Ely when the rioters show up, and the Disquiet of the people transfers its focus from the Prophet who caused it to the newcomer. She can sense the *qashmal's* presence, of course, and with some investigation she can figure out what's happening. Leaving only nets her the dogged attention of the fog, which follows her everywhere she goes and conspires to lead her back to the city by any means it can.

No obvious outcome will satisfy the *qashmal* except the natural conclusion to the riot: the mob continues to sack Ely until the Royal Dragoon reinforcements arrive and, together with the militia, engage in a pitched battle with the rioters until enough of them are dead to convince the others to stand down and face trial. What happens to the Frankenstein in all this isn't the *qashmal's* concern — it just wants her there as a stand-in for the vanished perpetrator. Of course, a Frankenstein's Azoth *isn't* exactly the same as an Amirani's, and the disparity might cause strange, unexpected effects on top of the already chaotic situation.

The Promethean and anyone with her faces a choice. Accepting the Disquiet as her own and allowing the riot to run its course gets people killed, and maybe herself and her throng along with them. Ignoring it earns her throng a *qashmal* interloper that's a nuisance at best and a threat to everyone around them at worst, as it resorts to more and more drastic measures to get the Wretched back where it wants her — and leaves the people behind to suffer with no help in sight. A clever Promethean might be able to find other options, like killing the *qashmal*, stalling it until its mission runs out of time, quelling the riot in an unorthodox way that fulfills its mission anyway, dispersing the pent-up Disquiet somehow, or something else.

Inspirations

Below are some suggestions for books and media that can help inspire a game set in the Year Without a Summer. These focus on the themes of **Promethean** in particular, but any **Chronicles of Darkness** game set during this time period might benefit from these suggestions. In general, look for stories set just before the Victorian era in which widespread hardship, Byronic antiheroes, and weird science appear — and of course, the Gothic horror genre.

Fiction

Obviously, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* is the quintessential inspiration for running a game of **Promethean** in the Year Without a Summer. Other works by the Shelley circle make for good reads as well: Byron's poem "Darkness" expresses the existential horror of seeing the sun blocked out by howling storms and inexplicable haze, while Percy Bysshe Shelley's novel *St. Irvyne; or, The Rosicrucian* provides a striking example of an antagonistic alchemist written with the florid melodrama of a Romantic poet. One of Mary's later works, *The Last Man*, depicts a set of protagonists based on herself, Shelley, and Byron who live in a postapocalyptic world devastated by plague; eventually, the Mary-analogue becomes the last man alive, showcasing her feelings of loneliness and isolation. Even Polidori's story *The Vampyre*, which features a vampire rather than any sort of created monster, stars the perfect Byronic hero to serve as a model for a character archetype that typifies the period — of which Frankenstein's creature himself is one example.

Two works written in the modern day but set in the early 1800s are *The Dress Lodger*, by Sheri Holman, and *Will Starling*, by Ian Weir. Both Gothic-style novels explore the seedy underbelly of London through the lens of a black market dedicated to digging up — or creating — corpses for the use of surgeons and anatomists who had nowhere else to procure bodies for study, thanks to the period's distrust of the profession. Holman's book also provides a frank and graphic look at the cholera epidemic which began in India and swept Europe, showing a government that ignores the needs of the destitute, while Weir's book features a villain who resurrects the dead via galvanism.

Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell by Susanna Clarke and *The Count of Monte Cristo* by Alexandre Dumas are two other novels set in the early 1800s that artfully portray the upper class corruption of the era and themes that resonate with Prometheans. Clarke's book might seem more suited to mages or changelings at first glance, but it also explores the plight of outsiders kept excised from society by magical means, and a curse of "Eternal Night" which calls to mind Byron's "Darkness." Plus, it features an obsessive competition between two supernatural intellectuals that results in disaster, reminiscent of the drives that push a demiurge like Victor Frankenstein (or John Polidori). Dumas' story, meanwhile, is a prime example of the fabulous scandals among the nobles of the time, and its themes of isolationism and all-consuming revenge set the tone particularly well for the Frankenstein Lineage.

Finally, Kenneth Oppel's young adult novel *This Dark Endeavor: The Apprenticeship of Victor Frankenstein* is written as a prequel to Mary Shelley's story, following the life of a teenage Victor Frankenstein along with his cousin Elizabeth and twin brother Konrad, and the adventures that mire him in his eventual obsession with alchemy and bringing the dead to life through morally questionable means.

Non-Fiction

Quite a few biographies have been written about the members of the Shelley circle, including Daisy Hay's *Young Romantics: The Shelleys, Byron, and Other Tangled Lives* which covers not only these writers and their complicated relationships, but a larger context that includes other literary and political figures of the time.



Chronicles of Darkness

The Year Without a Summer was an important time for the Created, but no less so for the various other supernatural beings that share the nights with Prometheans. All of them had to contend with the same weather-related phenomena and the subsequent food shortages and riots. The cultural and political changes of the era, too, presented interesting problems.

Vampires, for instance, had to cope with the reading public suddenly showing interest in their kind. Polidori's story was by no means the first time vampires had entered the popular consciousness, but *The Vampyre* was an important event in Kindred circles as the Invictus of London started blaming one another for giving "that doctor" his information. Whatever the truth, the story would not die — it spawned stage and operatic versions, and references to Lord Ruthven occur in other novels for decades thereafter. Some modern Kindred view *The Vampyre* as directly responsible for the modern notion of vampire hunters, since it so heavily influenced Braw Stoker's novel, *Dracula*.

Spirits the world over changed; storm spirits carried ash and fire with them, while disease and hunger spirits grew numerous and aggressive. This, in turn, led to bountiful hunts for the **werewolves** in Europe and North America. Of course, scarcity of resources affected them as well, sending Forsaken into conflict with Pure as they battled not for ideology, but for food. The Oath of the Moon prohibits eating human flesh, but the Uratha of the era often found themselves unable to hunt other prey.

Disaster often brings with it religious fervor, and during the Year Without a Summer, many people across the world thought that the end was, in fact, near. **Mages** and **Sin-Eaters** of the era might have agreed. The Underworld's tunnels filled with black, sooty water at irregular intervals, and the dreams of humanity were likewise abyssal. While modern Awakened and Bound might look back on this era, like many others, and chuckle at people being afraid of natural phenomena, others realize that the world *did* come close to ending. Something happened to curb the worst of the disaster, but no clear records indicate what that was or who was responsible.

The freed servants of the God-Machine known as **demons** might be able to shed light on the subject. Unchained from the era know that the eruption of Mount Tambora coincided with a number of powerful occult matrices. Does that mean the God-Machine was responsible? More likely, It used the eruption as an opportunity to further its ends, and may have even been involved with ending the effects of the volcano before they got any worse. Given the subtlety with which the God-Machine is capable of acting, though, no one knows for sure.

Changelings of the era saw a horrifying practice arise. In the areas most heavily affected by famine or plague, parents sometimes agreed to sell their children to the Gentry. They rarely know the full extent of what they were doing, of course, but the Huntsmen would come and taken the children away, not even bothering to leave behind a fetch. The Lost called such unfortunates "the Children of the Black Summer" or simply "the Ashen," after the parents' habit of marking their lips and hands with ashes. Some of them found their way home as changelings. Most are not even memories.

Also recommended is the eventually published diary of John Polidori, in which he was paid to chronicle his travels with Byron, titled *The Diary of Dr. John William Polidori, 1816, relating to Byron, Shelley, etc.*, edited by William Michael Rossetti. Likewise, *The Life and Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley Volumes 1 & 2* (edited by Florence A. Thomas Marshall) and *Lord Byron: Selected Letters and Journals* (edited by Leslie A. Marchand) contain not only personal diaries and letters from Mary and Byron, but also bits of the joint diary that Mary and Shelley kept together. All of these journals are worth reading to illuminate the exploits of the Diodati crew from different perspectives.

William K. Klingaman's *The Year Without Summer: 1816 and the Volcano that Darkened the World and Changed History* provides a comprehensive picture of how Tambora's eruption affected the United States and Europe, quoting tons of primary sources and digging into the personal horrors of the time. Gillen D'Arcy Wood's *Tambora: The Eruption that Changed the World* does the same, but expands its focus to include more global effects.

Television, Movies, and Video Games

Several films depict the events at the Villa Diodati in 1816. Watch *Gothic* (dir. Ken Russell, 1986) for one that captures the atmosphere of surreal horror and strange, inhuman experiences; watch *Haunted Summer* (dir. Ivan Passer, 1988) for

one with a bit more historical accuracy that stars Alice Krige as a captivating, brilliant Mary Godwin. For a more personal and sympathetic look at Byron specifically and his various relationships, watch the BBC's two-part series simply entitled *Byron,* from 2003. The Shelleys and Claire Clairmont make brief appearances, though the story skips over the events at Diodati to focus on Byron's doomed marriage and irreconcilable love for his half sister.

The television series *Penny Dreadful* is set a bit later in the 1800s, but its portrayal of ghastly horrors lurking beneath a civilized exterior in a Gothic-style time period is perfect, and it features both Victor Frankenstein and his creation as characters.

The film *Immortal Beloved* (dir. Bernard Rose, 1994) portrays Romantic composer Ludwig van Beethoven as a Byronic hero in his own right — an ill-tempered, yet tragic, creative genius caught up in a story of romance and betrayal, of profoundly emotional art and the desperate frustration at his inability to hear it. Beethoven as played by Gary Oldman is a man who loves deeply but can't help ruining everything and everyone he touches one by one, much as Disquiet and Torment haunt a Promethean. The film also provides a candid look at the horrors of living through the Napoleonic Wars, and how atrocities like domestic violence can go shockingly unremarked in an era that doesn't care.

The Last Confession of Alexander Pearce (dir. Michael James Rowland, 2008) is a biographical film depicting the story of a man who resorted to ghoulish cannibalism to survive his escape from the harsh wasteland of Sarah Island, a penal station in the Australian colony of Van Diesen's Land (later Tasmania). It takes place in 1824, framed by Pearce's final confession to priest and fellow Irishman Philip Conolly before his hanging. The film provides a raw look at starvation, damning isolation, and the unspeakable things human beings are capable of doing to each other when they get hungry and desperate enough.

Sleepy Hollow (dir. Tim Burton, 1999) retells Washington Irving's classic story as a Gothic-style murder mystery, in which Ichabod Crane (played by Johnny Depp) is a scientifically-minded investigator pitting his wits against the witchcraft and superstition of a backwoods community in 1790. It takes plenty of liberties with the original tale, but it provides a good look at what happens when the morbid fascination of new science and the visceral terror of old occultism clash, and it contains just enough brutal action for the viewer to hear the dice rolling in the background.

Finally, *Amnesia: The Dark Descent* is a survival horror video game set in 1839 in which the player takes on the role of Daniel, a man who has erased his own memory with an alchemical draft and now must navigate the deteriorating castle of Prussian baron Alexander Brennenburg in order to piece together his own history. Since the game is played from a first-person perspective, the player becomes intimately acquainted with Daniel's crippling nyctophobia and terror of the corruptive monster that hunts him. The game features indistinct, mutated creatures that hunger for Daniel's flesh, dark alchemy and an appearance by historical occultist and alchemist Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, and a protagonist who must deal with the discovery of his own terrible deeds, none of which he can clearly remember.





"That hurts the mother, you know."

Martha turned, setting down her forceps in the rag and wiping her hands on her dress for good measure. "Cleaning my instruments?"

The doctor scowled, stalking to her side. "Yes."

She snapped to the doctor as he lifted her double crochet. "Where are your gloves, Dr. Arthur?"

"Where are yours?" His shoulders shook through a scoff, and he set them back down. "The Association would not approve, ma'am. So many stillbirths are not normal."

Martha pulled her instruments closer and wiped them one final time with the alcohol. She set them in her bag and slung it over her arm. "You are in my home, doctor. The American Medical Association should leave women's business to women."

The doctor did not respond, looking back, instead, to the corner. He set a hand on the table and pushed off, moving towards the shadow he saw growing there.

"Lia?" He turned back to Martha as she called the name.

She narrowed her eyes, shaking her head as she took a step forward. "Lelia."

When he straightened back out, a young girl crept around the hallway. She looked small, but the doctor could tell that she was older than she looked. Thin, and, like most people in this town, almost disturbingly so. Her hands gripped each other at waist level, pointers crossing and grabbing at nothing. He blinked abruptly, drawn up by her eyes. They were a pale green, almost grey, and her skin was a light brown, her hair a shade or two darker and kinky. He narrowed his eyes, taking another step back as the girl passed him with a deftness and confidence far older than he had predicted, moving to Martha's side.

"I'm hungry," Lelia whispered.

She gripped the girl's shoulder, pulling her to an opposite corner. She whispered something to Lelia that Doctor Arthur could not hear, biting her lip after the girl shook her head. Lelia pushed to her tiptoes, whispering something back. Martha relented. It confused Arthur, to see a child fighting with an adult. The Negro girl had already learned wrong. The war had been such a waste, but when Arthur saw something like this, he felt a little more sympathetic.

Martha let go of Lelia's shoulder and passed her a far nicer cloak than Arthur thought she needed. She wasn't no damned Mammy Pleasant.

He didn't notice what more Lelia grabbed before she ran out to the hall.

Martha came back to her side. "Does the Association want something from me, Doctor Arthur?"

He didn't respond until she tapped his shoulder, staring out the way Lelia had come and gone. He turned back to Martha, but took a step back, gripping the wall. "That is an abomination."

Martha tapped the table. "My niece?"

"Your brother passed, so she's here? Where is her Jezebel mother?"

The midwife tapped the table again. "What does the American Medical Association want, doctor? The women of this town do not need your physicians when they deliver babies, nor do they need your chloroform."

He nodded slowly, mocking her with a raised brow. "And you are the authority."

She didn't lend him an answer, leaning down for her bag. "Leave my house, and do not come back."

The doctor dropped his arms. He could play along. "I should not be back. You have no more births — or, I should say, no more stillbirths — for this week."

"My schedule does not concern you, and it does not concern the Association."

"We'll see." Arthur tucked his head down for a nod. "Good day, ma'am."

She watched him so closely that Arthur was sure she would follow him to the door, but by the time he turned the corner and looked back, she had retreated to still another room.

"Doctor."

Arthur jumped, forcing a small smile as he faced front again. Lelia's cloak rested lower on her shoulders, the tie loose. "Your aunt sent you for food."

She did not return his smile, though she didn't seem to frown, either. "My aunt doesn't send me." She stalked closer, eyes trained. "My mother died after I came."

His smile melted, a frown now plastered on his face. "I'm very sorry to hear that. Modern medicine, it can prevent deaths like those."

"You don't care about my mother."

Arthur shook his head, far slower. "I do," he found himself whispering, unsure where his voice had gone. He bowed his head to the side. "I have business to attend to, girl."

Lelia rubbed his arm thoughtfully. She bit on her lip, peering up at him, and tightened her grip, her other hand jumping to his head and twisting, hard. "Then go."



A Fearful Lesson
(1863-1865)

Reconstruction South is a postapocalyptic society. No wildly-dressed outback cowboys race across the desert; no one battles for oil, no hordes of undead threaten lucky survivors. However, not only must the South cope with the fallout of war, their defeat radically upended the Southern way of life. The social and economic institutions upon which the pre-war South relied vanished into the wind, gone with the passage of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments.

Survivors must now navigate a society whose rules change day by day. Bandits, vagabonds and corrupt leaders seem determined to steal what little the region has left. The only law and order comes imposed by a people so far removed from Southern culture, they might as well be foreigners.

Scratch the veneer of Southern gentility, and watch centuries of oppression pour out. Those vanished social and economic systems hinged upon treating an entire class of people as property. As worse than property.

To a Beast, the South is full of lessons needing to be taught.

I wish there was some law here, or some protection. I know the Southerners pretty well...having been in the service so long as a detective that I still find myself scrutinizing them closely. There is... that sinister expression about the eye, and the quiet but bitterly expressed feeling that I know portends evil.

–Mary Bowser, freedwoman and Union spy

Introduction

The Civil War, fought between 1861 and 1865, cracked the United States in two. Brother turned against brother as a generation of young men and women were killed or maimed in one of the bloodiest wars in the nation's history.

The psychological anguish of that conflict left an indelible mark on the Primordial Dream. Ingenious, horrible advances in the science of destroying the enemy, and the scars they left on the souls and bodies of the survivors, created new fears for Horrors to feast upon. Soldier and civilian alike experienced pain, loss, and terror which will not soon fade from the collective psyche. No one can agree on how to handle those feelings.

Hundreds of teachers, industrialists, and business owners relocate from the North. Most have good intentions: the teacher who starts a school for black children, the industrialist who tries to modernize the region with railroads and telegraphs, the business owner who revives trade between North and South.

Many native Southerners resent these incursions. Northern transplants are called carpetbaggers, accused of looting the South for their own personal gain. The Southerners who support Northern intervention aren't treated much better, called scalawags, traitors, or worse.

No one can agree on how to properly restore the South. With no clear path forward, the war's pain cannot heal. Instead, the wounds fester and create deeper injuries which last for generations. The Primordial Dream responds in kind, and the former Confederacy becomes a particularly rich feeding ground for Beasts.

Some Beasts hunt easy victims to feed their Horrors: unrepentant slave owners, arrogant Confederate sympathizers, members of supremacist militias. Other Beasts *are* those unrepentant slave owners, arrogant Confederate sympathizers, or members of supremacist militias. And some Beasts may simply be confused, hardworking folk whose families owned no one, who sent no sons to war and who find it unfair to be called upon to pay a debt they did not incur.

STICKS AND STONES

Stay mindful of your language. Though most 19th century slurs sound ridiculous to a modern ear, those used against black people still have bite. Let historical accuracy slide when roleplaying how racist white characters refer to black characters.

THE LESSON OF WAR

Though Beasts in the American South during Reconstruction find many juicy targets, feeding becomes paradoxically less satisfying.

A Beast often prefers to hunt in ways which allow his victim sees past her terror and learn an important lesson. But the South, as a whole, never had such a moment: not during the Civil War, not during Reconstruction, and possibly not even during the next century's Civil Rights Movement.

The South prefers instead to live in denial. Trapped in dreams of a Lost Cause, they steadfastly refuse to acknowledge the full horror of slavery or racism. Instead of moving forward and building a new society, Southern leaders try as hard as they can to restore the old ways. Some of these leaders were Beasts as well, teaching lessons in direct opposition to those of other Begotten.

Even worse were the Heroes. An influx of Beasts naturally means an increase in Heroes, but for the South, the problem escalates. Everyone wanted to save the South, but no one could agree what saving the South even *meant*. Many Heroes emerge, dreaming of being the one celebrated for restoring order and justice.

REAPING THE WHIRLWIND

What does a Beast see when she travels through Atlanta or Richmond? Is she dismayed the Confederate traitors have been allowed to return home? Does her Horror balk that former slave owners still keep much of their power? Or maybe her anger is directed toward Northern carpetbaggers, the parasites who feed greedily off Southern pain. Perhaps, full of hate, she directs her greatest fury towards the freed black slaves whom she blames for the horrible war.

The fact is, the North never held the South to any sort of accountability. The early anger quickly burned out, leaving only apathy behind. Only one Confederate officer ever faces trial, and few ever see the inside of a prison cell. Everyone prefers to forget the war rather than learning from it, and "reconciliation" becomes the byword.

Many Northerners never realize that reconciliation only works when the other side acknowledges wrongdoing, and the South steadfastly refuses to admit that slavery and racial prejudice are flawed bricks upon which to build a civilization.

So, Reconstruction South: a society of deep divisions, where black and white and rich and poor try to find their way through a society in disarray, where no one wants to speak of the actual problems and prefer to cling to past dreams. The perfect territory not only for Beasts, but any other supernatural creature that thrives on chaos.

With so much unresolved hate and anger, is it any wonder historians now consider Reconstruction to be an abject failure?

And is it any wonder that Beasts thrived?

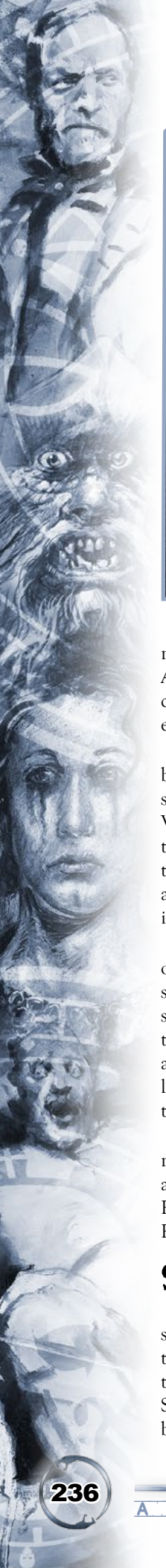
WHAT HAS COME BEFORE

On April 12, 1861 Confederate forces attacked Fort Sumter. Extended military operations in Virginia, including the First Battle of Bull Run, provided little success for the Union, as the South maintained some of the top military talent of the time. These wars proved huge losses for the Union and convinced the South they could win, and of the justness of their cause. In the west, Ulysses S. Grant won a series of decisive victories, though not without losses on the side of the Union. East, in Maryland, the Battle of Antietam raged on September 17, 1862. It is remembered as the bloodiest day in US history, and as a Union success served to hinder previously positive Confederate momentum. Quickly, the Confederacy won a series of successes at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville. Lee believed that if he could burn the military barracks at Carlisle, Pennsylvania and secure the arsenal in Harrisburg, he could prevent the Union from launching further attacks into his own home state. He met with General George Meade, a largely untried commander, but ultimately, the Union defeated General Lee. This, along with Grant's victory in Vicksburg, was the turning point of the war.

Though the United States and the Confederacy fought other battles in the east and west, individual battles are not important. The Congress of the United States saw victory within reach. The North maintained larger and more well-equipped armies than those in the South. Sherman's march south ultimately captured Atlanta. He burned a 60-mile wide, 300-mile long path to Savannah, Georgia and the sea.

January 1, 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation comes into effect. Abraham Lincoln declares enslaved persons in the South, all of whom had been fighting for their freedom for generations without a president who supported them, can no longer be held in detainment. This is the start of our era.

The United States knows it wants to punish the South after the war's end. The behavior of the U.S. military had ensured economic turmoil during the war, and policies that redistributed Southern land holdings guaranteed it would take a while for the South to recover. In 1865, the estimated value of enslaved persons freed in South Carolina alone is two hundred million dollars. But the United States wants to ensure that the South learns never to rebel again, and to do that, the Radical Republicans submit the Wade-Davis Bill. The bill requires the president to appoint provisional governors for Southern states and a majority of the white



Political Affiliation

It's worth noting that the political landscape in the antebellum, Civil War, and postbellum United States differed markedly from today. Not only were new or third parties more likely to be considered legitimate competitors, but also the political parties that have persisted through to the present were substantially different. The Democratic Party is largely the successor of the Democratic-Republican Party that emerged out of the Federalist/anti-Federalist debates of the earlier part of the 19th century. Their candidates included Andrew Jackson, Martin van Buren, James K. Polk, Franklin Pierce, and James Buchanan, while advocating for states' rights to determine the continuation of slavery and to expand slavery into the Western frontier.

The Republican Party of the period grew from the Whig and Free-Soil Parties, winning the Presidential election of 1860. They were Federalists in the spirit of Alexander Hamilton. Other influential political parties came and left during this period, including the Know-Nothing Party, which strongly opposed anyone who was not a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant. Ultimately, slavery became the focal issue of the election of 1860 and, perhaps partially due to the Democratic Party running two candidates, Abraham Lincoln was elected, which the South used as an excuse to target the North. It is essential to note here that Abraham Lincoln's primary intention at the start of the war was to keep the Union intact. This evolved over time, and we do not assert that Lincoln supported slavery. He made various conflicting comments over time and, though always hostile to the idea of slavery, he saw his duty as president to maintain the United States' territorial integrity.

males of the state to pledge their allegiance to the Union. A state constitutional convention mandates the passage of certain laws, including the abolition of slavery and the disenfranchisement of former Confederates.

Ultimately, Lincoln pocket vetoes the bill, though it passes both houses of Congress. The dispute worsens the ongoing struggle between Lincoln and the Radical Republicans. Where Lincoln seeks to form coalitions with Moderates in the North and South, the Radical Republicans only want to work with loyalists. The U.S. Congress approves the 13th amendment to the Constitution in 1865, abolishing slavery in all U.S. jurisdictions upon adoption by the states.

Quickly, the Union captures the Confederate capital of Richmond, and after months of desperate fighting, Lee surrenders at Appomattox. John Wilkes Booth, an actor, shoots Lincoln at Ford's Theater on April 14, 1865, in a plot to murder the president, Vice President Andrew Johnson, and Secretary of State William Seward. Only the president loses his life, and Andrew Johnson takes the oath of office the very next day.

President Johnson favors a quick restoration of government and the antebellum status quo. He allows elections, and is far less sympathetic to the calls of the Radical Republicans than was his predecessor whom they so despised. Reconstruction picks up with conflict on all sides.

Social Forces at Play

In addition to raw historical facts, it's important to consider the social systems constantly monitoring members of traditionally oppressed groups from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries. All of these shaped the United States' collective consciousness. Most still operate today, albeit to different degrees. Whether the focus of your chronicle or not, these ought to be present in the background of any antebellum or Civil War setting. Any Storyteller of a chronicle set during the early period the United States' history should be cognizant of the way they might affect the events played out in a chronicle.

Gender and Sexual Politics

While differences in gender politics in the North and South had advanced by the time of the Civil War, they were both rooted in ideas held by the British and French about the roles of women. Coverture was a legal and social structure that stemmed from French legal traditions. Husband and wife were viewed as a single individual under the law. Women's power derived from their independence, but the legal system operated off the needs and wants of men. Women who were deemed too old to be single frequently found themselves prone to accusations of loose sexual morality. Because of this social stigma, women were rarely unmarried by the time they reached their early-to-mid-twenties. Historians have noted that the words wife and woman were synonymous in New England from 1650 to 1750. Herein, women could only function socially by marrying and allowing for their identities to be subsumed by their husbands or closest living male relative.

Immediately before, during, and after the American Revolutionary War, this was framed as the work of the English "good wife." In the colonies, this morphed into a conception of "Republican motherhood," by which the wives of patriots were to raise their children to uphold the edicts of Republicanism, and the daughters of patriots were to be raised to do the same. By the 19th century, this had morphed into the Cult of Domesticity, also called the Cult of True Womanhood, stemmed from the separate spheres theory wherein women were to manage the private sphere of

the home and men were to manage the public sphere of everywhere else. Women were to possess four virtues—piety, purity, domesticity, and submissiveness. Here, piety referred to religious and specifically Protestant piety, purity referred to sexual purity and devotion by a woman to her husband, domesticity referred to control over the home sphere and childrearing, and submissiveness referred to compliance with the demands of one's husband. Some conflict was present among these virtues. For example, a woman's control over the home sphere may have conflicted with the virtue of submissiveness to her husband, if there was a disagreement over something like childrearing. Nevertheless, the Cult of Domesticity laid a religious foundation wherein women's places were as strictly delineated as possible, making it very difficult for a woman to negotiate outside of her proper sphere. Female Beasts living in early North America have additional concerns to worry about than their male counterparts. Anything that sets them apart—being single for too long, managing the estate of an ill husband, or not having children—may manifest as a disturbance in the Primordial Dream. Personal politics were not personal. Similarly, men challenged the childbearing and childrearing responsibility of women through the professionalization of medicine. These ongoing social battles drew the ire of Heroes when participating midwives were vocal Beasts.

Early colonial and United States law drew a distinction between sexual intercourse by force and sexual intercourse against a woman's will. Sexual aggression on the part of white men was accepted as normal, and white women's chastity and will to not engage in sexual activity had to be able to stand up to pressure and advances from white men. The further lack of recognition of marital rape in North America reinforced the husband's rights to his wife's body — women's social statuses derived from their husbands', especially in the nascent United States. Many a husband in the North and South proclaimed, even after being brought to court, that they had the right to discipline their wives as they saw fit. Adultery when committed by women was seen as a social and legal slight by women against their husbands, and abuse following cheating on part of the wife was largely ignored. The same restrictions were not coded explicitly for men.

Heterosexual intercourse between white women and black men was automatically presumed to be by force and against a woman's will, off social attitudes towards what would in this period be termed miscegenation, or interracial sexual relations. Early laws in the British colonies equated whiteness with Englishness and Protestantism. Native American oral traditions assert that Matoaka, or Pocahontas, was raped by the English prior to her marriage to John Rolfe. They further assert that this was a forced marriage, in line with a Europeanization campaign that brought Pocahontas to England years later and portrayed her as an English



good wife in portraiture. These actions were about domination and power, and white male desire for control over white and black women alike continued beyond the nineteenth century.

Attempts to resist domination by white men shifted cultural attitudes and fears, drawing attention and action from Beasts and Heroes alike.

Economic Organization and Conflict

England's consumer revolution spread to its North American colonies with hardly a pause, and led to less of a household production of goods. Materialism was seen as a sign of not only wealth but also necessity. By the mid-18th century, tea, which had previously been a luxury good, was requested at poor houses. Here, the stereotype of women as naturally vain and craving the ability to display pervaded. Consumer practices, capitalism, and market appetites were displaced onto women, particularly middle and upper class women. Men, particularly wealthy men who seemed overly vain, were viewed as overly feminized or controlled by their wives. Terms such as dandy and lavender stereotyped these men. During the American Revolutionary War, England and the colonies both used propaganda images of feminized men to mock the other side. Collectors and Ravagers thrived in this period of conspicuous consumption, eagerly taking from those willing to spend so much on items so unnecessary. The consumer revolution was used to perpetuate systems of oppression and separations among people, and to create a system whereby one had no choice but to try and join the elite. Everyone owned a teapot. A teapot made of china set one apart. This was beneficial to the colonial system because it scapegoated the enemy and simultaneously formed wealth and position as a ladder-based goal anyone could achieve. While not so much a question regarding benefits versus risks as a question of framing a financial system, Beasts drawn to pretty things loved this trend, picking what they wanted from stores, homes, or the pockets of indigent street dwellers.

Conflict over a central banking system endured from before the time of the founding fathers. Andrew Jackson attested to fears of banks since he first learned of the South Sea bubble of 1710. The first national bank of the United States was the Bank of North America, started by the Congress of the Confederation in 1781, and central banking evolved very much from the Confederation to the U.S. Government under reconstruction. The Second Bank of the United States was at the center of a variety of economic concerns in the antebellum period. The Panic of 1837 was the most well-known of these, and arguably the greatest financial disaster before the Great Depression. Andrew Jackson believed that all banks should support their investments with gold, and after Congress failed to renew the bank's charter in 1832, Jackson passed an Executive Order called the Specie Circular, that required hard money to back up all purchases. A Collector plucking whatever gold she saw sunk the country further into a recession that lasted through the 1840s. Before the recession ended, the bank became a private institution and liquidated its holdings in 1841. The recession led to massive deflation of prices and wages, and an estimated unemployment rate between 10% and 25%. The real wages of most laborers dropped by 14% and, in the style of the Second Bank of the United States, many banks and businesses closed. The impact of this recession on families, communities, and the nation could be felt through Reconstruction, when Confederate money became defunct, and southerners who had already recovered lost everything once more.

The Effects of a Financial Crisis

In any period of financial strain, more people are out of work, and more families can't afford what they need to survive, much less what they want. Any interaction during a financial panic or recession will mean more indigent people and families. Think about how this may affect the atmosphere of your campaign.

Improvements in the production of steel, mining, and the discovery of petroleum hastened construction of rail. The companies responsible for building the Transcontinental Railroad heavily engaged in worker abuse and exploitation. On the west coast, the managers of Central Pacific coerced Chinese workers to build with few legal or physical protections and for little pay. Similar abuses took place on the Union Pacific line in the east and in most industry in the United States. Employers ignored attempts to curtail the use of child labor, exploiting children under the age of twelve and for longer than ten hours a day, in spite of unrestrictive regulation dictating the exact opposite. The Knights of Labor, the United States' first national labor union, disbanded in the late 1890s, giving way to the American Federation of Labor to continue the fight for fair wages, the elimination of child labor, and the eight-hour workday.

In 1873, the United States faced another financial crisis tied to the value of currency. President Grant responded by pegging paper money to the price of gold. The resulting depreciation of the U.S. dollar immediately affected families at home. More abstractly, it affected the consumer economy. Now, not everyone could afford luxuries, which in turn put people out of work, and led to the huge wealth disparity of the Gilded Age.

The Law and People of Color

Contrary to what is often taught in the United States, the emancipation of enslaved persons went far beyond any one person freeing the slaves. Enslaved blacks never played a passive role in their oppression, and, in fact, some historians have labeled the American Revolutionary War as the greatest slave revolt in U.S. history, with hundreds of thousands of enslaved persons taking advantage of wartime disarray to escape or to try to manipulate their masters. Here, we will discuss the many forms of resistance utilized by enslaved

persons and then examine the evolution of the legal status of people of color.

In 1822, Intendant James Hamilton of Charleston, South Carolina mobilized the city's defenses to apprehend participants of a planned revolt organized for Bastille Day by Denmark Vesey. A formerly enslaved man from St. Thomas, Vesey had bought his freedom after a twist of fate landed him a small fortune. Vesey founded and pastored over the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, which was one of the largest of its kind in the United States, and which the city council saw as an educational organization for the black community. The church was a visible manifestation of mobility, teaching literacy, providing a gathering space to enslaved persons, and providing a staging point for other activities made illegal by whites in positions of political power. A reasonably controlled Hero on the City Council tried to curtail the behavior of a Beast he could not identify in the congregation and closed the church many times, only for it to reopen post-haste. By the time of Denmark Vesey's rebellion, he was an established artisan in Charleston. Governor Bennett and other political elites in South Carolina, ignoring the protesting City Councilman as paranoid, had no idea that Vesey and others had been fomenting a rebellion that involved many of their own enslaved, and when co-conspirators revealed the plot, these white elites quickly worked to capture all involved. The Vesey plot increased fears of slave rebellion throughout the United States. Links to the Haitian and French Revolutions spoke to collusion among other black populations that had fought for and achieved their freedom. Revolt in the Governor's own home spoke to a vine that the white community was unsure they could prune, but were determined to prove they could. South Carolina and other states tightened their restrictions on enslaved populations following the failed revolt, and passed some of the most severe laws yet to make an example of colluders, polluters, and abettors. However, the Hero's dreams of a Beast in the congregation did not subside.

In perhaps the most recognized single act of revolt in United States history, Nat Turner led a group of just under one hundred enslaved and free blacks from plantation to plantation in Southampton County, Virginia in 1831. The group freed slaves as they went and murdered all white inhabitants they came across save some poorer white families who were not directly exploiting enslaved labor. Turner frequently experienced what he called visions, saw himself as a prophet, and was nicknamed as such by other slaves in his neighborhood. Turner later told his attorney that he had been visited by agents of the lord, who had tasked him with eliminating the sins of man through violent force. He asserted that he drew inspiration from the failed insurrection of Denmark Vesey. After a solar eclipse that Turner took as a sign from his god, he told trusted friends of his plan and collected weaponry. He planned on carrying out his rebellion on July 4th, pulling from the symbolism of the date just as Denmark Vesey had planned with Bastille Day, but had to move the date due to various complications. August 21, 1831, the men began their revolt, eliminating many slaveowning families overnight. In the aftermath, the white populations of Virginia and surviving states rallied in unregulated militias to slaughter enslaved and free blacks on sight, most of whom were not involved in the rebellion. The state quickly tried to squash these efforts, acting in what they wanted to claim was a more legitimate context to dispense the rule of law. Turner and many of his co-conspirators were executed, and the state of Virginia strongly considered abolishing slavery in their borders. Though this legal shift did not yet take effect, Nat Turner's sense of divine purpose did not end when he became the Beast Incarnate, willfully feeding on the Confederacy and Southern losses through Reconstruction and beyond.

LAWS ON THE BOOKS

In Virginia, laws show the evolution of persecution against people of color in the future capital of the Confederacy, forbidding blacks from possessing arms in the late 1630s. By 1705, all blacks were conclusively denied the right to bring cases to court or testify. They could not hold public office nor serve in militias. A fine for intermarriage between blacks and whites, both for the parties involved and the priest who ministered the marriage, punished interracial relationships. By the Civil War, enslaved blacks in Virginia were classified as property, and could not challenge that classification in court. Mixed race children threatened white control, and so before, during, and after the war, anti-miscegenation laws spread through most of the United States. By the 1870s, black men had the right to vote. Extralegal punishments increased during this period, and the Ku Klux Klan rose in power, almost entirely unhindered until the turn of the century and largely supported by political officials.

In 1855, nineteen-year-old Celia, an enslaved woman in Missouri, murdered her sexually abusive master Robert Newsom in self-defense. Celia, who was pregnant with the child of an enslaved man, requested of Newsom's daughters and then her master himself that he leave her alone through this third pregnancy, after having abused her for five years. He refused, and when he came to her cabin requesting sex, she hit and killed him with a lead pipe she had hidden under her bed, burned him, and had his unwitting grandson dispose of the ashes. Celia was arrested, and convicted of first-degree murder after a series of jury instructions that made other rulings all but impossible. The defense team appealed to the state Supreme Court and worried the execution would be carried out before the new hearing. Celia delivered a stillborn baby, and disappeared from jail five days before her planned execution, stolen by a Tyrant seeking power over what he saw as a corrupt judicial system. After a family battle, his Nemeses sister stole Celia and returned her to jail at the end of the month, unable to let Celia go unpunished for the murder she committed. The judge declared a new execution date



with little investigation. The state Supreme Court came to deny Celia's request for a stay of execution. December 21, 1855, the state murdered Celia. Days prior, she declared to her interrogator, "as soon as I struck him the Devil got into me, and I struck him with a stick until he was dead, and then rolled him into the fire and burnt him up."

What is To Come

On April 9, 1865, General Robert E. Lee surrenders to General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox. The war is over.

For a brief moment, hope for a more perfect Union flares in every heart. A Radical Republican Congress quickly ratifies what will become known as the Reconstruction Amendments. Together, the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments abolish slavery and assert every United States citizen, regardless of race, origin, or previous condition of servitude, has the right to equal protection of the law.

These Amendments are not popular in the white South, but until enough Southern states earn readmittance into the Union, Radical Republicans have little opposition in Congress.

Under the watchful eye of the Johnson and Grant Administrations, life rapidly improves for black citizens. Hundreds of teachers come to educate black children. Black men vote in enough numbers to see not only the election of black sheriffs, mayors, and state legislators, but also send Congressional representatives to Washington. Loved ones reunite and begin building homes and communities. But despite all their efforts, hope dies within half a generation.

The South has always been a hierarchical society, built on the divisions between black and white, free and slave, rich and poor, male and female. Everyone knew their place, and most people (or, at least, the ones at the top) liked it that way. Many Southerners, especially of the 19th century, firmly believed the world functioned as it did due to immutable, God-given reasons. Social status and power based on race, gender, or wealth was as much a law of nature as gravity. Change imposed on these social systems, especially from without, risked upsetting this natural order and creating chaos.

So to a Reconstruction-era Southerner, the Radical Republicans' plan to educate and enfranchise the newly freed black population threatens precisely the sort of systemic upset which they fear. The war has already thrown their society in disarray; white Southerners foresee even more disruption if the Radical Republicans get their way.

And so, as soon as they could, Southern leaders got to work rebuilding their own idea of society; a New South which looked remarkably similar to the Old South.

Corruption, Graft, and Scandal

Though Lincoln wins re-election near the end of the war, he does not live much past his second inauguration. Instead his vice president, Andrew Johnson, assumes the Presidency six days after Lee's surrender. Johnson's inability to work with the Radical Republican Congressional majority reduces him to little more than a cantankerous figurehead.

The two factions, a Republican-dominated Congress and the more Southern-friendly Johnson, continually butt heads. The legislative process becomes: Congress passes a bill, Johnson vetoes it, then Congress overrides his veto. In 1867, Johnson fires Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, giving Congress the (flimsy) excuse they need to impeach the President. Johnson's Presidency survives the impeachment, barely. Re-election lies firmly out of the question. Instead, the Republicans run Ulysses S. Grant, who wins quite handily and oversees the rest of Reconstruction.

Unfortunately for Grant's legacy, the late 19th century is a high point (or perhaps low point) regarding corruption in American politics. Cronyism and bribery, all-too-common ways to conduct business and politics, impede sincere efforts to improve the South. Many attempts to build new infrastructure (railroads, telegraph lines, factories) in the former Confederacy vanish in a puff of embezzlement and fraud. Bad decisions based on bad advice cause continuous scandal during Grant's Administration.

The prime targets for accusations of corruption are the carpetbaggers, Northern businessmen who come South seeking new opportunities (mostly financial, but some got involved in politics, too). Even more hated are the scalawags, native-born Southerners who embraced Radical Republicanism (and did pursue politics).

Resentful Southerners see both groups as carrion eaters, feeding off the pain of the South to enrich themselves. Much was made when corruption scandals break regarding carpetbaggers and scalawags, but these politicians were (usually) no more nor less corrupt than the average "good old boy" mayor or sheriff.

The Compromise of 1877

In 1876, Rutherford B. Hayes, a moderate Republican, runs for President against Samuel J. Tilden, a New England Democrat.

Tilden wins the popular vote quite handily. When time comes for the Electoral College to convene, however, Southern Democrats dispute 20 votes — enough to change the election.

Though some Southern states *seemingly* go for Hayes, local Democrats allege a campaign of intimidation and fear kept voters from the polls in Louisiana and South Carolina. In addition, the Democrats of Florida claim a confusing ballot design led many voters to cast ballots for someone other than their intended candidate.

The Electoral College sends the matter to Congress to decide. The newly re-admitted Southern Congressmen see their opportunity, and seize it.

The South wants home rule restored to the states, federal troops out, and government assistance in building local industry. And Southern representatives have just enough power



to get what they want. They block any attempt at resolution by staging a truly epic filibuster, lasting almost a full week.

For their part, the Republicans are quite happy to see Hayes assume the Presidency. Their sticking point is the list of concessions the Southern Democrats demand in exchange for backing down.

As Inauguration Day grows closer, Republicans and Democrats finally arrive at a compromise. The Democrats will end their filibuster, provided that Hayes withdraws the last federal troops from the South, appoints at least one Southern Democrat to his cabinet, and sends government money to the South for the purpose of investing in railroads and other infrastructure.

Hayes, of course, agrees to these terms. The Presidency is decided, by one electoral vote, in his favor.

And so Reconstruction ends in 1877, when the last Union soldier gets on a train headed north; and David M. Key of Tennessee becomes Postmaster General.

To Raise Up a Child

To understand post-Reconstruction racism, it's necessary to first understand the depth of commitment the antebellum South had to slavery.

Though slavery has always had its defenders, rising abolitionist sentiment during the 1850s saw gallons of ink spent on deeply racist treatises, sermons, and laws defending the South's "peculiar institution."

Priests and pastors preached how God ordained slavery for the benefit of the black soul. Doctors and scientists used quack phrenology and evolutionary pseudoscience to explain how black minds and black bodies were constitutionally suited to servitude. Businessmen and politicians described how the Southern way of life would collapse without a slave class. Equality between whites and blacks, they *all* argued, would lead to the dilution of the qualities which made the white race inherently superior (generally via the sexual corruption of white women). Chaos would result.

The end result of a society soaked in justifications for slavery and white supremacy is that a white child raised in 1850s Georgia or South Carolina grew up thoroughly educated in these arguments. Those children of the 1850s become the adults of the 1870s and the leaders of the 1880s. And, haunted by the specter of rising black power, the lessons learned in childhood could not be easily uprooted.

Some Northern advocates might have been able to ride the postwar wave of civil rights reform to challenge these attitudes. *If* they had cared to.

Racism in America has never been solely a Southern problem. Though they acted more subtly about it, Northern Yankees still had distinct ideas on racial mixing. Even though many Northerners celebrated the end of slavery, most still felt deep aversion to the idea of black in-laws or black leaders with authority over white citizens.



Justice Deferred

So when the time came to hold the South to account for their many crimes against black Americans...nothing happened. No reparations, no justice, not even an official apology.

Despite committing grave treason, no Confederate leader ever faces serious punishment. Robert E. Lee loses only land. Jefferson Davis is imprisoned for a few years, but eventually purchases his freedom. Confederate Vice President Alexander Stephens is charged but never tried — and, in fact, serves in the House of Representatives and as governor of Georgia. The only Confederate to ever be put on trial for treason or war crimes is Henry Wirz, the Swiss-born commander of Andersonville prison, executed for murder and conspiracy.

By the 1876 national centennial celebration, the North wants to forget the war ever happened. Northerners believe they have sacrificed enough, and don't think black civil rights a hill worth dying on (again). Most feel the passage of the Reconstruction Amendments is more than adequate. Having put these laws down on paper, Northern consciences are assuaged and few see any need to pursue the matter further.

The Slaughterhouse Cases of 1873 demonstrate the extent to which the federal government feels obligated to support enforcement of the Reconstruction Amendments, and the answer is: not much. The Supreme Court rules that enforcement and protection of civil rights will be left up to the individual states. In short, New York, California and Washington, D.C. are absolved of any responsibility regarding the fair treatment of black citizens in Georgia or Alabama.

Some native white Southerners do support racial equality, but they are too easily drowned out (sometimes violently) by their less enlightened neighbors.

As a result, racism and white supremacy flourish in the South.

Supernatural Stalemate

What does this mean for Beasts?

Beasts come from all walks of life, their inner natures poorly understood by even the most learned occultists. The Begotten may not be wholly human, but nevertheless carry their childhood prejudices and assumptions forward with them.

A freedman Nemesis may fight to punish former slave masters; while a Confederate veteran Tyrant chooses instead to feed on the nightmares of Yankees he holds responsible for ruining his society. And the Ravager, whose childhood home burned in the war, is angry at everyone.

To a certain extent, this makes life easy for Beasts. Begotten, after all, hold themselves accountable to nothing except their Horrors. The racial and class anxieties in the South offer a delicious spread of fears to feed their Horrors. Even if an individual Beast does not necessarily possess any egregious bigotry, he's usually not above exploiting such fears to get a good meal.

Observing how Beasts interacted with the South may offer a clearer perspective on why Reconstruction failed. After all, a Beast's most emotionally (and ethically) fulfilling meal usually comes when her victim learns an important lesson. Without a sense of purpose or cultural unity, these lessons lose their meaning. A white supremacist might wake up to the pain she has caused, but a different man gets taught the perils of supporting black voting rights.

Eventually, any meaningful signal gets lost and everything becomes little more than noise. Prejudice reinforces prejudice, and no one can find their way forward.

The Rise of Jim Crow

The Emancipation Proclamation officially abolished slavery within the Confederacy, and the four slave states exempt from the Proclamation quickly followed suit. The 13th Amendment ensures no readmitted state can try to restore the practice. That doesn't mean lawmakers aren't busy disenfranchising the black citizenry in other ways, though.

Directly after the war, the Southern states pass the Black Codes, a series of measures which severely restrict the lives of black men and women (including forbidding black men from voting). The federal government quickly overturns these codes, though legislators try again after Hayes' election.

Almost as soon as they escape the watchful eye of the federal government, Southern states pass a long list of discriminatory laws collectively known as "Jim Crow." Fair-minded lawyers challenge Jim Crow in court, but the 1896 *Plessy v Ferguson* decision makes "separate but equal" the law of the land. Southern lawmakers nod enthusiastically at this ruling, while secretly crossing their fingers behind their backs and rewriting budgets in back rooms.

Black schools find themselves severely underfunded (when they survived at all). Hospitals can turn away black patients without repercussion (even in an emergency). Public services (police, mail carriers, firefighters) often don't extend to black neighborhoods.

Every day, at every turn, survivors of slavery living in the post-Reconstruction South are reminded they live in a society which still considers them second-class citizens... and white Southerners are reminded that, no matter how bad their own life gets, they still have a better situation than their darker neighbors.

Some black families respond by leaving the South. However, whether they relocate to Oklahoma, Chicago, or California, black citizens soon discover that segregation is a fact of life everywhere in the Union, whether *de jure* or *de facto*.

Perhaps elected black leaders might have been able to combat Jim Crow, except for the long list of new voting laws. No state *explicitly* passes a law to forbid black men from voting, but poll taxes lay beyond the ability of most black families to pay, and literacy tests are often strangely more difficult for hopeful black voters than white.

Many methods of disenfranchisement, though, are more direct and brutal.

Flags, Masks, & Other Symbols

Even if black men are able to pass the literacy test and pay the poll tax, they have tremendous incentive not to do so.

White supremacist organizations, usually founded by Confederate veterans, explode in popularity. The most famous, of course, is the Ku Klux Klan, but other groups with names like the White League or the Red Shirts also attract hundreds of members.

Despite protestations that these groups only want to protect supposedly vulnerable white communities, the goals of these organizations are clear: the subjugation of black communities and the eradication of black power. Black homes, businesses and schools go up in flames, erasing much of the progress these communities have made since 1865.

Lynchings and mob action become common (cross burnings did not become a practice until the 20th century). Sometimes, the Klan even holds parades through black neighborhoods. And because they march masked, the terrified black residents have no idea whom they can trust — does the town sheriff, the town judge, their landlord, hide behind a white hood? The terrorism works.

How can any black man or woman challenge white hegemony, when doing so puts their loved ones at grave risk? Groups eventually form to fight for civil rights, such as the founding of the NAACP in 1909. But generations pass, and over 4,000 black men, women and children are lynched, before these organizations gain enough power to be effective.

Some white Southerners do oppose the Klan and similar postwar supremacist groups, but doing so is not without its own risk. Angry mobs kill over 1,000 white men and women for offenses such as advocating for black rights, doing business with black customers, or taking a black lover. And, like their neighbors, the violence perpetrated by these hate groups terrifies many otherwise openminded white people into silence.

Blood is Thicker than Fear

Nothing brings a community closer together than a common enemy. In defiance of those who create and perpetuate fear, tight-knit black communities form all through the South.

Black women may not have a hospital within 150 miles where they can give birth; but Mama Louise down the way will deliver a baby for two chickens and a bottle of moonshine. Black men may not be able to find a good job, but they can put in a day's work at Cousin Joe's farm and get a hearty supper in the evening. The police may not care if a white boy raped Sue Ellen, but Sue Ellen knows how to get justice by asking a hoodoo witch to put a hex on her rapist.

Whatever the challenge, the community finds a way to come together in the face of adversity. The cornerstone of many black neighborhoods becomes the church, where congregants come together to celebrate all the good things in life — family, love, and the simple joy of being alive. Reverends, pastors, and preachers become local leaders, often having a great deal of influence over their flock.

Another cultural cornerstone becomes the juke joint, where workers go after a long week to drink, gamble, and listen to music. The music born at juke joints, blues, is destined to become one of the most influential musical styles of the 20th century.

Similar communities form around poor whites, close-knit neighborhoods united by faith and work. However, even though the Southern poor of all races have more in common with each other than their richer counterparts, segregation holds sway.

Voodoo Hoodoo and Witchcraft

Though most black Americans are traditionally Protestant Christians, remnants of African faith traditions survive in a few regions. Born from a syncretism of forcibly imposed Christianity and the religion of their ancestors, some black community leaders use hedge magic to serve their people.

These workings generally rely on invoking ancestral spirits to perform services on behalf of the practitioner (who may herself be asking for someone else). Folk medicine also has a place, as those who cannot afford a doctor might visit a *mambo* for treatment instead. These traditions are, however, practiced only in a *very* small geographic area. Voodoo is extremely common in New Orleans and Louisiana, hoodoo (which incorporates Appalachian folk magic) less common in Alabama and Arkansas, and almost unheard of elsewhere. Even other black communities elsewhere in the nation regard these practices with suspicion.

Within the world of Chronicles of Darkness, however, spirits answer more often than not. Working as a *mambo* often serves as a convenient cover for other supernatural powers.

Community Ties

For Beasts, the closeness of Southern communities becomes a double-edged sword. Young Beasts who have yet to realize their full potential feel their isolation even more keenly, as they struggle to make the social connections which come so easily to others.

Though the Devouring brings self-actualization, a Southern Beast faces even more isolation. She lives in close, intimate quarters with those whom she loves but cannot entirely stop thinking of as prey. She may resist by declaring herself the protector of her community, refusing to feed on her neighbors



and instead sating her hunger on those who have caused harm. When Sue Ellen is raped, the hoodoo witch she goes to might very well be a Nemesis, who sustains herself for years by repeatedly punishing (an outsider might say torturing) her rapist.

Other Beasts, though, thrive on the fear generated by racialized hate. Even for Beasts with little or no racial prejudice, few see anything wrong with putting on a white hood, if doing so satisfies their Horror. Yet, though Beasts often accept without question others of their own kind, some find exploiting racial hatred a bridge too far.

Such a commitment to community protection invariably comes with a price. The majority of Southerners live in small, sparsely-populated towns. This, to a Beast, means greater difficulty finding those who meet not only her Horror's particular needs for feeding, but her personal standards as well. Eventually, the Beast misjudges her Hunger or goes too long without hunting, and her Horror compels her to feed on a loved one. Now the Beast feels ashamed, angry at herself for failing in her chosen role.

Even worse, her mistake may attract the attention of a Hero. Rounding up an angry mob to go take care of a threat isn't difficult in the South, especially if the Hero can take advantage of racial animosity. Even if the Beast escapes, she must bear the burden of knowing *she* brought the wrath of the Hero down on her loved ones.

Some Beasts, then, make the painful choice to leave, to deliberately stay away from their people in order to protect them. Where can a Beast go and stay truly isolated, though? Even if a Beast moves away from her childhood home and settles in a different town or city, she still must face the risk she presents to her new community.

Sometimes a Beast gives up having a stable home in the mortal world altogether, and takes to the road. The traveling salesman or peddler might not succeed exceptionally well in the economically depressed South, but at least he has an excuse to be constantly traveling and meeting new people. As the South slowly industrializes, railroad or telegraph employees can also stay transient.

Other Beasts speak of small neighborhoods, rural towns, or desperately poor farm villages, where a Beast actually *confessed* what they were and still found acceptance. The name of the town changes with every telling, though. When a Beast arrives at this legendary place, they often find the story to be just a tall tale. They don't stop hoping, though, and continually seek a place they might find true acceptance.

Economy and Industry

The soil and climate of the South is well-suited to agriculture, and Southerners long saw themselves as a society built of gentleman farmers. Like many attitudes in the South, this, too, proves resistant to change. Many Southern leaders recognized the need for the South to industrialize. But the common citizens of the South are reluctant to give up their agrarian ideal, and industrialization happens slowly.

After Emancipation, the South had a great number of previously enslaved workers who knew agriculture and desired a certain measure of self-determination. On the other hand were the former planters who'd kept most of their land and now needed people to farm it. Thus, a system already slightly in use before the war gains wider practice: sharecropping.

A sharecropper has a certain acreage of land assigned to him by a landlord; who often provides seed, tools, and small livestock as well. The sharecropper grows what his landlord tells him (usually cotton, tobacco, or peanuts), and the two parties split the crop come harvest time. Half the crop goes to the landlord directly, the other half belongs to the sharecropper to sell as he wishes.

Most sharecroppers are initially those who had once been slaves, but by the end of Reconstruction many white farmers turn to sharecropping as well.

The system works well enough to ensure a sharecropper earns enough to feed his family, but usually little more. Sharecropped land cannot be inherited by children or spouses, and the system of crop lien means sharecroppers almost always owe their landlords. Sharecroppers quickly realize that debt and poverty can constrain a life as firmly as whips and chains. But few have other options. Only the advent of World War II and the mechanization of agriculture bring an end to this system.

Southern Belles & Working-Women

The firm hierarchy which defines Southern culture extends to gender as well. And while the war disrupted some gender roles, it did so only in a limited fashion and for a short period of time.

The highest feminine ideal remains the southern belle: she is beautiful, pious, gracious, chaste, and well-mannered, an excellent housekeeper nevertheless brave and competent in the face of a crisis. An ideal rooted in the antebellum South, many post-Reconstruction women still aspire to be southern belles.

However, most women find belle-hood unattainable. Only a wealthy woman can afford the money, leisure time, and servants necessary to maintain her role.

Most women of the post-Reconstruction South, then, are working women. They aren't career women; rather, they work out of economic necessity (and in addition to their primary domestic duties).

In rural areas, women of all races work side-by-side with their husbands and brothers on small farms. Women in cities or towns commonly work in support or nurturing roles. Nurses, teachers, seamstresses, and beauticians all find a place in the Southern economy. (As did prostitutes, the cruel tradeoff being that they lose their social status but often earn more money.)

Somewhat less common are businesswomen. Though a woman rarely start her own business, it's perfectly acceptable to continue running one she inherits (though Southern states are slow to catch up to more progressive Northern states in allowing married women their own property. Throughout post-Reconstruction South, a man often has more rights to his wife's wages than she does).

Black women, when they do not work on the family farm, find employment as domestic servants — housekeepers, cooks, and, importantly, nannies. The Southern Belle has little time to devote to the raising of children, and often hires a black woman to care for her offspring.

Paradoxically, despite women making up a strong component of the labor force, women's rights take decades to permeate the South. Just as some whites feared racial integration upsetting the natural order of things, so too do many 19th-century Southerners fear gender equality having a similar effect.

Americans of Other Colors

Though the South is primarily black and white, other races infrequently settle the area. Historically, the Seminole tribe settled Florida, and Texas has always had a significant Hispanic population. A few Asians settle in the South, though most choose to live in the West.

Jim Crow laws, by and large, do not directly apply to nonwhite, nonblack people; though many white businesses still refuse service to dark-skinned members of other races. The Asians, Hispanics, and Native Americans that do live and work in the South still have to navigate a difficult and complex web of race relations.

Of greater prevalence and social importance, however, are those of mixed ancestry: children born from one black parent and one white parent. Despite strict laws and social taboos against racial mixing, every generation sees a healthy percentage of mixed-race births. Some of these unions are certainly of the forbidden-love variety, but not every multiracial child is born of a consensual encounter.

Despite the "one-drop" rule, in which any person with at least one black ancestor is legally considered black, biracial individuals often find their coloration light enough to be thought white. This leads to the practice of *passing*, in which a person of mixed-race ancestry lives as white. Though passing means these people were spared the worst bigotry, they nevertheless face their own difficulties. Many who pass are forced to sever ties with their black relatives, and face dire consequences if their secret ever came out.

Mixed-race or passing Beasts, therefore, have an especially challenging world to navigate — not just one, but two important secrets define their lives. While Beasts naturally build ties with others of their kind, can a Beast with a black mother ever *really* trust that her fellow Beasts will accept her if they knew?

The Rise of the Lost Cause

After retiring from public life in the late 1870s, Jefferson Davis turns to writing. He publishes *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government* in 1881, and, just before his death in 1889, *A Short History of the Confederate States of America*. Together, these two books promote and define the "Lost Cause" ideology, still a popular (though incorrect) interpretation of the Civil War.

The Lost Cause puts forth that the Confederacy had solid economic and political reasons to secede, reasons which had little or nothing to do with slavery. The role of slavery in Southern culture is downplayed, both in terms of its pervasiveness and its detrimental effects on those enslaved. Reconstruction is viewed as a deliberate attempt by the North to disrupt or destroy the Southern way of life for nefarious reasons. Confederate soldiers and even Reconstruction-era KKK members (often the same people) are lauded as brave heroes fighting to defend their culture.

The Lost Cause ideas gains traction among Southern whites, who want to believe their forefathers seceded for morally sound reasons. Films such as *Gone with the Wind* or D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* promote the idea that white Southerners are the innocent victims of Northern bullies and 'thuggish' blacks. The popularity of these films, particularly *Gone with the Wind*, allows Lost Cause ideas to percolate into wider American culture. Most historians reject the Lost Cause ideology for being ahistorical, though that doesn't prevent the ideas from finding a home in the hearts and minds of many Southerners from Reconstruction onward.

Chauvinism by Another Name

Though the South has some specific ideas about the proper role of women, the idea of feminine honor permeates the culture. Southerners practice a form of sexism which they insist is benevolent: men are expected to be courteous and socially deferential to women, while gently guiding them away from holding power outside the domestic sphere (and even then, a woman keeps house in accordance with her husband's preferences). A man who does violence to another man for insulting the honor of a female relative faces little to no punishment.

However, how these men behave in the dark is a different matter entirely. Women who insist on climbing down from their pedestal are rarely rewarded for it. And even sworn lawmen are often reluctant to interfere with a man using violence against his own wife or children. Poor or black women are excluded from the 'benefits' of benevolent sexism, and just get the sexism.

Southern Living & American Culture

Despite its economic and social challenges, the South continues to develop as a distinct North American subculture



while making considerable contributions to national — and global — culture.

Growing out of a Caribbean style, barbecue as both a cooking method and social gathering were first popularized in the American South. The nation comes to embrace the cookout, to the extent that two United States holidays, July 4th and Memorial Day, are traditionally celebrated around a barbecue grill.

To go with pulled pork and slow-cooked ribs are a wide array of Southerner-invented beverages. Confederate veteran John Pemberton initially developed Coca-Cola as a health tonic to assist him in getting off morphine; and Jack Daniels was the son of another veteran, who learned distilling after being orphaned as a young teenager.

Blues music grows out of old spirituals, work songs, and the experience of postwar black society. Blues musicians will go on to influence bluegrass, jazz, R&B, and rock and roll... making blues a core component of modern music. Southern writers contribute significantly to English-language literature: Mark Twain hailed from the South, as did the more contemporary Zora Neale Hurston, Thomas Wolfe, Tennessee Williams, William Faulkner, Truman Capote, and Harper Lee.

Of special note is the Southern tradition of hospitality. Southerners generously open their homes to friends and strangers alike. Though many cultures embrace the ideal of hospitality, the practice becomes art form in the South. Even a shady-seeming individual can count on a glass of sweet tea and a chance to use the washroom in most Southern towns (provided he stays respectful of racial constraints, of course).

The Supernatural

No supernatural community emerges from the war unscathed. Many coteries, packs, or freeholds lost members and resources, and now struggle to rebuild. As a result, normally insular groups find themselves more open to the idea of including a Beast – especially once they realize the benefits conferred by Family Ties.

Mages

The Nameless War marked mage conflict during the U.S. Civil War and Reconstruction. This was a civil war between the Diamond Orders and the Nameless. The Nameless came to unite under the banner of the Free Council at the end of the conflict, though some communist and anarchist Libertines may resent the military terminology. The war included, perhaps, the most mage casualties from a single conflict, though it involved neither the Exarchs nor their followers the Seers of the Throne, save at the end when the Nameless issued their infamous Great Refusal to join the Seers of the Throne and formed the Free Council. The conflict, which had been escalating for centuries, quickly quieted down. The Diamond became the Pentacle, and the newly congealed Order of revolutionaries, the Free Council, became the most despised by the conquerors of the Supernal.

Though incomparable by sheer number, the casualties inflicted on brothers and sisters by brothers and sisters eerily reflected the same in the United States' Civil War, the bloodiest conflict in United States history, fought entirely on United States soil. As with the U.S. Civil War, the aftermath saw new societal structures being created, and though many identify the end of the Nameless War as the Great Refusal, others are of the opinion that, like battles, wars do not end. Many in the Diamond still distrust the Free Council, and the Free Council's disdain for the organizational structure and legal enforcement of the Diamond Orders is well known. Even so, as long as the Seers of the Throne remain a tangible and metaphysical threat, the Diamond Orders and the Free Council know they must continue to combat them together, no matter how uneasy the alliance through different periods of stained history.

As addressed earlier in this chapter, midwifery and childbirth were long viewed as the domains of women. When the Seers of the Throne started and consolidated control over the American Medical Association in 1847, they quickly tried to push women out of informal medical practice, as a means of reclaiming control over what had traditionally become a way for women to express political and social influence. By creating these structures, they distanced Sleepers from the Supernal, distracting them with mundane conflict.

Midwifery was always a target of suspicion in the New England colonies and the early United States. The Massachusetts Bay Colony exiled midwife Anne Hutchinson of Antinomian Controversy fame, and in 1648, the colony executed its first accused witch, a midwife named Margaret Jones. More famously, midwife Elizabeth Proctor was targeted in 1692, though the record of her arrest and conviction were expunged in the early 1700s due to legal changes in England and letter requests of the Massachusetts governor.

In the 19th century, medicine pushed the bounds of what was believed to be possible. In 1849, the Seers of the Throne actively sought to trivialize medical miracles, tweaking the Lie to construct mundane solutions to what used to require Supernal intervention. By interfering with what they termed false cures, the Seers of the Throne not only tightened their regulation of Sleeper society but also monitored the activity of Thyrsus mages who tried to disguise their healing through mundane means. Just a year prior, in 1848, the American Medical Association advocated for state governments to register births, marriages, and deaths, monitoring many a potential for Awakening and the formation of Sympathetic Connections. In the Seer's efforts to professionalize medicine, control those professional organizations, and monitor the healing activities of Diamond Thyrsus mages, midwives without magical skill were collateral damage. Because of this, many midwives lost the right to aid in delivery, and in some cases, lost their lives. The Seers of the Throne won the battle for physicians swiftly, and maintained it until the advent of new wonder medicines during the Great War.

For a group with control over the physical laws of the universe, the Seers of the Throne had significantly more trouble securing control over the litigative and legislative elements of society. The establishment of the American Bar Association happened in 1878, sometime later than the establishment of the AMA in 1847.

In its early years, many of the Bar's presidents were former Confederates and Confederate sympathizers who somehow managed to avoid paying the price for their actions and counter-sympathies. Many of these presidents were also politicians and were former career military in both the Union and Confederate armies. This period was characterized by constant struggles between the Seers of the Throne and the Diamond Orders to wrestle control of U.S. legal structures from the other side, but these battles took place on sociopolitical fronts, with little to no physical fighting.

Tensions rose in general during this period. Most U.S. Americans know of Representative Preston Brooks of South Carolina beating Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts with a cane in 1856 over a virulent slavery speech given by the Senator. The legal battles between the Seers of the Throne and the Diamond were more reminiscent of Massachusetts voters reelecting Sumner through his hospitalization and years following, as a passive aggressive reminder of Southern brutality. The Silver Ladder would not relinquish control over legal systems, but the Seers of the Throne had set up the very social systems from which those legal systems were derived. Willworkers of both sides were unwilling to allow the other side to gain way, and the Diamond's stake in this only increased as the Nameless War grew more heated with the need to monitor their own. From 1868-1872, John Dillon, a Silver Ladder mage who would go on to preside over the American Bar Association from 1891-1892, penned a series of treatises to restrict the power of localities in an effort to stop the Nameless from being able to form jurisdictional domination. Control of the Bar shifted between the Seers of the Throne and the Pentacle during Reconstruction, but entirely on a social, extralegal battlefield. When a mage ended up dead, it could not be traced to the other side in any tangible way, viciously reflecting the sociopolitical atmosphere of Sleeper fights for postbellum equality. Finally, the Diamond — soon to be the Pentacle — managed to maintain control over the American Bar Association, with little reclamation from the Seers of the Throne. Though many litigators and attorneys were unaware of this overarching battle, whichever side ruled at any given time manipulated those active in Bar Association politics to see things their way.

Mages and Beasts during the U.S. Civil War and Reconstruction

During this period, Diamond willworkers found themselves increasingly distracted by Nameless revolutionaries, to the point where it became very difficult for them to focus on much more than combatting the rebels and the Seers of the Throne. Mage interests are as varied as their backgrounds, but what many saw as an existential threat facing their organizational structure meant that most in the Diamond had to reevaluate their priorities to focus on the Nameless. When mages and Beasts did encounter one another, it entailed much more specific conditions than any general action by mage society. If a Beast chose to target a mage, the community responded. Unfortunately for the mage community, Beasts did not respect their desire to focus on the aftermath of the Nameless War.

A chronicle set in this time may well feature the aftermath of crossover between the U.S. Civil War and the Nameless War. Though many magi would be reluctant to admit it, their politics were largely shaped before their Awakenings. The Seers of the Throne wiped off scraped knees and dug into growing legal and social Sleeper organizations, to influence the reach of those they served. Pentacle mages in positions of Sleeper power prosecuted thousands of Klansmen to keep Seer control of the organization curtailed. Sleeper money launderers pursued opportunities to exchange counterfeit currency, and grifters defrauded many southerners, vulnerable after the falls of their governments and economic systems. In particular, mage political battles over Sleeper organizations drew the attention of Tyrants. Similarly, Tyrants and Collectors may react to extortion attempts by mages or sleepers. Seer and Pentacle attempts to control professional organizations affected relatively fewer Beasts than the widespread economic deception in the south, but many Beast practitioners took great offense to their younger relatives trying to dictate the rules of their trades. A Storyteller could examine any of these for a **Mage** and **Beast** crossover.

Vampires

The covenants of the Kindred community reacted quite differently to the outbreak of war, though for the most part, efforts were simply focused towards ensuring their nightly feeding supply. The Ventrue in the North saw opportunity to weaken the herds and power of their southern cousins, taking such easy ways out as supporting laws to simply pay someone else to take their place in the draft. In the south, vampires did not interfere with the system of slavery in part because it served as an easy way to consolidate earthly wealth and to keep herds under control. After a lashing, many an enslaved person did not notice further blood loss.

Civil war always rocks vampiric communities, but war leaves many men gathered together, with deaths to be expected. The U.S. Civil War sees several ancient vampires losing territory to younger ones. The war came with a burst of increased scrutiny of Kindred activity, with bloodborne and other diseases being tracked by the newly founded American Medical Association. With this increased notice, hunters became a problem in a way that they hadn't been since before the American Revolutionary War. Among these hunters was a lawyer from Springfield, regarded by some of the Kindred as their greatest threat in the New World. He had a surprising resistance to the effects of domination, and even an attempt to drive him to suicide through depression proved useless.



Especially in the South, further from the tight control of the Elders in New York City and closer to the future capital of unlife in the United States, New Orleans, the rise of this man to first the Republican nomination and ultimately to the presidency served as a shock. For beings who had seen kings rise and fall, this man's ascension seemed to spell their doom.

New Orleans was one of the largest urban areas in North America and home to the largest slave market in the United States. During the Antebellum period, more enslaved men and women moved through New Orleans than any other city. Even after importations of enslaved people were made illegal, it served as a black market port for such trade. For the Kindred, it was this second role of the city that made it appealing to those willing to settle away from the more urban New England. Many of these slave markets were run by ghouls, looking over the stock of humans flowing through the city for their masters. With the capture of New Orleans in 1862, Major General Benjamin "The Beast" Butler implemented a misguided and aggressive attempt to stamp out the Kindred in the Big Easy. General Order 28, in which any woman who was disdainful to an officer or symbol of the federal government could be treated as prostitute, saw the government trying to curtail vampiric nighttime activities, to little effect. Even though their city was quickly recaptured by the Union, the secession of Louisiana ultimately finalized the separation of New Orleans' Kindred into their own political entity, which would only grow in power after the end of the war. Local vampiric control of New Orleans meant a vampire was almost always the Apex and even neophytes tried to demand cuts from Beasts' activities. While swatted away as gnats, Beasts were now annoyed by the activities of their younger relatives, not annoying their relatives themselves.

After 1864, William Tecumseh Sherman's name was anathema to the Kindred due to his use of fire in the March to the Sea. Many Kindred believed that he was one of Lincoln's agents against the vampires of Georgia — whether he knew of the existence of the Kindred or not, the March to the Sea uprooted infrastructure, destroyed centuries old mansions, and unearthed Kindred hiding places, exposing them to sunlight, fire, and wooden stakes. Of Sherman's campaign, Lincoln wrote, "it afford[s] the obvious and immediate military advantage; but, in showing to the world that your army could be divided, putting the stronger part to an important new service, and yet leaving enough to vanquish the old opposing force of the whole — Hood's army — it brings those who sat in darkness, to see a great light." Though a reference to the Bible, the final line bore an especially lethal meaning to the Kindred given the loss of unlife experienced in the early winter of 1864.

On April 1st, 1865, Lincoln's crusade against the Kindred ended. After lending his support for Radical Republican legislation to increase the legal protections for blacks in the aftermath of the U.S. Civil War, a Washington, D.C. coterie of Lancea et Sanctum Elders murdered Lincoln in Georgetown. Lincoln's team of hunters kept their training and tactics alive for years to come, their descendants eventually forming the core of Task Force Valkyrie. Though this would take nearly a century, Lincoln's team unwilling to reveal the existence of the Kindred to the general public, they framed his death two weeks later.

Vampires and Beasts during the U.S. Civil War and Reconstruction

Though they related to Beasts' consuming hunger, vampires ultimately thrived when they were able to farm blood and acquire power. They saw no need to teach, to educate, or even to learn beyond what was necessary for their scheming, petty or grand.

Tyrants and Predators joined vampires in targeting the particularly powerful. The war did little to change that, though vampires took more notice of these walking nightmares as they became potential tools of warfare, and tried to manipulate these beasts in turn. With Covenants temporarily torn apart, many of the Kindred attempted to recruit Beasts to their side, to little avail. Though Beasts' desires ranged as much as any human's, few could be tempted to take part in some 10,000 year old battle unless it happened to fulfill their particular hunger.

It is worth noting that many of the Kindred did occupy the same spaces as Beasts. With the war taking many able-bodied men to the front lines, the Kindred had easy pickings of those left at home or dying on the battlefield, and Beasts had fewer targets to sate their hungers. Though the increase in conflict for prey was small, it did not go unnoticed by either community. Stories are still told of a neophyte coterie burnt to char and regurgitated in the middle of an October night, with no hint of fire. When the Kindred awoke the next morning, a beast had staked a note through Archbishop Rev. Aaron Burr Sr.'s coffin. *Leave Your Older Siblings Be.* As Burr had been growing less popular due to his staunchly pro-Union policies, only a token hunt was undertaken, ordered by his Ventrue Invictus successor.

Vampires never deluded themselves into thinking they could stay out of the conflict, nor did they want to. They had every stock in maintaining the social order and the ready supply of bodies from which blood would be little missed. Many vampires pursued blood addiction in wealthy slave owners, ghouling them for further use. The impact of that blood addiction when slave owners held less power may be an interesting exploration for a **Vampire** chronicle set during Reconstruction. Vampires also embedded themselves in hospitals, draining from the sick and injured. Beasts bribed into destroying the Safe Place of a particular vampire for rivals, or into sullying someone's reputation may serve as an increasingly political **Vampire** and **Beast** crossover.

Sin-Eaters

The U.S. Civil War led to so much death, it haunted Sin-Eaters every time they took a step. The sheer number of voices suddenly severed from their mortal lives seemed to mock Sin-Eaters, and it became almost impossible for them

to function save to help those voices find solace and pass on. Sin-Eaters made no structural decision to side one way or the other, but most Sin-Eaters stayed neutral in the conflict and urged each other to do the same. Dependent on their Synergy and the urgings of the geist, this may have differed from Sin-Eater to Sin-Eater, but the vast majority did not choose a side, instead helping any and all dead they encountered. The political stance of the vast majority of Sin-Eaters was to stay apolitical, help as many ghosts as they could regardless of side, and alleviate as much of the suffering of survivors and civilian loved ones as possible. The Civil War provided ample opportunity for Sin-Eaters to gain access to otherwise remote locations. Where sneaking around a battlefield may have raised some questions if they were not affiliated with either side, many, especially in the north, joined with the armies as camp followers, sometimes physically helping to collect the dead or working in other roles in the camps.

Even after the war, hundreds of ghosts lingered at some of these battlefields. The price to bring the ghosts to rest proved too high for some Sin-Eaters. Confederate soldiers who particularly fought to preserve slavery would not allow themselves to be lain to rest when droves of freed, formerly-enslaved people were given 40 acres and a mule, regardless of how quickly the order was rescinded. Some Union soldiers who particularly fought to spread freedom to all did not accept Sin-Eater help as violent attacks on people of color increased and escalated in the postbellum United States.

However, once the Civil War gave way to Reconstruction, black men were targeted for lynchings at levels that had never before been seen. By this point, not only did most Sin-Eaters feel the only true way to help the dead was to side with newly freed people of color but also helping the dead more and more meant helping newly freed people of color. Their apolitical stance quickly shifted in kind.

Sin-Eaters and Beasts during the U.S. Civil War and Reconstruction

Beasts in this period saw Sin-Eaters as more liberal. While some Beasts saw this social impetus on part of Sin-Eaters as an opportunity to teach lessons to the societies they were a part of, others saw that if they became caught up in these same social battlegrounds, they would draw too much attention from Heroes. Predators, Nemeses, and Ravagers took advantage of Sin-Eaters to teach lessons to those they didn't want to approach themselves. Unfortunately, this still sometimes pulled Heroes near Beasts with a mind for social reform.

The Bound tended to think of Beasts in terms of the corpses they left behind, and so other interactions between the two in this period might come from Sin-Eaters cleaning up a scene left behind by their older siblings. Violent Beasts of all Hungers leave many laden souls behind. Clean up of the scene required the assistance of a krewe almost every time, and sometimes even created more souls for whom a geist might offer an arrangement. The Bound follow death, and Beasts leave death in their wake.

Sin-Eaters liked to see themselves as staying out of the politics of the war. The reality of this may make for an insightful **Geist: The Sin-Eaters** chronicle and exploration for Storytellers and players alike. Regardless, many Sin-Eaters spent the Civil War on battlefields trying to assist the dead. The Bound took much inspiration from Clara Barton, the Angel of the Battlefield, who served as a nurse in the U.S. Civil War before she founded the American Red Cross in 1881. Barton believed it her duty to heal the wounded regardless of affiliation. This resonated with many Sin-Eaters, and rumors spread among Bound who had not seen her in person that she may, in fact, be one of them, a mage, or a being of an even stranger nature.

The Lost

Southern changelings have more problems than the average Lost. Most changelings now residing in the former Confederacy were taken before (or during) the war. Having escaped their Durances, they now find themselves in a world nearly as alien as Arcadia. Nothing is unchanged, little is recognizable. Not a great position to be in when one's mental health relies on stability.

Many Lost set up freeholds which mimic the antebellum South in an attempt to reconnect to the familiar. But these communities have more in common with children playing house than with a functional society. Other changelings go in the other direction, attempting to create experimental societies or utopian communes, with varying degrees of success.

Freeholds across the South fracture. Some institute policies of radical inclusivity, enforcing strict bans on any displays of racism. Other freeholds go the opposite route, insisting on segregated courts, even placing restrictions on black changelings accessing Goblin Markets.

Sometimes these rules change with the seasons, as the Spring King with Radical Republican sympathies overturns the rules of the more conservative Winter Queen...only for the freehold's rules to change yet again with the ascension of the Yankee-born Summer King.

Such rapidly shifting rules obviously aren't good for the Lost. As a result, many refuse to petition *any* freehold for membership. Instead, these changelings live as outsiders, doing their best to make their way in a confusing, sometimes terrifying, world.

So when one of these extremely lost changelings finds a somewhat kindred spirit in a Beast, the relationship often benefits both. Beasts, hungry in their own way for stability and community, have little difficulty forming Family Ties with these changelings.

Of course, this doesn't mean all Beast/changeling relationships are sunshine and roses. A given Begotten and a given Lost are just as likely to become rivals or enemies as bosom pals. Even the most well-intentioned relationship can sour, if the Lost places too many expectations on the Beast and tries to get the emotional fulfillment only a freehold can provide from her Begotten friend.



The Forsaken

The Civil War was not kind to the Forsaken. Packs lost valuable members, territory, and loci to the fighting. Just as never-before-seen nightmares wracked the Primordial Dream, so too has the spirit world undergone a profound transformation. Fed by fear, anger, and pain, the South is full to bursting of unstable, destructive spirits.

More than a few outsider packs realize the opportunity which Reconstruction promises, and have traveled south to see if they can't carve out better territories than what they found elsewhere. Conflicts between native-born packs and the interlopers break out with some regularity. Local packs try and defend their ancestral territory, but simply don't have the numbers to face the newcomers.

Other conflicts are direr. Recognizing that the Forsaken packs of the South have been severely weakened, several packs of Pure have seized the opportunity to bring a new war to the South.

In an attempt to raise their numbers back to prewar levels, most packs are relaxing a few rules: more Wolf-Blooded are permitted to join the sacred hunts, and the Forsaken rely more on outsiders to help defend their territory.

As a result, while a Begotten likely won't be accepted as a fully initiated member, many packs remain open to a more casual arrangement. A Beast may not be a formal participant of most hunts, but the pack usually doesn't mind if she tags along and provides support.

However, the Forsaken are no less vulnerable to the prejudices and bigotries of anyone else raised in the South. Though Uratha like to think they're above petty human divisions, more than a few hunts have a racial element — even if it's a pack protecting their black Wolf-Blooded kin from an angry white mob.

New Nightmares

Memories of the war, of slavery. Racial fear. Class anxiety. Here are just a few examples of Nightmares which feed on the particular worries of Southerners.

Soldier's Heart

A rain-soaked battlefield. A burning farmhouse, children trapped inside. The hungry winter after soldiers stole the harvest. Bloodied feet and burning lungs, the baying of the slavecatcher's hounds.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Satiety vs. Resolve + Supernatural Tolerance

Normal: The Beast dredges up the worst, most traumatic memory her target has, and forces him to relive it. A veteran experiences a flashback to the smoke and blood at Gettysburg, a freedwoman remembers a desperate, failed escape attempt, a nurse can't forget the endless rows of the dead and dying in a stinking field hospital.

The victim, trapped in her memory, gains the Broken, Distracted, or Fugue Condition.

High Satiety: The victim loses access to her Mental Merits for the duration of the Nightmare.

Satiety Expenditure: The victim fails one Mental action per point of Satiety spent.

Exceptional Success: The memory is now so vivid and disturbing that the Nightmare provokes a breaking point.

This Isn't My Skin!

What? What's wrong with you? Why are you looking at me like that? Don't you recognize me? No! Don't run away!

Dice Pool: Presence + Satiety vs. Composure + Supernatural Tolerance

Normal: The victim perceives herself as being of a different race or gender. Her loved ones see her just as she's always been, but she cannot read their sincerity. Instead, she only experiences revulsion and rejection as her social ties crumble and she loses all sense of identity and belonging. The victim gains the Delusional Condition and suffers a -2 modifier on all Social actions.

High Satiety: The victim gains only one success in contested Social actions, regardless of how many the player rolled.

Satiety Expenditure: The victim cannot regain Willpower through her Virtue or Vice; her sense of identity is too shaken for the usual pleasures to comfort her.

Exceptional Success: The victim gains the Agoraphobic, Confused, or Paranoid Condition.

Don't Take My Leg, Doc!

The saw bites down on your bone, and you bite into the stick someone's shoved between your teeth. You try not to hear, try not to feel, as your shattered leg is cut away.

Dice Pool: Presence + Satiety vs. Resolve + Supernatural Tolerance

Normal: For a soldier who'd taken a bullet to a limb, sometimes the only way to ensure survival was amputation. Southern streets were full of these veterans, missing arms and limping on crutches.

The victim of this Nightmare believes herself to be such an amputee, and suffers a -2 to all Physical actions.

High Satiety: The victim becomes incapable of using the "lost" limb. The effect is the same as the Arm Wrack or Leg Wrack Tilts, except the victim does not suffer any physical damage.

Satiety Expenditure: The pain of the phantom amputation becomes severe enough for the victim to gain the Beaten Down Tilt, which cannot be resolved until the Nightmare ends.

Exceptional Success: The victim also believes she has lost her vision, and gains the Blinded Tilt.

Heroes of the South

Heroes are driven by the sure conviction that what they are doing is *correct*, and for the greater good — making them perfectly suited for a Reconstruction-era chronicle.



Sergeant Clarinda "Johnny" Weaver

Clarinda Weaver grew up the youngest of six children on a Tennessee tobacco farm. Young Clarinda, whose family owned five to eight black 'servants' over the course of her childhood, could never understand the fuss some made over slavery. Her family, after all, treated their slaves quite well: They got Sundays off, extra rations at Christmastime, and children weren't sold until they were at least eight years old.

During the war, Clarinda saw half her siblings enlist. One brother never came back, and another came home without his left arm. Union soldiers raided her farm in 1862, and Clarinda watched her family's wealth go up in flames. Once word reached the remaining Weavers that her last brother had been killed in the fighting, Clarinda had enough.

She cut her hair, bound her breasts and enlisted in the Confederate Army, ready to get revenge on the Union soldiers who had destroyed her life. Even after Lee's surrender, Clarinda hasn't stopped fighting.

Clarinda uses her military training (including her skill with disguise) to hunt and pursue those she deems a threat to her community, targeting Union sympathizers first and foremost.

Ollie Doherty

Ollie and his family came over from Ireland in the early 1850s, settling in Boston. Anti-Irish sentiment made life difficult for his family, especially sensitive Ollie. The neighborhood priest recommended seminary, which suited the bright young boy quite well. But school cost money, and no matter how hard the Dohertys worked, they could never quite cover the costs.

And so Ollie left home at 16, going west to seek his fortune. During the war years, he worked for anyone willing to hire an Irishman. He found employment as a miner, a rancher, and a railroad worker, never losing his piety or intelligence.

Ollie always felt called to a higher purpose, and has followed this feeling to the South. His experience of the Primordial Dream is quite different from most Heroes. Ollie believes his connection to this realm is a sacred gift. Revelations regarding Beasts come when Ollie prays, and he experiences his Heroic powers as the saints working through him.

Ollie feels guided to rid the world of wickedness, and so is horrified at the rampant prejudice he sees. The anti-black bigotry reminds him of his own childhood, when he experienced persecution and poverty for being Irish. Ollie further struggles to overcome the attitude that he's nothing more than a carpetbagger, here to loot the South. Can't they see he's just trying to *help*?



Berend McKey

Berend's life has been one of *almosts*. His father was *almost* wealthy enough to be a planter. Berend was *almost* good enough to marry Miss Ada Sinclair. He *almost* got into law school. And when the war happened, he was *almost* good enough to receive an officer's commission. Instead, he worked as a quartermaster, made to watch the rest of the troops march to the front lines while he guarded the horses and wagons.

Berend's bitter ambition led him to find his true calling as a Hero during the war. He put an end to two Beasts, thereby discovering fulfillment. Hunting Beasts gives him a sense of purpose and power over his life which he's never experienced before.

Berend isn't mindful of collateral damage when on a hunt. Indeed, some dark part of him revels in the chaos he's caused as he stands in front of a burning building or over the bleeding body of his most recent victim.

Berend doesn't restrict his hunts to only Beasts. He'll destroy any creature he perceives as a threat. For Berend, this has now come to mean anyone he deems responsible for the "degradation" of the South. He'll gladly silence anyone who opposes him, Beast or not.

Berend is also an accomplished con artist. Despite never being admitted to law school, he is currently passing himself off as a lawyer.

Apexes

Most supernatural creatures in the South are still constrained by their outward appearance, which defines where they might go and with whom they interact. Those who have learned to successfully cross those boundaries are the most successful, and most likely to become Apex.

Due to the hierarchical culture of the South, Apexes are often granted more respect than they might receive elsewhere.

Ol' Man River

No one remembers his real name; perhaps he never had one. The Makara Tyrant known as Ol' Man River has been a fixture on the Mississippi for at least 80 years, and claims as his territory both banks of the river running from the Mason-Dixon Line to the bayous of New Orleans. He stands barely five feet tall, white whiskers and hair exploding outward from underneath a battered straw hat. His race is difficult to determine — possibly of African descent, possibly a sunbaked European; his dark eyes suggest a touch of Native ancestry.

Ol' Man River's lesson is: Survival on the Mississippi requires hard work. He appreciates those who respect "his" river and the skill necessary to navigate it, but he absolutely cannot abide laziness, and his Horror enjoys feeding from the idle and indolent. On some level, the sailors and steamboat workers understand this. An array of superstitions has sprung up to appease Ol' Man River. For his part, Ol' Man River appreciates their gestures and offerings.

Until, of course, it's time for his next meal.

Martine, Dragon of Winchester

When interacting with mortals, Martine usually presents as either male or female, but while attending supernatural gatherings, they wholeheartedly embrace their androgyny. Martine's ability for easily transcending the boundaries between male and female has earned them the respect of the local Ordo Dracul, of which they are an elder member.

While most Apexes achieve their status through predation on mortals, Martine's recent ascension has been slightly more roundabout. In 1859, Martine possessed one of the best occult libraries in North America. But during the war, much of Martine's library was lost to theft, confiscation, or looting.

To restore their lost treasures, Martine has begun hiring mercenaries to recover or replace what the war took. Martine prefers not to work with Kindred, as they believe vampires are too untrustworthy. But they will otherwise contract with Lost, Forsaken, Begotten, or even mortals. The resulting influx of strange creatures carrying occult paraphernalia, and their collective impact on the mortal lives of Winchester, has caused Martine to assume the mantle of Apex.

Neva Rodgers

An Anakim of mixed-race descent who rules the supernatural community of Galveston, Texas, Neva has worked hard to make her city the rare success story of Reconstruction. Even the vampire prince and freehold monarch do not act before consulting Missus Rodgers. Originally occupied by the Union, the Confederacy controlled Galveston from 1863 up through the end of the war.

Neva found the Confederates both challenging and rewarding. Despite having freed herself from slavery shortly after her Devouring in 1848, her race ensured the soldiers did not treat her well. This was fine by Neva; as a Nemesis, she found much to punish in wartime Galveston. Her Horror grew fat on racism and hate, and Neva became Apex in late 1864.

After the war, Neva turned her power to the protection of Galveston. She has emphasized education, especially for newly freed children, and her town is relatively free of racial strife. However, that now works against Neva. Fewer people live in Galveston whose punishment will satisfy her Horror. She is faced with either finding some way to keep racial tensions at a certain level, or risk losing her status as Apex.

Locations of Interest

From sprawling farms to crowded cities to shantytowns, the South is full of interesting and mysterious places. Here are just a few which Beasts might encounter.

The Gilroy Hotel

Originally built near busy slave markets, the Gilroy Hotel used to house wealthy planters coming to trade in human beings. However, the hotel was lost to the Gilroy family in 1865, when a wealthy Northern widow named Mehetable Marques purchased the property.

"Mable," as she is called by those close to her, found the hotel uniquely suited her needs. Situated near the Mississippi River, containing a few turrets and an extensive cellar, the Gilroy is the perfect place for herself and her small brood of Beasts.

Mable has begun offering a discreet service, advertised solely by word of mouth. She is aware of the unique requirements of certain travelers, and can provide excellent lodgings for a variety of supernatural creatures. As a result, the Widow Marques has become one of the wealthiest women in town.

However, her money's working against her. Her neighbors see her only as the carpetbagger who unfairly stole the Gilroy. The constant parade of suspicious and unsavory travelers through her hotel doesn't help her reputation, either. While supernatural characters might be assured of a pleasant stay, they may eventually be called upon to defend Mable and the Gilroy.

Ridgewood

A tiny, isolated town on the North Carolina/Virginia border, Ridgewood has recently seen a boom in local industry. As luck would have it, Ridgewood lies directly between two major cities now being connected by rail. Ridgewood, as a result, has been recently flooded with railroad workers, not to mention salesmen, preachers, saloonkeepers, and anyone else looking to make a little cash off the rail workers.

Though the Northern owners have significant experience, not to mention a hefty amount of government cash, they are also predictably corrupt. The old sheriff was "persuaded" to retire, and a Northerner crony was quickly voted in. The prosecution of criminals in Ridgewood now depends on what the railroad men think of the accused (and accuser).

Such changes have caused no small amount of upset among the longtime residents of Ridgewood. Several of them have banded together and formed a Protection Squad. The Northerners insist this is vigilantism, but what else are the residents of Ridgewood to do?

Marion's

Born on a Georgia plantation, Marion and Lyle spent their childhood in slavery. After the war, the siblings had nowhere to go. The two snuck back to the old plantation, stole a wagon, and dismantled the old slave quarters. Marion brought this lumber to a crossroads, where she and Lyle built a juke joint.

The music starts around sunset, a continuous, open-invitation jam session which lasts until dawn. While the joint's too small to have a dance floor, there's often a dice or card game happening on the wide front porch. And more than a few pretty young ladies (and a young man or two) are ready to show patrons a good time in exchange for a quarter-dollar and some bourbon.

But bourbon isn't the only sort of spirit at Marion's.

The stolen slave-house wood has a history, and Marion brought back more than she realizes from the old plantation. Those spirits have attracted others, and now Marion's juke joint is a curious nexus of strange activity and unexplainable phenomena. If Marion can sense anything, she won't admit it. But Lyle's always been more open, and he's begun having strange dreams. It's only a matter of time before the spirits (or Lyle) attract something bigger.

Playing the Game

The psyche of the Reconstruction South is a chaotic tangle of fears and anxieties as survivors of the war figure out what a postbellum society should look like. Shifting cultural forces, compounded by outbursts of violence, create a pervasive sense of insecurity, all of which are rich conflicts to mine for in-game drama!

Fears of the South

When designing a Beast-centric chronicle set in the Reconstruction, choose one or two core fears for the story to revolve around. Create story characters who embody these fears. Consider implementing a custom mechanic or two to represent a setting element tied to such fears. Examples of such mechanics might be: restricting the Availability of important goods, developing a custom Condition, or increasing the ease with which Heroes can become aware of Beasts and access their powers.

Example: Empty Fields, Empty Larder

General Sherman, during his march to the sea, destroyed thousands of acres of farmland, which in turn created a severe food shortage over the next few years. The population most directly affected by this shortage was the newly-liberated slaves, who had neither the skills nor money to help them survive. Many would eventually become sharecroppers, but thousands died of hunger and sickness during this transitional period.

The core fear for a chronicle set during this particular moment in time might be *Starvation*, with its attendant fear of *Disease*. Namtaru would feel right at home in this setting, so perhaps the Apex is a plaguebringer who hungers for Ruin. And, of course, her Lair reflects this, with Traits like Decayed, Rotting, or Toxic. Perhaps the physical representation of her Lair is a ruined plantation, barely-buried bodies poking up through fetid soil, burnt crops rotting in the ground, flies and mosquitoes covering everything.

Maybe the postmaster has a tremendous goiter on his neck, a huge growth which oozes stinking pus. Few just passively starve, so the woods are full of bandits willing to kill over a half sack of corn. Mangy dogs roam the streets, desperate enough to attack anyone who gets too close. Orphaned children and limbless veterans are everywhere, showing their ribs and begging for scraps.

In juxtaposition to such privation is the town's mayor. He's rich enough to import food, and pays a few ablebodied veterans in bacon and flour to protect what's his. The



desperation and corruption of the setting becomes even more apparent when you look at his rotund figure. The doctor is similarly well-fed, but at least he *earns* his meals, spending up to 18 hours a day treating patients suffering from malaria, gangrene, yellow fever, or worse.

Characters must continually look for food, which, for this campaign, has been assigned an Availability. The Storyteller also creates the custom Condition, Hungry, which functions much like Fatigue: It gets progressively worse (up to death) the longer characters go without a substantial meal.

The conflict comes as characters confront just *what* they're willing to do in order to stay fed.

Example: It's All In Your Head

Psychology was in its infancy during the late 1800s, but even then, people still recognized war had a profound, deleterious effect on those who survived it. The condition modern people recognize as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder was called *soldier's heart* during this time. Though people had a name for it, they had few treatments beyond booze or the Bible.

A chronicle dealing with the psychological effects of war might have *Madness* as its core fear. And, of course, soldiers weren't the only people carrying trauma. Millions of former slave men and women had their own painful experiences to cope with — and fewer support systems. A concurrent fear might be *Loss*, as those who have already lost so much fear losing what little they have left.

Who's the Apex in a setting like this? Perhaps the twist is: no one. A settled area lacking an Apex is exceptionally rare, and such an absence would be a noteworthy reflection of how chaotic the region has become. Perhaps two creatures of roughly equal power vie for the position, and the Apex changes day by day. Emphasize this by imposing Environmental Tilts, as the weather spins wildly out of control and harsh storms reflect the inner turmoil the characters must deal with.

Players should be encouraged to create characters who've been through trauma. Remind them that Beasts often project their own fears onto prey, and certain Horrors might find a broken Beast especially appealing to Devour. If players want a crossover chronicle, changelings would be especially well suited for inclusion.

In a setting like this, the fear comes through those who want to help but simply can't. The preacher finds the comfort of Christian love only goes so far. The alienist finds his schooling inadequate when treating a patient's flashbacks. The druggist can provide a variety of solutions... but only temporarily. Characters hope for a remedy, but soon discover it cannot work and fear their further mental deterioration.

Use the Primordial Dream to its fullest extent for this campaign. Create embodiments of the character's traumas (or the traumas of story characters they've grown close to), then develop situations where characters must confront these entities in both the Primordial Dream and the material realm.

These are just two examples, of course. Reconstruction, after all, offers a smorgasbord of fears, terrors, and anxieties to build a campaign around.

Fears of Loss

One of the more prevalent fears during Reconstruction, regardless of race or class, was losing one's personal power. Individually, these fears manifested in a dizzying array of anxieties. Poor white Southerners feared losing their fragile social position to a prospering black population. Black Southerners feared what the whites might do to them in turn. White carpetbaggers and scalawags feared their neighbors' revenge.

For a Beast, then, the question becomes not how to feed, but from whom. And more importantly: *why*. If fear is meant to serve as a teaching tool, what's the lesson? Does a given Beast want to exacerbate class anxieties as an easy way to feed, or is she going to use her Nightmares to teach her victims the consequences of hate? Is the chronicle going to focus on the fear of vigilante attacks and racially motivated violence, or the more subtle fear of social upheaval? Or perhaps both?

Beasts are not themselves immune from fear. Many a Begotten inflicts her own deep-seated fears on her victims without entirely realizing what she's doing. A white planter who lost everything in the war might feed off his black neighbors' fears of poverty and loss, and tell himself he's punishing them for his own suffering. But what he's really doing is reassuring himself that poverty, his own worst fear, is *survivable*.

Fears of the Wild

Southern folklore deals quite a bit with environmental fear: snake people living in the swamp, wild cannibals in the Ozarks, ghostly pirates patrolling the Carolina coast, voodoo witches casting hexes.

Generally, these fears reflect the dread a "civilized" person feels when confronted with Mother Nature in all her terrifying glory. Yellow fever, tuberculosis, and malaria are very real risks for those living in the 19th century Deep South, not to mention dangerous wildlife like alligators, wolves, or venomous reptiles.

Such fears explain otherwise mysterious phenomena. Tuberculosis might ravage a family, but believing a vampire preys upon a certain bloodline not only explains to a rural farmer what's going on, the story also reassures him that his family is safe as long as certain rituals are observed. Accurate or not, such fear can easily be exploited by a hungry Beast.

Utilizing local fears also creates a sense of place. Each region of the South has its own unique folklore, such as La Llorona of Texas, the Bell Witch of Tennessee, the Wild Man of Arkansas, or the *rougarou* of Louisiana. When writing a chronicle or campaign set in a specific place, research the local folklore of the area!

Roleplaying Race

Running a chronicle set during Reconstruction proves impossible without confronting issues of race and structural inequality. Storytellers and players must be aware of this, and prepare to handle these issues with thoughtful consideration.

The LeMat

Despite lagging in many areas, the South stays current when it comes to weapons technology! The most popular sidearm is unquestionably the LeMat pistol. Developed in New Orleans in 1856, this weapon quickly became the favorite of Confederate generals and soldiers alike. A nine-shot revolver, the LeMat had a secondary barrel which could be loaded with buckshot. A lever at the gun's hammer allowed the shooter to switch between barrels. The main drawback is accuracy, as the LeMat is deadly only at close range.

To represent a LeMat, use the mechanics for a light revolver, but increase the damage for bullets to 2 and clip size to 9. The damage for buckshot remains 1, as does clip size. Depending on the year in which your chronicle is set, Availability is either • • or • • • •, as manufacture of the LeMat stopped in 1865. Switching between bullets or buckshot is a reflexive action, and can be done while drawing the weapon.

One important fact to realize about racism is that it's not an inherent aspect of the human condition. Though groups exclude others based on criteria of varying importance (gender, race, wealth, faith, etc.), no part of our brains comes congenitally hardwired for racist thought. Racism, therefore, manifests more often as an expression of deep social and economic insecurity. When creating racist characters, stay aware of that.

The character's racism will surely be no less destructive and harmful to those who bear the brunt of it, but understanding character motivation beyond "he's a racist who does racist things because he's racist" adds a level of complexity and nuance, which a game set in Reconstruction requires.

Race and Mechanics

As a Storyteller, while creating custom mechanics to represent structural inequality may be tempting, the interplay of race, class, and gender in Reconstruction South was more complicated than can be accurately represented through universal +2/-2 modifiers.

A player who creates the character of a black woman living in Richmond, Virginia with 5 dots of Resources may seem unrealistic at first glance...but might also describe the historical figure of Maggie Walker, the first black woman to charter a bank in the United States. A player who creates Maggie Walker is looking to tell a particular type of story; give her the opportunity to do just that.

Focus instead on describing race and racism using narrative elements, and keep in mind that thoughts on race were complex even in the South.

The Slow Crawl of Progress

Many 19th century Southerners were content to live the way their granddaddies did. Though the telegraph, railroad, and typewriter are nationally common by the 1870s (and the electric light is beginning to catch on in the 1880s), these innovations take their own sweet time to become mainstream in the South.

Larger cities, such as Richmond or New Orleans, do their best to keep up, but most Southerners still live in small towns or out in the boonies, a long way away from the nearest telegraph office, railroad line, or factory. Gas lamps, horses, and handwritten letters defined how most Southerners traveled and communicated (making the South friendly territory to supernatural creatures who don't stay up to date well, such as elder Kindred).

Chronicle Seeds

The half-healed scars of a postwar South present a rich array of story seeds and chronicle hooks.

The Haunting of Belle Glen

Once a plantation owned by the Sinclairs, now the land of Belle Glen has been transformed into a community of sharecroppers. Black farmers grow cotton and peanuts, while their children get an education in a one-room schoolhouse which used to be the horse barn. On Sundays, everyone comes together for church and a potluck supper.

However, life is anything but idyllic for the black residents. The two elder Sinclair sons, William and Theo, now landlords, bitterly resent the loss of what should have been theirs. Most recently, they have refused to pay their tenants a fair share of the recently sold crops. Several farmers clashed with the Sinclair brothers in a conflict which turned violent. Among the injured was Hatty Freeman, a teenager whom Theo Sinclair struck in the head with his hickory walking stick.

Unfortunately for the Sinclairs, and the rest of Belle Glen, Hatty had only just undergone her Devouring and embraced her heritage as an Ugallu. Her Horror kept the damage Theo inflicted from being fatal, but is now Ravenous. While Hatty lays unconscious in her mother's home, her Horror hunts. Every night, it visits the dreams of the people Hatty feels most strongly about – those she hates, those she fears, and those she loves.

Due to her head injury, Hatty cannot control her Horror. It feeds at night, gaining enough Satiety to reflexively heal her injury. But then her Horror becomes Ravenous again, and the cycle continues. Somewhere, Hatty's consciousness is vaguely aware of what's going on, but she doesn't know



enough about being a Beast to bring her Horror to heel. Even worse, her Horror's ravaging has begun to awaken the Hero in Theo Sinclair.

Characters can become aware of Hatty's troubles by the havoc her Horror wreaks in the Primordial Dream, or when Theo starts to take clumsy yet committed action towards fighting her.

Killing Hatty would release her Horror and so solve the problem, but many would balk at murdering a teenage girl in her sickbed — not to mention the severe (and armed) objections Hatty's family would raise to such a plan. Someone with a special talent for navigating the Primordial Dream could potentially make contact with Hatty and help her feed enough for the Ugallu to regain consciousness. Hatty would still be Ravenous upon awakening, though feeding becomes *much* easier. If the characters take too long, Theo Sinclair might take matters into his own hands.

Elections for Sale

It's 1872, and Ulysses S. Grant is running for a second Presidential term against Horace Greeley of New York. More important to the citizens of Carroll Parish, though, is the election of a new sheriff. Willie Scott is ready to retire, and the two likely candidates for his successor are in a dead heat.

Loren Wilbur Scott, Willie's own son, stands for everything his daddy did. Law and order and everyone knowing their place. Loren fought for the Confederacy, and often brags about how many Yankees he killed during the war. His wife worked as a nurse, and even now visits the sick and injured as part of her Christian duty. Running opposite him is Edgar Wainwright, who relocated to Carroll Parish after the war and currently earns his bread as a wagon builder. Edgar's got some good ideas, but his status as a relative newcomer makes voters suspicious of his motives.

Of course, Edgar does have a past he'd prefer voters not discover – he fought in the war, but on the Union side. He also deeply guards another secret: he's a changeling. And, in a perverse twist of fate, he once used his Contracts to save Loren's life when Loren fell ill with cholera. Complicating their relationship further is the fact that Loren's also an Anakim. The indebtedness Loren feels towards his rival has caused Family Ties to form between the two men. However, Family Ties aren't enough to overcome the political differences between the two, and each is convinced he's the best candidate for sheriff.

Both men are committed to running a clean election, but "clean" in 1872 means keeping the bribery to less than a hundred dollars. Both Loren and Edgar are looking to hire solid operatives to help them win, and each is willing to tolerate a *small* amount of chicanery.

Hunting Party

An unruly vampire threatens the stability of Galveston, Texas. Quinn, a relatively young Mekhet, hasn't taken well to unlife. He's lost all but his last Humanity since his Embrace five years ago, and such a rapid decline hasn't been easy on his mental health. Losing his second-to-last dot of Humanity just a few nights ago has caused Quinn to spiral, and now he's running amok.

Quinn's antics threaten to undo much of the hard work of Neva Rodgers, the Apex. He hasn't breached the Masquerade (*yet*), but he has attracted the attention of a group of hunters. At first, Neva rather liked the fresh fear Quinn brought to town. But now that the hunters are here, she wants Quinn *gone*.

The Vampires

Quinn is not entirely without friends. His sire, Donna, and her coterie are convinced they can help Quinn. Provided, of course, that they catch him first. Unfortunately, Mekhet are good at not being found when they prefer to stay hidden.

Donna cares for her childe, and her coterie has taken a few risks to find Quinn. The prince isn't pleased with Donna or her wayward offspring, and is putting pressure on Neva to deliver Quinn to him. But Donna knows that only means Quinn's summary execution, and she's desperate to prevent that.

The Hunters

Led by Gordon West, the hunters form a crack team of Union veterans. Gordon got his start in the supernatural world a few years ago, when he found himself scrambling to cover up the supernatural circumstances of Lincoln's assassination. West and his team performed so well that President Johnson quietly gave them a dispensation to take whatever measures necessary to protect the United States citizenry from unique threats.

Due to his military and political connections, Gordon's team has access to the most cutting-edge weapons available in the 19th century. They've also spent significant time training together, and so have more than a few Tactics under their belt.

As newcomers to the Vigil, Gordon and his crew still know very little about any supernatural creatures, be they vampire, Beast, or other. All Gordon knows is that sudden chaos, such as has recently befallen Galveston, often has a supernatural origin.

Gordon and his team might be persuaded to ally with Neva, if approached in the right way.

Story Hooks

Reconstruction manifested in many different ways depending on one's location. We hope the ideas below will help you brainstorm the best ways to utilize the context we have laid postbellum towards a chronicle that fits the theme and mood you would like to explore.

Alaska

In the late 1860s, the United States purchased Alaska from Russia. Native Alaskans proved harder to control for the United States government than indigenous peoples further south. The United States propagated forced assimilation tactics that not only inspired the Dawes Severalty Act's division of

native tribal land years later but also Canadian abuses of First Nations, Inuit, and Metis populations at the end of the 19th century. Government policy enforced compulsory attendance of boarding schools by Alaskan Native children, where their families could hardly visit. Teachers and administrators at these schools beat Alaskan Native children who tried to hold on to their cultures by speaking languages other than English or observing their own religions. In this story hook, the characters are a makeshift group of children in an Alaskan boarding school who did not know each other previously. Their tribes and cultures are different, and they have found themselves forced into an assimilation camp where they met their real family. How do these children negotiate the shifts in identity the United States government forces their way? Do they fight, now that they have found their true nature and others like them, or do they eschew their Native cultures and their attempted acculturation into white United States society, choosing instead their family through the Dark Mother?

Louisiana

In 1868, the Louisiana Ice Company opens the first ice manufacturing plant in the United States, curbing the importation and sale of natural ice from Europe and New England. At the same time, a lack of water worsens to drought in the Great Plains. The company holds a Makara in the cave systems below Plains aquifers, using him to siphon Plains freshwater and turn it into ice. The player characters are a brood that discovers their brother when the company secures enough water and transports the Makara to their new plant. Does the brood respond by trying to save this other beast? Do they challenge a company that somehow detained one of their siblings? Do they ever learn how the company took the Makara captive to begin with, and if they do try to save him, are they taken in turn? How else does this company use their captives? Perhaps they share their roots with a European pharmaceutical company that blooms at the turn of the century.

Nebraska

Corruption and worker abuse mired the construction of the transcontinental railroad. New blast furnaces, the discovery of oil in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and West Virginia, and the discovery of methods to create stronger and more versatile steel made it cheaper than ever to develop new transportation systems to connect the country in previously inconceivable ways. The Central Pacific and Union Pacific Railroads would lay rails east from Sacramento, California and west from Omaha, Nebraska, respectively, but because the government subsidized construction by the mile, the lines would instruct their workers to specifically build in any other way other than straight, which not only brought in more money but also taxed the workers more, with media propaganda encouraging them to work harder. In this story hook, the characters are a brood working on the Union Pacific line in Omaha, where a harsh winter has halted construction and damaged already lain rail. Other workers are picked off,



ostensibly due to harsh working conditions and venereal disease. In truth, a Hero has locked on to the presence of the brood, and incorrectly targets workers as the brood's activity increases. Can they catch the Hero in time to save themselves?

Pennsylvania

A brood in Union Mills, Pennsylvania spots a shift in the postal cancels issued by their local post offices at the same time as they notice a shift in the Apex. Suddenly, rather than carving Union Mills fancy cancels with the animals and star patterns in use previously, the postmaster cancels stamps on letters sent to the brood with the letters KKK and a skull. Other cancels from neighbors bear similar markings. When the brood asks mage friends at the Union Mills Consilium if they know of the change's cause, they learn that the new postmaster, the Apex, is also the Tetrarch to her own Tetrarchy and a servant to the Hegemonic Ministry. Does the brood pry any further or try to take any action on their own, or do they leave it to the Consilium to handle or not? Will the Consilium do anything? Can they do anything to lessen the postmaster's impact, or would the fight require more energy than they're willing to give, with too little gain in stopping Seer-supported Klan activity? Is the brood willing to challenge the Apex at all, or are some stones better left unturned?

South Carolina

The players' brood, previously satiating a Hunger for Power by hoarding Confederate money that is now useless, must find a new way to fulfill the urge. The brood, formerly enslaved blacks in Columbia, South Carolina, stole Confederate money as an act of rebellion, taking control through holding something forbidden, and stolen from their master. Now, that money is worthless, and the brood doesn't pluck control from its collection as they may have previously. What can they collect now, for that same effect? What has value in the same way? Now freed, the power dynamic between themselves and those they formerly stole from is different. Their former master lost his plantation and voting privileges, and, if male, they gained voting privileges in turn, should those matter to them. Will something less tangible give them the power and control they covet? Was there something about holding Confederate money in bulk that appealed to them, or was it exclusively drawing that economic clout out of the system, and from their enslaver? Surely, a switch to legal tender money, issued by the United States government and backed largely by credit, is not enough. What is? In this story hook, the characters search for answers to these questions, and for something new to clone the power they crave.

Virginia

After the U.S. Civil War, white men feared the loss of sexual control over black men, black women, and white women. The growing political power of black men meant, to white men, that black men would begin to exert sexual power over white women in the same way that white men had forced sexual relations on enslaved black women. These fears hugely motivated the growth of the Ku Klux Klan in the south, whose members would claim the rape of white women by black men as a justification for lynchings and other extralegal execution. Of important note, these claims held little regard for the reality of sex between white women and black men, viewed in the south as illicit regardless of the presence of consent. In this story hook, a black man and a white woman, both Beasts, kept their relationship secret through the Civil War. Anti-miscegenation laws in their state, Virginia, and increased Klan activity, have made it more dangerous still to so much as live together, much less be seen together outside. If a group of two, the player characters may take the roles of these two Beasts, trying to move up to Massachusetts to marry. If a larger group, the player characters are a friendly brood, albeit separate from these two Beasts, helping their friends escape north. What obstacles does the group encounter on their way? This story hook is more appropriate for a short chronicle, though a longer chronicle could explore their lives upon settlement.

Inspirations

America has never loved Reconstruction.

For over a century, artistic focus on American life during the latter half of the 19th century has revolved around the Western, avoiding North and South alike in favor of more hopeful narratives.

The few films and novels that do handle Reconstruction often do so from a Lost Cause point of view: minimizing the immorality of slavery, emphasizing Northern corruption and justifying Confederate secession. Such works still have value, however; especially to a Storyteller looking for insight into the Lost Cause mindset.

Whether filmmakers and authors realize it or not, postwar themes frequently show up in Westerns. Jesse James, one of the more popular outlaw figures, began his career as a Confederate guerrilla before becoming a bank robber. So while many of the works on this list may not be *explicitly* set in the Reconstruction South, they nevertheless deal with similar themes and attitudes.

Literature

Beloved, by Toni Morrison. Set in Ohio, this highly praised novel tells the story of formerly enslaved women and men struggling to accept their past in the context of postwar freedom. Sethe, the main character, deals not only with the psychological trauma of having been owned, she must also come to terms with a long-ago murder. Morrison unflinchingly portrays the scars slavery leaves on the minds and bodies of those who experienced it.

Life on the Mississippi, by Mark Twain. A book in two parts, Twain writes first about his experiences working on riverboats during the antebellum period. Using his characteristic wit and insight, Twain describes the cultural and economic importance of the Mississippi River to the people of the South. He then follows this up with a description of a return visit in 1876, just as Reconstruction ended. The book presents an

interesting comparison between prewar and postwar South, through the eyes of one of America's most talented writers (if all you want is a glimpse into Southern culture and vernacular, *any* Twain story will suffice).

The Wind Done Gone, by Alice Randall. An answer to the unchallenged racism in Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind*, Randall's book focuses on Scarlett's half sister, a slave named Cynara who cannot escape her connection to Scarlett. The novel roughly parallels the events of Mitchell's novel, which means Cynara witnesses Reconstruction from her own point of view.

Witches, Ghosts, and Signs, by Patrick Gainer. Southern culture, particularly Southern Appalachian culture, loves ghost stories. Many good books on Southern folklore have been published, and any one of them might inspire a chronicle. What sets Gainer's book apart is his coverage of folk magic and describing how each story or superstition fits into a larger cultural context.

Film

Cold Mountain (2003, dir. Anthony Minghella). Based on a novel of the same name by Charles Frazier, *Cold Mountain* tells two stories: that of a Confederate deserter who simply wants to go home; and his city-bred fiancée struggling to keep up an inherited farm. The film poignantly depicts the destruction brought by war and its impact on the lives of common people.

Gone With the Wind (1939, dir. Victor Fleming). One of the more famous films dealing with the period, *Gone With the Wind* can rightly be criticized for its overly romanticized presentation of antebellum South, slavery, and race relations. However, that viewpoint can be helpful when planning a setting. This film portrays what many Southerners *wish* was real. *Gone With the Wind*, with its lavish sets and costumes, also serves as a useful reference for set dressing, giving Storytellers and players alike a good understanding of the clothes, food, architecture, and customs of the era.

Frank and Jesse (1995, dir. Robert Boris). More than one filmmaker has told a story about Jesse James. Here, Frank, Jesse, and the rest of their gang stage a series of robberies against those they see as bringing ruin to the South. But the Northern politicians and railroad magnates aren't going to let the James-Younger gang get away with this, and send the Pinkertons after them. It should be noted: nearly any film about Jesse James is worth watching; *Frank and Jesse* is just one example.

Music

The South developed several distinct traditions of folk music, which often incorporate regional or personal themes. Blues, originally created by Southern black communities, has been wildly influential in the evolution of 20th century music. Appalachian folk songs also poignantly capture the experience of being a rural Southerner. The list of talented musicians in these styles is far too long for a short article to do full justice, but Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Blind Willie Johnson, Ida Cox, Jean Ritchie, and Fiddlin' John Carson are all recommended (not to mention Robert Johnson, whom legend says sold his soul to the devil at the crossroads).

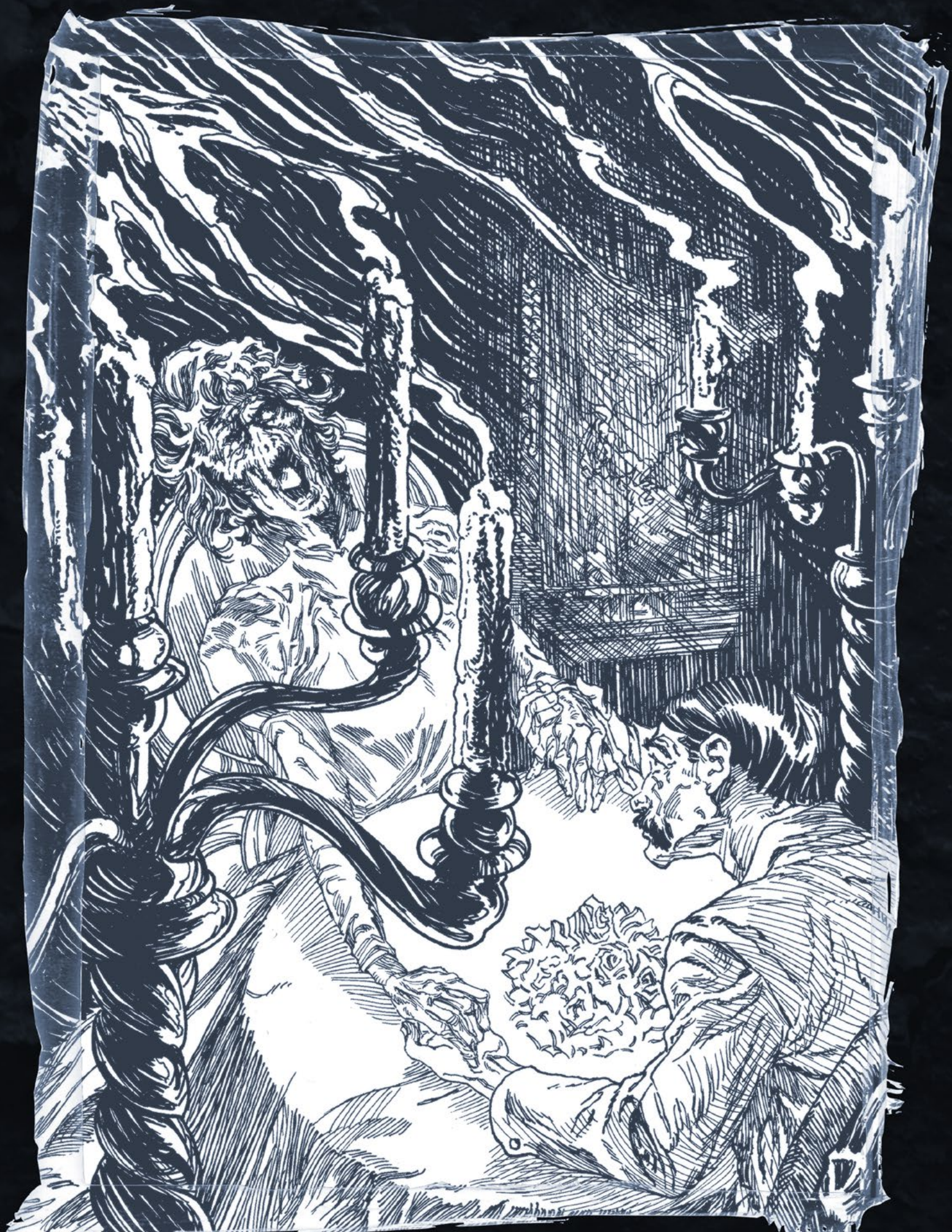
Television

Children of the Dust. Also sold as *A Good Day to Die*, this TV miniseries based on a novel of the same name by Clancy Carlile follows half-black, half-Cherokee Gypsy Smith as he assists black families in settling Oklahoma against a backdrop of Jim Crow laws and vigilante violence. Gypsy also has a personal motivation — KKK members beat and castrated him the day before his wedding, and now he wants revenge!

Firefly. Seriously! Joss Whedon, the show's creator, has described the show as an allegory for the post-Civil War United States. Captain Mal fought hard for a cause he believed in, but which ultimately lost. Now he must figure out how to navigate the world as a former rebel who's not ready to abandon his values.

Hell on Wheels. Though set in the Midwest, two lead characters in *Hell on Wheels* are an ex-Confederate, slave-owning soldier and a freedman who gradually become friends. Even though they've both left the South, they nevertheless carry the scars (literally and figuratively) of slavery and war. The show isn't shy when it comes to portraying postwar race relations, either.

Roots. Based on Alex Haley's semi-genealogical novel, *Roots* tells the story of black slavery and Reconstruction by tracing Haley's own ancestors. The miniseries has won significant cultural acclaim, and is definitely worth watching for anyone looking to better understand how black men and women experienced slavery and racism.



The London night sky glows as Kay walks down Meteor Street. Number 23 is typical of the area, only the boarded-up windows marking it as something special. She checks the key in her pocket and taps the voice recorder app on her phone.

"I'm at the place. No signs of forced entry or squatters beyond the busted in glass. Lock on the front door's an original. Let's see what's so special about this place that I'm getting anonymous letters."

The key turns easily in the lock. She pushes the door open.

• • •

The front door of the house on Meteor Street opens. A young woman in a maid's uniform, pale and hollow cheeked, gestures the man on the doorstep in out of the rain.

"You're late," she says. "Please, let me take your coat. The lady of the house will see you in the parlor."

"Thank you. Please inform your mistress that Doctor Palmer is here."

She leads him down the hall to the second door, then gestures him into the room.

• • •

Kay gasps, leaning on the doorframe for support. "Yeah. Something's here alright. Vision as the door opened. Need to follow up on a Doctor Palmer."

A gentle rain starts falling as Kay walks into the house. She clicks on a flashlight and looks around. "Dusty as hell, but it looks like it did in the vision."

She makes her way into the parlor.

• • •

Tapestries in red and green hang on the walls, candlesticks and picture frames catch the light, and the round table in the center of the room is bedecked with a green tablecloth and set with a centerpiece of fresh flowers. The gas lamps aren't lit; the light comes from the candles that pack the room.

An older woman sits at the table. Unlike so many spiritualists of the time, she doesn't wear a great deal of jewelry, nor does she keep a crystal ball on her table. "Doctor Palmer, please come in and sit down." She has an eastern European accent, but keeps her eyes fixed on the centerpiece.

"Thank you, Mrs.–"

"Mistress, if you please; I find that the right title helps my image."

"My apologies, Mistress Agnieszka. I'm not entirely certain how one should address a witch in her lair." He can't keep a slight sneer out of his voice, but she doesn't rise to the bait.

"I would suggest, Doctor, that you address her how she wishes to be addressed. But you do not believe in my powers?"

"I want to, but I have met many frauds."

"Then take a seat with me at the table and we will see if I can convince you."

• • •

"Another vision. Mistress Agnieszka, another name to check out. The note with the key was signed 'Ms. A,' I wonder…The room's pretty similar. Got the same decoration, same ornaments and furniture. Some of this is pretty classy stuff. We could make a few grand if we strip the place. I'm guessing that's not why I'm here."

• • •

"Tell me, Doctor, who is Sylvian?"

Palmer looks up, shocked. "Who?"

"Please. It's just you and me. What goes on between you and your French gentleman in Paris is your business."

"That's – that – nobody knows that!"

She smiles, and moves the centerpiece aside. "Are you willing to trust me?"

"I…yes." He sighs. "But I came to see you about my sister. Tuberculosis took her five years ago. Her husband became a rich man when they married, and I know that he had been, ah, carrying on with the woman who is now his wife while my sister was alive."

"You think murder?"

"I don't know. I think so. My father thinks that I'm just jealous of him, that she married the wrong sort."

"Then may the spirits guide you to the truth. Take my hands."

• • •

Kay walks through the room slowly. "Okay, I've got a lot I need to follow up on. But why am I here? Why did I get a key?"

• • •

"The spirits circle the room. They come to the light."

Something raps the table, hard.

"Oh! The spirits speak!"

Palmer grips the table. "What are they telling you? What happened to her?"

Mistress Agnieszka slumps forward, pulling her hands back. "They have told me of your sister's fate. She was murdered, the breath stolen from her lips by a pillow."

The doctor sits back, holding his head. "I knew it. I knew it."

"I am glad to have helped. My maid will discuss payment."

• • •

"Wow. Okay. This Agnieszka, she's some kind of impressive medium or something like that. Need to look her up. I'm sure she'd have some records."



Lifting the Veil
(1885 – 1890)

If coming events are said to cast their shadows before, past events cannot fail to leave their impress behind them.

–Helena Blavatsky

On March 31, 1848, Kate and Margaret Fox of Hydesville, New York, reported that they had made contact with a spirit. The spirit didn't just manifest to them but made its presence known to onlookers by rapping on tables and walls. Their story caught the imagination of people who heard of it and begat widespread interest in spiritualism — a broad field that includes making contact with the dead, but also more general psychic abilities such as the ability to read minds.

Spiritualism in turn lead to a swift upswell in psychical research as scientists tried to find evidence of what was really happening. A few tried to debunk claims of contact with ghosts and spirits, pointing out that these ethereal voices all seemed to favor the speaker's positions on universal suffrage or the equal treatment of women. These researchers discovered that many so-called mediums were in fact frauds — people who had set up table-rapping devices, or who used cold reading, assistants, and gadgets to fake contact with the other world.

Some scientists discovered quite the opposite — they uncovered people who could actually read minds or contact the dead. The Societies of Psychical Research in both the United States and United Kingdom did their best to sort out the facts of the matter, but the massive belief in spiritualism, combined with their idiosyncratic methods and the zealotry of some members, muddied the waters even further. Spiritualism also had a number of high-profile supporters, including Arthur Conan Doyle and Madame Blavatsky, the latter capitalizing on the spiritualist revival to fund her Theosophical Society.

Thrust into the public eye, psychics find themselves in a quandary. Do they embrace celebrity, gaining both fame and notoriety in exchange for scrutiny from parties determined to disprove their abilities — some of whom aren't above faking evidence of fraud? Do they try to help researchers, volunteering for often dangerous experiments with not-yet-proven scientific validity? Or are they overlooked, as the all-pervading racism of the time paints them as lesser than other people even when they have supernatural abilities?

The Society for Psychical Research, founded in London in 1882, has as its mission the investigation of six fields: Thought-Transference and Mesmerism, Mediumship, Reichenbach Phenomena, Apparitions and Haunted Houses, Séances, and the history of the supernatural. Though the U.S. and U.K. branches of the SPR have started to drift apart, they are the foremost researchers into the field as of 1885.

This mass-consciousness acceptance of the supernatural has knock-on effects throughout the world, spurred on by numerous high-profile adherents. Arthur Conan Doyle is a skeptic at this time, but will join the Society for Psychical Research in 1887 and becomes an ardent follower of spiritualism over the next thirty years. Madame Helena Blavatsky founded the Theosophical Society in September 1875, with its mission to investigate the unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in man.

Theme and Mood

The theme running through the lives of both psychics and researchers is one of *living on the edge*. Powers that people have so far had to ignore or hide under a

A Racist Foundation

While not a founder of the spiritualist movement, Madame Blavatsky was one of its most well-known proponents. Her 1888 work *The Secret Doctrine* set down her theories of the seven root races of humanity — a thoroughly racist idea that nonetheless reflected scientific theories of the time.

As such, a great deal of spiritualist thought at the time, especially among scientists investigating those phenomena, is built on racist foundations. Much of the actual research at the time involves both white researchers observing the talents of other white people, or "encouraging" the abilities of Indian and East Asian people through appropriated mythology. Some communities with a significant black population accept that anyone can have a sixth sense, but the vast majority of contemporary researchers scoff at the idea.

Quite beyond the field of spiritualism, racism is rampant in society. Scientific theories demonstrate without a doubt the difference between the races, reinforcing the idea that people are fundamentally different based on the color of their skin. While these theories are complete and total crap, they pervade so much of what people believe at this time that it is impossible to ignore them entirely in writing about the era.

Before play begins, the players and the Storyteller need have a frank discussion of whether such elements should surface in their stories, and if so, to what degree. If people at the table do not want to deal with the pervasive racism of the time, don't feature it in the game. For all that a black psychic character may face oppression and ridicule, she could also find herself in demand as her demonstrable talents draw more interest from the SPR than her race.

bushel are now the subject of mass speculation and excitement. Psychics have their likenesses painted on lurid posters that promise audiences the world, and even unscrupulous promoters pay well for a demonstration of their powers. It's a seller's market, and psychics can always find somewhere else to ply their trade. That wave of public enthusiasm is a brilliant shining light, but be careful of getting too close. What the world's attention giveth, it can also taketh away. Whether it's one of the rare skeptics faking evidence that a psychic is a fraud, or a black mesmerist whose attempt to parlay his abilities into equal treatment backfires spectacularly, celebrity is a curse as much as a blessing. Worse, the attention on psychic abilities and the desperation of people to contact the dead involves playing with powers that nobody fully understands. Ghosts linger, visible out of the corner of the eye, and spirits walk the Earth with impunity. Is that the psychics' fault? If so, can they do anything about it? And if not, can they convince anyone of their innocence?

The mood of the era is one of *experimentation*. The field of spiritualism opens up whole new vistas of human experience. Scientists develop new ways to measure and categorize psychic and spiritual phenomena. This rush of experimentation is only loosely concerned with the scientific method — instead of defined hypotheses, they instead take a psychic's claims at face value and try to define how their abilities work, rather than if they work at all. Some do try to disprove the claims of spiritualists and mediums. While in truth these skeptics have a target-rich environment, most people don't want to believe that a respected spiritualist relies on specially made table-rapping equipment. Wild experiments promise to unlock a scientific breakthrough the likes of which no one has yet dreamed, with riches untold for the person to discover the means of attracting and communing with spirits. Some snake-oil salesmen go so far as to claim that they have already discovered the mechanics of the spirit world, and use scientific-looking devices to scam people wanting to contact the dead.

The United States

The relationship between spiritualism and the United States is a long and winding one founded on one of the strongest cultural forces in the United States: faith. One of the social cornerstones of the nation, faith drives many of the cultural shifts that happen in the United States in 18th and 19th century. Spiritualism, while superficially fitting in with faith, veered from the standard path of religion in the country: a new path for a new land. For many, religion was simply the relic that spiritualism had surpassed. The movement was part of the industrial and scientific spirit that took hold in the U.S.

With hearts and minds in the balance between Spiritualism and standard religions practiced around the United States, discovering frauds and revealing the whys of spiritual connection were of vital importance to many people. The search for truth, however, had unintended consequences, leaving the world of the Chronicles of Darkness in a particularly strange liminal state. People in the U.S. approach spiritualism from a state of intense belief and a desire for indisputable proof. Between the pincers of this vice grip live the creatures of the Chronicles of Darkness.

Spiritual Sisters in Burned Over Districts

The northeast corridor of North America, from New York State all the way over to Nova Scotia in Canada, was a hotbed of spiritualism. The movement springs from a single location: Hydesville, New York. This was the home of two of the three Fox sisters, Kate and Margaret. Along with their



much older sister Leah, the three sisters would become the backbone of spiritualism, demonstrating the sorts of dangers humans faced as they moved closer to the Twilight.

In 1848, Kate and Margaret's home was filled with strange knocking sounds that no one could explain until Kate said that the noises were their friend, "Mr. Splitfoot." She would ask Mr. Splitfoot questions, and Mr. Splitfoot would reply with the right amount of knocks. The family started asking more questions, and Mr. Splitfoot answered with uncanny accuracy. Testing this phenomenon, the Fox family invited their neighbors in to test the knocking. Every question that was put forth was answered. People talked among themselves, and rumors spread that spirits had to be involved and that they were communicating with the Fox sisters. The belief got out of hand, disrupting the lives of the family and moving quickly through the community; as a result, Kate and Margaret were sent to live with their older sister Leah.

Leah noticed the hubbub and turned her sisters and herself into an attraction. She filled concert halls with people paying large sums of money to attend, with the hope that Mr. Splitfoot might answer their questions. Money poured in as word spread about the mysterious spectacle. Only one of the three sisters, Leah, benefited from this arrangement, however, as she acted as guardian of her sisters and kept tight control over their finances.

The imbalance of power and wealth turned the sisters against one another after only a short time. Those closest to the family blamed the influence of Mr. Splitfoot, claiming a Faustian bargain had taken place. The sisters started to bicker and fight, with each attack getting more and more sinister as time progressed. Kate, in particular, was determined to break Leah's hold over them.

Despite accusations of fraud, Kate and Margaret were actual mediums, unlike Leah. Searching for any power she could employ, Kate turned to the spirits as a means of getting back at Leah in return for the constant slights she felt subject to. The spirits seemed to cooperate, but nothing went according to plan. Instead, Margaret seemed to bear the brunt of the attacks. Leah would be targeted, but the effort would backfire, leaving Leah nettled but unharmed and gentle Margaret in terror.

A woman of temper, Leah responded to these attempted spiritual assaults by tightening her control rather than loosening it. She cut Kate and Margaret off from all sources of money. She and Kate fought and argued as she forbid them from society without her. Never one to forget a grudge, when the girls grew older, Leah even tried to take Kate's children away from her, claiming that she was an unfit mother and delusional.

Margaret, ever the odd woman out in the battles between Kate and Leah, ended up being ignored or inadvertently targeted by the fighting siblings until she was destitute and emotionally destroyed. Margaret fell so far into despair and poverty in her life that she eventually turned her back against spiritualism and denounced herself and her sisters as frauds in return for money to try and survive.

Despite all the fighting, Leah managed to avoid the worst of the effects and lived her life in comfort, while her sisters suffered immensely. She seemed to be immune to whatever the spirits tried to do to her, irking Kate to no end, and causing speculation that perhaps Kate and Margaret were not the only spiritually talented women in the Fox family.

Fuel for the Fire

Spiritualism wasn't the first quasi-religious movement to come from New York State. The western and central parts of New York had seen so many religious revivals come and go: the Shakers, the Millerites, and the Latter Day Saints had all been through the region, converting everyone they could. It was widely recognized that there was no more spiritual "fuel" in the area left to "burn," as every soul was largely spoken for already and a certain weariness and skepticism regarding new movements had set in, hence describing the district as "burned over." The normal rules seemed to be set aside for spiritualism, however. It grew quickly, taking many of those religious converts and turning them toward thoughts of the afterlife and how souls might try to guide one another along the path.

Other religions, including the long-standing Protestant faiths such as the Calvinists and the Puritans, quickly became suspicious of spiritualism. They used aggressive rhetoric toward anything viewed as odd or related to spirits, making it known that one's salvation was in jeopardy should religion be abandoned. Some religious leaders were upset over the thinning of their flocks and the power and prestige that fled their congregations along with the converts. True believers felt that this was the work of Satan and that it needed to be destroyed to preserve the faithful from its corrupting influence. Mobs of otherwise respectable citizens occasionally formed, and hunted down anything that was seen as "other" and unholy.

At the same time, unexplained phenomena were on the rise. Some reported having incredibly vivid yet violent dreams, waking up with wounds they didn't have when they went to sleep. Artifacts reappeared as if they were set in place to be discovered by adventurers. Other historical pieces vanished, never to be seen again. A drive for treasure hunting seemed to infect people, making them do things that they normally wouldn't do. Spiritualism seemed a catalyst for wild changes in personality and temperament, shocking many as loved ones abandoned long-held beliefs and status to chase ephemera through the world. As the Twilight churned, the populace reacted, reflecting the chaos that spiritualism created in its wake.

Science and Skepticism

Organized religion wasn't the only group threatened by spiritualism. Charlatans and con men abused the emotional needs of the people around them, while proof of the supernatural drove many to claim that the advances of science were meaningless in the face of eternal mysteries. Even some scientists felt the pull of spiritualism, dedicating

themselves to studying the link between life and death. By applying scientific methods to the spiritual world, they could theoretically breach the gulf between life and death. Cures for diseases and illnesses not yet known would be available; even immortality was not entirely out of reach.

For these reasons, many scientists viewed spiritualism as an attack on the rational and empirical world, thus taking spiritualism as a personal affront and dedicating their lives to debunking, demystifying, and attacking any spiritualists they came across. As a result, scientists fought among themselves as often as they did with spiritualists. Committees dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge frequently offered rewards if someone could prove to their satisfaction that psychic abilities existed. Most of these organizations were run by ruthless men looking for frauds to discredit and publically humiliate, but not all of them were. Regardless, the tests themselves were often invasive, horrific, and terrifying. Experiments included a lot of intrusive physical examinations of any joint that they felt could possibly make any noise. People were tied down to make sure that they couldn't move at all and forced to attempt to still get the spirits to answer. Some went so far as to induce pain to make sure that the individual medium's body wasn't producing the sounds that they were hearing.

Frauds who thought that they could fool the scientists often weren't expecting that level of scrutiny, which only fed the skeptic community's belief that all spiritualists were frauds. This led to real mediums being discredited by people who felt they had a solution and were going through the motions of scientific discovery. In addition, not all victims underwent these investigations voluntarily. Many mediums and spiritualists were tricked by unscrupulous people who wanted to cash in on a reward, providing more fodder for the disbelief mill created by these committees.

To counteract these scandalous and often fraudulent findings, scientific groups arose that felt the need to prove and promote spiritualism. These groups did research with the belief that spirits and spiritualism were real, though poorly understood. Groups, including the American Association of Spiritualists and the Christian Scientists, tried to provide empirical evidence of the existence of spirits. They published their articles in their own journals, the most famous being the *Christian Science Monitor*, to show the world that great wonders were at the fingertips of humanity.

The Theosophical Society and the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) were other groups who focused on science as a way to understand the miraculous. While they shared many similarities with partner organizations in the U.K., there were subtle differences. Stateside organizations were more focused on discovering true mediums, for example. Frequent correspondence between Jean-Pierre Brattel, who would eventually go on to found Null Mysteriis, and members of the United States Theosophical Society showed that Brattel felt that the U.S. had the right way about it: a strong hand was needed to usher the science of spiritualism into the new century. The U.S. branch of the Society for Psychical Research was far more interested in fieldwork than academic studies, and their trips abroad brought them into contact with aspects of the world in which Chronicles of Darkness is set on many occasions. Regardless of differences in approach, the groups on either side of the Atlantic communicated frequently. While communications were cordial, it was clear that each side believed that they were moving down the one correct path of truth.

Suffragettes in Spirit

Scientific journals were hamstrung during this period, as what was published had to be sanitized in order to avoid outraging Victorian society. Issues of class and race abounded, as well as gender. Most true mediums were women, though no one had yet put forward a satisfactory theory as to why that was. In the 19th century, certain things were considered outside the bounds of good and gentlemanly behavior. Physically testing women in the way mediums were frequently examined was publically frowned upon, if somewhat titillating for a discriminating audience.

Despite these risks, mediumship and spiritualism provided a number of opportunities for women that didn't exist before, particularly in the United States. There were few rights for women in the 19th century, and almost no chance for social mobility except through marriage. Even then, marriage was its own trap; once a woman was married, everything she owned or earned belonged to her husband. Suffrage didn't exist and would not exist until 1920, despite the efforts of people like Susan B. Anthony and Victoria Woodhull fighting for the right to vote. Even then, married women did not gain equal financial and legal standings in the U.S. until well into the 20th century.

Status as a medium or spiritualist, whether real or pretended, gave women in the U.S. a power to which they rarely had access. By adding the title of medium, the public perception of a woman changed. Rather than being considered as the property of a father, brother, son, or husband, she was able to have a singular identity connected only to her ability: a uniquely male prerogative during this period in history. Spiritualism provided a large number of women with an income, a voice, and respectability. Women who wouldn't normally be heard were suddenly able to provide the President of the United States with advice, leading large organizations in an attempt to change what's happening in the country.

Mediums opened shops across the northeast in both the U.S. and Canada. Larger cities such as New York, Boston, and Philadelphia had hundreds of mediums. Some were grand parlors visited by wealthy and powerful people, while others were dark corners home to dangerous people looking for answers to horrible questions. Even smaller towns often had at least a single medium working there, though those mediums tended to work out of their homes. A parlor or a smaller, more intimate, room was set aside for séances and guests. For honest mediums, that room served as a division between their personal lives and their spiritualist persona. For the fakes, it provided them a place to set up their illusions away from unwanted eyes.



Suffrage and Racism

Like spiritualism, suffrage in this time was incredibly racist. It was focused on getting white women the vote, ignoring women of color. There were a wide variety of reasons given, but they were all based around the idea that it would be easier for the group to gain the rights if they didn't include anyone other than white women. One of the arguments that suffragettes put forward was that white women deserved the vote more than black men. Women of color weren't even considered to be a part of the discussion. Again, please discuss among the group how much reality you wish to see in your historical game.

The Civil War

Many of the people who sought answers from mediums were those affected by the American Civil War, wives had lost husbands, and everyone from cousins to sweethearts grieved for matters left undone. People also looked for solutions to the mysteries that had been lost in all the battles, seeking to find treasures left behind or hidden, or to settle old scores. There were also people looking for mysteries lost in all the battles, treasures that could make someone rich, or to settle old scores. Wounds run deep, though, and so do grudges; so much concentrated emotion allows gateways between the worlds to swing wide.

Spiritualism wasn't only involved with the aftereffects of the Civil War, it was also integral to the end of the Civil War. President Lincoln delivered the Emancipation Proclamation in the third year of the Civil War. It brought slavery to the front of the conflict, whereas it had only been considered one of the symptoms of the war previously. A significant portion of the spiritualist community pushed the idea of the proclamation forward, particularly a medium named Nettie Colburn.

Nettie was a constant visitor to the White House. Many mediums who demonstrated a high level of skill in the Washington, D.C. area were invited to soirees at the White House, but she in particular caught the ear of the President. The Lincolns were both strong believers in Spiritualism, and Nettie had informed the President at the beginning of the Civil War that it would last far longer than anyone had anticipated. She also was the main voice encouraging the President to read the proclamation, saying that the spirits didn't see an end to the war without it.

Northern Confederation

While the Civil War and Reconstruction were going on, in Canada there was a different feeling. There was a sense of urgency to consolidate in order to gain some independence from Britain, but also to combat against further incursions from the south. It wasn't an easy transition, however, with the English- and French-speaking parts of the country locked in an uneasy truce. Some of the larger conflicts came from the Maritime Provinces. Nova Scotia was one of the first four provinces to join the Dominion of Canada, along with Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick, but it was a difficult decision. Many people felt that the province was better on its own. Others felt that there was more in common between their province and the United States to the South.

One of the ways that Nova Scotia was similar to the rest of the northeast was through spiritualism. Many influential people heard the spirits call and wanted to convince the leaders of the other provinces that the country could differentiate itself through spiritualism. Those opinions ran up against the staunch Catholicism of the Quebecois and the rather staid and boring Anglicanism of Ontario. In the face of such opposition, Joseph Howe pushed for a repeal of the vote to join the confederation. While it ultimately failed, there were plenty of spiritualists who disliked the federal government and its disdain for the spiritual sciences.

Daniel Dunglas Home

More commonly known as D.D. Home, Daniel Dunglas Home was one of the most notorious mediums of the era. He was frequently the target of debunkers and scientists, and he was never exposed as a fraud. The worst that people said was that he would make a mistake one day and then they would catch him. He was famous for being one of the few people who levitated themselves rather than a table or a chair, and some people witnessed him walking on the ceiling during a séance. To further enrage the skeptics, he performed during the day with as many lights on as possible so that there couldn't be any question about using the dark to fool people. He was famous, a frequent guest of the wealthy and powerful around the world.

There was never a charge for his services, though he was happy to accept expensive gifts from his patrons before contacting the spirits. He also rarely had a fixed address, as he tended to live on the kindness of his friends and patrons, travelling across the United States as well as to various places all over the globe. He emigrated to the U.S. from Scotland when he was two, but as the years went on he left the country for longer and longer periods of time, frequently returning to Russia. He felt that it was his true home, that there were spirits there that were older, stranger, and wiser than any he had met in his travels. D. D. would wax poetic about the country whenever he was asked anything about it, or at any given time, really.

Home was a true medium. He talked to the spirits and knew that there were a lot of proscriptions on how he could live based on the deals that he made with a powerful spirit called the Somne. The Somne provided him with a great detailed vision of whatever he needed to ask, as well as the other powers he exhibited, like levitation and the ability to manifest nearby spirits. In exchange, he couldn't take money

for his services, and he could only tell part of the truth. If he told the entire truth, he would be punished physically for every transgression. His health constantly deteriorated over the years as he tried to test those boundaries, and frequently crossed them if he ever felt it was necessary. By the end of his life, he was suffering from symptoms that appeared to be tuberculosis but was instead the result of many hidden injuries that he sustained by transgressing against the Somne. He wanted to live for as long as possible, which is why he said his abilities were waning as he got more and more ill, so that he would be less tempted to use his abilities to his detriment. The accumulated injuries that he had sustained over the years would lead to his death in 1886.

Storytelling Hints: The most constant feeling people get when dealing with Home is his sense of certainty. He acts as if he knows what's going to happen before the players do and he doesn't try to hide it. It makes him one part insufferable and one part believable. He will frequently cut off people when they're explaining things to him that he knows and gets bored when people go on and on and on. Despite his air of superiority, he does try to be a good person. If he sees something particularly awful, he will let people know what it is, even at the cost to his health.

Victoria Woodhull

The suffrage movement had quite a few strong people involved in its fight, but none were as large, loud, and controversial as Victoria Woodhull. Her first attempts at séances were quickly exposed, but she continued to promote herself as someone who had a deep connection to the spirit world. This may have been true, but not in the way people expected. She seemed to be able to find herself next to true mediums, and she used this to maximum effect in her activities. She used mediums to start up a brokerage where bankers could come for advice from the spirits. They made a lot of money in the process, since a large chunk of the advice they provided was useful. She then turned that money into a magazine in 1870 called *Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly*. It was ostensibly a magazine with articles of interests to feminists, but it was also her way to attack people she didn't like with unfavorable press. This led to her being the first woman to speak to a congressional committee and one of the voices of the suffrage movement.

She was originally welcomed into the suffrage movement by people like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, but eventually her politics forced them to try to distance themselves from her. She was all about free love, open relationships, and Spiritualism being the one true faith. She tried to run for president in 1872 but failed to gain much traction. She became the president of the American Association of Spiritualists, and used her uncanny ability to discover more members to add to their ranks, but for every person she recruited three more left because of her views. Eventually she had angered or annoyed enough people that she moved to England and continued to agitate for women's suffrage, free love, and spiritualism.

Victoria's unfailingly optimistic attitude makes her constantly ignore anything that isn't a part of her world. Despite the terrible things she's been close to, she refuses to admit they were real. Any anomaly can be explained away as a freak of nature or not believing in her personal movement's ideals, rather than the horribleness of the reality. There has yet to be any terrible spiritual occurrence that she has properly attributed. Strangely, this has led her to use various opportunities for personal gain that she might not have had she been focused on the horror of the situation.

Storytelling Hints: Victoria is larger than life. Everything she does is big and boisterous and visible. She's a shameless promoter, and will use every opportunity to sell the players something that she's working on. She's constantly moving, always ready for the next opportunity to do something that will help the causes she believes in and to promote herself. Very few things faze her, because she's always viewing every odd thing as a chance to find some benefit. She wants to live life to the fullest and will do what she can to make sure she gets the life she wants.

The United Kingdom

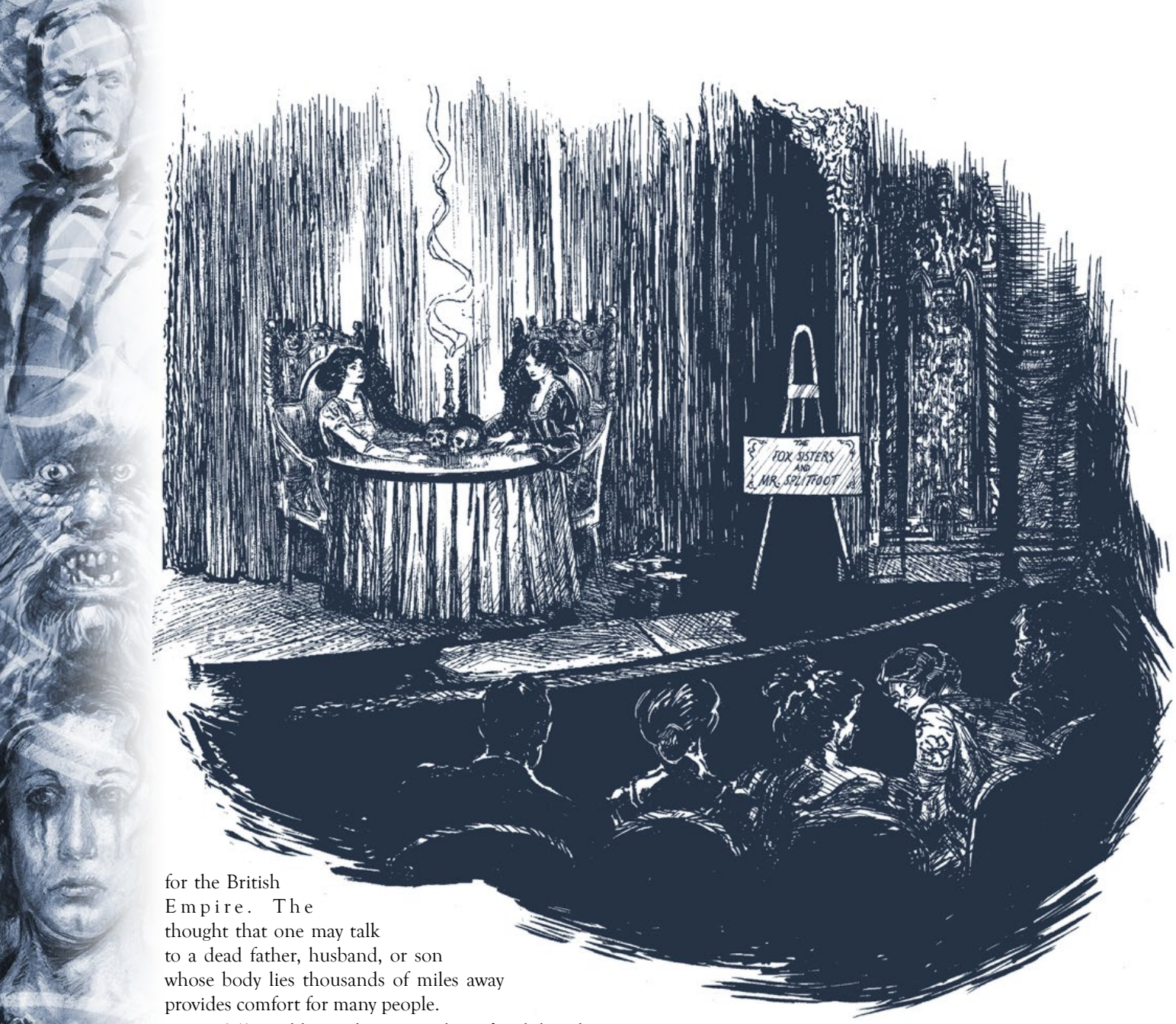
The United Kingdom is a hub of spiritualism, reflecting ideas from throughout Europe. Philosophers, theosophists, and psychic researchers share notes and theories, and they swiftly spread across the cities of the U.K. London, Edinburgh, and Dublin are hubs where the educated classes can share theories and research, while Glasgow, Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool, and Cardiff are home to more down-to-earth gatherings of spiritualists and mediums, many catering almost exclusively to the working classes.

In London especially, coffee houses and society offices bustle with chatter of the latest theories and discoveries to come out of Prague, Vienna, Berlin, and Paris. While they remain in contact with their fellows in the United States, distance proves a barrier — while a common language unites spiritualists on both sides of the Atlantic, roughly 4,300 miles of seawater and two different cultures divide them.

British spiritualists also benefit from the Empire that casts its web across the globe. They have comrades, allies, and other interested parties embedded throughout the machinery of the empire, its functionaries often believers themselves who interpret native beliefs and philosophies through their own preconceptions. Not for nothing was much of the science around spiritualism grounded in Hindu and Taoist beliefs — suitably whitewashed for British sensibilities, of course.

The Rise of Spiritualism

Spiritualism flourished in the United Kingdom soon after its origins in the United States. News of the spirit contact in Hydesville circulated by newspaper throughout the UK, and caught people's interest. People jump at the chance of making contact with the dead — some lost during the Napoleonic Wars, far more among the corpses that provide foundation



for the British Empire. The thought that one may talk to a dead father, husband, or son whose body lies thousands of miles away provides comfort for many people.

In 1853 Keighley, in the West Riding of Yorkshire, became home to the first Spiritualist church in the U.K. Two years later, the town also became home to the Spiritual Telegraph: the nation's first Spiritualist newspaper. Word spread quickly, aided by the newspaper, and groups of spiritualists established churches in other cities over the following years. As more people encountered spiritualists and mediums, word of spiritualism spread through word of mouth. The presentation of spiritualism as a church and mediums as religious figures helped deflect one of the most common objections to making contact with the dead — that it was an immoral, unwholesome thing to do.

The Victorian era is not just the time of empire, it is the time of scientific enquiry. Mysteries long thought unfathomable — from electromagnetism to the color of the sky — have fallen before the minds of Victorian scientists such as Michael Faraday, James Clark Maxwell, and Lord Rayleigh. The paranormal is just another mystery, and parts of the established scientific community see it as the next challenge they can master.

Beyond séances and spirit-talkers, psychics ply their trade on stage and in the music hall. Mind readers and hypnotists share platforms with magicians and escape artists. Those with a gift other than the mental or spiritual — able perhaps to move objects, or make fire twist at their command — only ever appear on stage. Their gifts are obvious and showy, but outside of convincing an investigator they are of little use in a family drawing room. Some of the richer families may pay for a private show, but they have to vie with the box office takings of a sold-out performance.

Those psychics who do take to the stage quickly become aware just how much of what happens on stage is fake. Some work alongside fraudulent "mind readers," who seed the audience with patsies, and spirit-talkers whose glowing balls of light are nothing more than small jars of phosphorescent liquid. In the business it's easy to assume everyone is a fake, so many performers are upfront about their deception — which can easily put off those truly gifted who want to make money and entertain people with their talents.

Performers with a gift soon learn to recognize one another by their slightly wary looks and reticence to discuss exactly how they work their magic. A few even band together, forming troupes of performers who all have some manner of gift. What these shows make up for in spectacle, however, they frequently lack in showmanship. The truth speaks for itself, and many with some kind of supernatural ability see it as a burden or as something mundane rather than something wondrous. Sadly, it isn't enough for a telekinetic to lift a full glass of water without touching it. If she doesn't sell the effect, people will remember her as a poor night's entertainment compared to the man who pulls a rabbit out of an empty top hat.

By contrast, the work of mediums and spiritualists most often takes place in a parlor or drawing room. Some work out of their own homes, especially in working-class areas where a family of ten may share just one room between them. The wealthy will often entertain a spiritualist as a visitor for a few days, providing a room and inviting her to dinner — where her abilities will often become a topic of conversation almost as interesting as the séance itself.

Whatever the setting, most séances led by a medium have a similar structure. The participants sit around a table in a room lit by only a few candles, each holding hands with the people on either side of them. The medium enters a trance and either relays messages from spirits — through asking and answering questions — or speaks for the spirits, often with a very different voice from her own. She may also entreat the spirits to make their presence known by rapping on the table, levitating the table, or through similar means. Frequently something blows the candle out when the spirits make contact, though most of the time even a truly gifted medium must resort to sleight-of-hand to make that happen.

Beyond people with the gift, the U.K. is also home to a wide range of haunted places, where the living can see and sometimes even interact with the dead. Most haunted places lie abandoned, with anyone who would take residence scared off by the ghosts. Local people frequently know of the presence of a ghost and a few may even warn visitors, hoping that they won't attract its attention. Others would rather say nothing — ghosts, like other supernatural phenomena, aren't something that normal, God-fearing people should acknowledge.

The U.K. has a vast network of ley-lines that connect important places, and which some people can use to travel great distances — if they have the understanding of how to open a gate. Many of the oldest paths cross the country, leading from one forest to another or creating a path between distant stone circles. Travelers describe these paths as being between tall briars or thorny hedges that stretch many yards into the sky. Recently, some children have discovered shorter ley-lines that link two towns, or connect places in the same city. A few adults wise enough to believe these stories have learned to walk the lines for themselves — though some of them do not return.

The Stage and the Spirits

The age of the celebrity psychic — as seen on television by millions of people — is a long way off in the Victorian era. While mind reading and mesmerism are grand amusements, to actually talk to the departed is not a matter for the public. As such, events where mediums attempt to channel spirits of the dead almost always take place without an audience. Everyone joining in makes the entire affair more intimate, and means attendees are less likely to let on what they have heard in detail.

Class

The entrenched class system in the U.K. influences both how and why a person would come into contact with the supernatural. The classes are not a simple matter of "rich" and "poor"; a person's family and social circle are just as great a set of class markers as money. Despite class divides, most people in the U.K. believe in *something* supernatural and know of the world outside of their experiences through books, newspapers, and gossip.

Working Class

The working classes have their own divides, from unskilled laborers to skilled artisans. Those whose trade requires technical skill and experience can make a reasonable wage, and get a decent education — learning Latin or French to help with their work. Unskilled laborers and those reliant on the workhouses, frequently have little education, and are paid barely enough to feed their families. A working day may last anywhere up to 17 hours, leaving little time for recreation — and visiting with a medium is definitely a recreational activity.

Many among the skilled working class make the time to speak with a medium or spiritualist. Life can be brutal and short, and a medium can help a man come to terms with his wife's death far less self-destructively than can a bottle of gin. These mediums work out of their own homes, with a room set aside for visits and contacting the other side. Each one has their own style, some presenting what they are doing as a new science, others hearkening back to mystic tradition. Whatever the case, a medium will always charge in advance for her services, and many can guarantee at least some level of contact with the spirit a visitor seeks. Séances frequently include many people who do not otherwise know one another, each hoping in turn for the medium to contact someone of relevance to them.

Perhaps the saddest people to visit a medium are those mothers who have lost young children. Out of grief — or guilt — they go to a medium to spend time with their departed child. Those stolen moments are addictive, however, and



stagnate the process of grief. Some ethical mediums will refuse to see such a visitor after a while, though many more will happily entertain her for as long as she can pay, in some cases for over a year. Sadly, many of the mediums involved are frauds; though they may justify their actions as helping a distraught woman come to terms with her loss the fact is that they are profiting from her grief.

Middle Class

Shopkeepers, accountants, photographers, and lawyers, the middle class is one of the broadest social groups in the United Kingdom. Those in the lower middle class, who have their own business but cannot afford employees, may visit the same mediums as the working classes — though rarely on the same night. Others with an interest in the supernatural but with a keener sense of social divide may instead gather the adult members of the family to use a planchette, following the instructions to gain information from the other side as part of a self-guided séance. Unless one of the participants has the gift, any messages are the result only of the people present.

Other members of the middle classes — those with knowledge-based jobs such as lawyers, doctors, and accountants — are among the most likely to travel the country, either for work or simply to see the sights of a new locale. As such, they are some of the people most likely to encounter ghosts and hauntings in otherwise abandoned locations; while the working class locals likely know about the apparition, they also know enough to stay well away.

The upper middle class, those whose income comes from their holdings rather than their work, is the class of thinkers and tinkerers and experimenters. With the free time of the upper class, they can dedicate their time to investigating the supernatural without concern for deadlines or missing work. Many paranormal investigators belong to the upper middle class, as they can self fund their investigations, and travel far and wide in pursuit of knowledge. Quite a few fancy themselves scientists, and devise theories and experiments in the hope of being the ones who finally crack open the secrets of the supernatural world.

Upper Class

The upper classes blend money, often from tenant farmers, and social connections, from being part of the nobility. It is they who have the time to host mediums as guests, and patronize scientists who try to plumb the depths of the supernatural. Like the upper middle class, they have a lot of free time, and while some use it to hunt, shoot, and attend social functions, others set up societies and clubs to discover which hauntings and spirit-talkers are real, and which are the work of cunning tricksters.

Members of the upper classes may be posted anywhere in the British Empire as ambassadors and diplomats, sometimes with a staff of their own. Here, they can investigate local claims of supernatural manifestations, whether it is a young man who bears the soul of the immortal Mahatmas or a great beast that turns people to hot stone just by looking at them. Through their letters and visits home, they contribute a great deal to the discussions about the supernatural that take place in coffeehouses and gentlemen's clubs.

In addition to taking posts within the machinery of empire, the upper classes travel more than others. A young man's Grand Tour, though now undertaken by some in the middle classes as well, exposes him to the culture and philosophy of Europe — at least, those parts that the British aristocracy think are important. A Grand Tour took in at least Paris, Geneva, Florence, Venice, Rome, Naples, Vienna, Munich, Berlin, and Flanders, and could take years to complete. Often it incubated a sense of adventure, sending young men off to barely explored parts of the world in order to find out what was there. On these travels they often encountered customs and superstitions foreign to the British way of thinking, but brought their understanding home with them. Through this legacy of travel, the upper classes appropriated and whitewashed foreign beliefs, tying them in to the European view of the supernatural.

Scientific Enquiry

The British Empire, especially in London and Edinburgh, is a hotbed of scientific thought; nowhere is that more noticeable than in the field of the supernatural. Spurred by tales of strange customs and creatures from far-away lands, ghost sightings, and people who can summon ghostly lights or move things with the power of their minds, the scientific community is constantly on the cusp of a major breakthrough.

The Society for Psychical Research provides much of the academic backing of scientific research into the supernatural. In addition to investigating phenomena, the Society collates information and has built up quite a reference library documenting both proven and supposed paranormal events. Members of the Society travel throughout the British Empire to find new ideas and new perspectives, either on their own or in the company of scientists and philosophers. Others help design the experiments that will prove supernatural phenomena.

The British arm of the SPR welcomes everyone who wants to investigate the nature of the supernatural. Many of its members are spiritualists, and more than one has some demonstrable gift or ability. Members assist scientists in devising experiments, using what the Societies' records have noted in order to determine the parameters of a given individual's ability. Many, of course, refuse to be tested. After all, the experimental conditions themselves may interfere with the beings attempting to make contact. As such, the Society works to devise better experiments and better ways to investigate claims of supernatural ability.

Over the past year, the fallout from Richard Hodgson's investigation into Madame Blavatsky has caused rifts in the SPR. Hodgson's findings angered both spiritualists and those who work with Theosophists to analyze the Odic force or identify features of lost Atlantis. They claim that the Society has become a front for people determined to discredit the supernatural and stall scientific progress. Soon, Hodgson

will leave for America rather than remaining a target of ire within the Society.

Though the backlash is partly responsible, the British arm of the SPR has always been a little more accepting of paranormal claims. Hodgson is an outlier, his zeal to disprove the supernatural getting in the way of the necessary scientific work of understanding it. Most members of the Society in the U.K. try to define the parameters of a given supernatural effect or find out *how* it happens, rather than trying to demonstrate that it didn't actually happen at all.

Welcome to the Twilight

The rise of spiritualism coincides with some large changes and events that have an impact on the world, and by extension the setting of Chronicles of Darkness. Anniversaries, social movements, innovations, and curiosity shed more light on the world of the Chronicles of Darkness than it was used to. There was a shifting of power, both natural and supernatural, mixed with opulent displays of wealth. It was a time of empire, recovery, growth, and change.

Reconstructed Rifts

The Civil War was the defining event for citizens of the United States in the 19th century. It took four years, over 600,000 known soldier deaths, many more undocumented military deaths, and untold civilian casualties. The war was supposed to be the end of the strife between the two ideologies, those of the North and those of the South, but it never really solved anything. All it created was a quiet, simmering, and subtle war between the two sides.

Spiritualism played a part in the Civil War. Many mediums throughout the northeast had agitated for the Emancipation Proclamation, and word of this had travelled through the South. Combined with the spiritual practices of their former slaves as well as indigenous peoples, a large part of the white southern population therefore distrusted and hated spiritualism. Legislators made laws banning the practice of anything mystical or magical.

Many of these laws were created through the influence of powerful forces within the world of the Chronicles of Darkness. They used the natural human inclination to ignore the supernatural and helped reinforce a deep suspicion of anything extraordinary as reflected in the penalties exacted, ranging from hefty fines to extended jail times, and turned an unofficial blind eye to those pillars of the community who might be moved to take justice into their own hands. Mediums who were people of color had it worse, as they faced physical attacks from law enforcement, threats, and lynch mobs.

Spiritualism as a movement and a religion tried to make its way down south during the twenty years following the American Civil War with varying levels of success. A lot of religions tried the same thing, sending dignitaries, emissaries, and proselytizers to spread word to those they felt were less fortunate. Most were stonewalled as carpetbaggers: people descending from the North to take advantage of people in dire situations. Spiritualists had problems unique to their own situation, however, in that there were already established spiritualist beliefs in the Caribbean and black communities. None of these groups took too kindly on a predominantly white invading force telling them what to do.

The Theosophical Society had the most difficulty out of all the spiritualist groups. Word of the investigation into Madam Blavatsky had reached many people in power in the South. This added another layer of mistrust, because no one wanted to be conned by fakers from the North. The Theosophical Society also failed because they were seen less as a scientific organization and more a religious group defending their leader and trying to take advantage, just like all the other carpetbaggers. They tried to set up organizations and actively recruit people to spiritualism and the society.

The SPR had a much better time travelling in the South. They mostly went down there for research purposes, investigating rumors and tips from people in various parts of the country. There wasn't any organizational plan: no locations being built or modified to suit their needs, no training facilities to try to create new members. The SPR simply went in and researched whatever paranormal events were going on while working with the local people to try to help them make sense of confusing and possibly dangerous situations.

The local authorities were rarely happy with the SPR, but the Society did handle difficult problems that the local sheriff couldn't or wouldn't. Because there wasn't any agenda present with what the SPR was doing, they were one of the few groups of Northerners who were able to earn the trust of the people in the South. Chapters of the SPR started to spring up organically in places like Widowee, Alabama, and Kingston, Tennessee, as well as in Atlanta, showing up when the Georgia School of Technology was founded and using that as a laboratory for objects, items, and creatures they discovered. This welcome was galling for the Theosophical Society. While they were polite about it in public and in the communications between the two groups, many individuals were loud in private about how they detested the SPR.

The Golden Jubilee

While the United States is focused on their internal strife, the vast majority of the world is focusing on Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. This was only the second time that a British monarch had reached fifty years of rule, and Queen Victoria was the first woman to hold the throne for fifty years. The celebration took place over two days in 1886, two full days of celebrations, speeches, meetings, parties, functions, dignitaries, assassination attempts, and political opportunities for anyone who had the ability to attend. Places with strong connections to the British Empire were focused on the Jubilee, to the point where it seemed that everything was moving toward that singular point.



The guest list for the Jubilee was rumored to include 50 foreign kings and princes, not to mention the Queen's representatives from the various colonies and the commonwealth. Musicians, authors, and renowned scientists were preparing for various competitions and awards, finding ways to impress the Queen, any of her ministers, or the other esteemed guests. Amidst the pageantry, there was a small science award. It wasn't the most prestigious award, and the reward for winning was minimal, but the contest was for the scientists who could best further the cause of the spiritual sciences.

The contest existed because of Queen Victoria's growing interest in spiritualism. In her youth, she had a passing familiarity with the spiritual realm. She attended a few séances with the Prince Consort for an evening of entertainment. After Prince Albert's death, her interest spiked sharply as she began looking for a way to connect with Albert again. Unlike President Lincoln's fatalistic interest in spiritualism, where he accepted his own assassination because of what a medium told him, Queen Victoria wanted to change things. She had the power of the British Empire at her command, and she wanted her husband back. Many scientists viewed the contest as a great opportunity to display the mechanics and tools that they were developing to measure and prove the existence of spirits and gain favor with their Monarch.

Canada, often considered to be one of Queen Victoria's favorites places, particularly felt the need to provide something to the monarch who helped realize the British North America act through Parliament. Many Canadian scientists and spiritualists were working together to create what they felt was going to win them the award. The Toronto based SPR group, along with a couple of friendly mediums, had built a box that they felt could force a manifestation. From there, it could be studied, talked to by non-mediums, and be the physical piece of evidence that would prove the existence of the spiritual world.

The only people who felt that the Jubilee was a bad idea were the Theosophical Society mediums. The warnings started in 1885, where Emma Donaldson, a medium of dubious quality practicing out of Norfolk, entered a trance and started giving dire warnings about the Jubilee. She mentioned that the gates would be flung asunder as the clock shimmered with gold, and all the spirits would be lost to the twilight. A few months after Emma's first prediction, other mediums started having the same trance and giving the same warning, until it was difficult to get any questions answered by spirits. The Theosophical Society tried to draw attention to this, but the Queen cared little for their organization. She knew what she wanted and the Society for Psychical Research was providing the answers that she wanted to hear.

Union Dues

While the rich and powerful were busy thinking about celebrating the reign of a queen or consolidating their power in small towns, the labor movement was starting to gain some momentum. Business was booming, but all that money was held by fewer and fewer people. The wealthy showed off their opulence with their large houses, grand clothing, and personal mediums who gave them predictions on their business. The workers in the factories, however, were working in hard conditions for pay that barely provided enough money to live, leading to the workers fighting back and the formation of trade unions.

The influx of factory workers came through the migration of people from rural to urban environments. A large group of people who were used to being self-sufficient were now forced into an urban environment where that kind of self-sufficiency was impossible. Being accustomed to communities where people banded together against adversity, they imposed a similar structure in their urban environment, resulting in unions. The major focuses of the unions were improving working conditions, paying better wages, and stopping controversial firings.

Strikes and workers' rights were battlegrounds in the large cities. Workers would organize and set up in front of factories with little to no warning to the general public, and factory owners would then send people to break up the picket line. These conflicts would quickly escalate into pitched, violent battles that would frequently leave the workers bruised, broken, and lying dead in the streets. Frequently innocent bystanders would be caught up in these fights and treated as if they were enemies on both sides of the conflict.

Both sides, from the line walkers, to the union representatives, to the managers and owners, looked for any advantage they could get their hands on. Each side looked to the Twilight to get guidance from the dead to gain a competitive edge. When the moneyed interests went to look for mediums, they looked for people whom they could influence either through money or intimidation. There were trips to lavish homes and expensive gifts provided for poor mediums who could see working with the factory owners as their chance

Ghosts and Spirits

In Chronicles of Darkness, Ghosts and Spirits are two different types of entities. While mediums would often use the two terms interchangeably, there are differences between the two. Ghosts were the souls of the dead that were trapped and unable to move on. Mediums who could speak to ghosts tended to be drawn to the Society for Psychical Research. Something about their focus on the science tended to draw people towards them.

Spirits were the reflections of the living that were held back by a barrier known as the Gauntlet. During this time, the Gauntlet has weakened to the point where many spirits have escaped and were drawn to the Theosophical Society, whose ideology fit more with the spirits' nature.

at wealth. Those who felt uncomfortable being involved in the conflict were threatened with violence against them and their families.

The Unions tried a different tactic. They tried to appeal to humanity, showing mediums who were going to work for them what they were fighting for, and how workers were looking for a fair deal and safe working conditions so they could survive to feed their families. Sadly, they also tended to resort to threats and intimidation as well if a medium refused or felt uncomfortable being involved in the conflict.

Because the ghosts that these mediums spoke with were split over the issue, any answers they provided were also split. There was no clear answer to the labor problem from the spirit world. If a medium spoke with the ghost of a dead banker, then the ghost would favor the factory owners. If the medium talked to a ghost of a dead factory worker, then that ghost would provide beneficial information to union mediums.

If a medium contacted the wrong spirit while searching for information to help the cause, then there would always be consequences. Spirits are perfectly capable of providing misinformation, exposing fake "spies," and giving away valuable people, places, or things to the opposing side. More to the point, the chaos in the physical world becomes mirrored in Twilight. When there were fights between the owners and the workers, the ghosts would mirror that and fight alongside their "comrades," called by the presence of the medium even if not intentionally. Mediums caught in the middle of that would have to worry about their physical body as well as their mind, as they would be feeling the attacks on both sides.

Meet the Pinkertons

The Pinkerton National Detective Agency was incredibly active during this time. They were famous for being the official security of President Lincoln during the U.S. Civil War. Around the late 1880s, the company employed a vast array of people. They did private investigation work, but they also did military work, law enforcement, and undercover operations. A large majority of their undercover work in this period involved infiltrating unions and breaking strikes. If a story focuses on labor strikes during the late 1880s in the U.S., there will be swarms of Pinkerton agents to deal with.

Because of the increase in the use of mediums, the Pinkertons felt that they needed a special unit to handle hunting them down. They needed people who were smart and discreet, since a ghost could warn a true medium before they could complete their tasks. The Pinkerton Detective Agency was looking for people who were willing to hunt down individuals who might not have done anything wrong. A lot of what they were hired and willing to do for clients frequently crossed the line into illegal activity. Mediums were frequently kidnapped, beaten, or even killed when the Pinkertons were done with them.

Spiritualism's Internal Conflict

There is no doubt in anyone's mind that spiritual power is growing with every passing month. When spiritualism began, there were very few actual mediums and lots of charlatans practicing. Over the course of 20 years, those numbers have shifted so that instead of about one in 10 mediums being able to actually converse with the dead, now roughly one in three are able to do so, many of those numbers coming from former con artists who suddenly developed true talent: a fact that more than one found deeply frightening. Even worse was when those who were indifferent or opposed to spiritualism found themselves suddenly able to speak with spirits. A lot of Christians-turned-mediums fled Christian Science in order to find a way to reconcile their faith with their newfound abilities. Others tried to push "the devil inside" out as much as possible. Exorcisms became a money-making venture for many churches in the area who wouldn't publicly charge a rate, but would gladly accept donations. These rituals tended to be effective, but only for a limited time. People could go through them and for weeks or months not hear any ghosts talking to them. Eventually the Twilight breaks through, however, leaving the medium overwhelmed at the return of her power.

In addition to an increase in numbers, the powers of mediums have grown exponentially since the Fox sisters first heard knocking in their home. A medium's power manifests

Condition: Unintended Mediums

Unintended mediums weren't only humans. Many creatures in the world of Chronicles of Darkness ended up getting extra sight that they weren't always pleased to get during this time. A ghost might have been drawn to a character, or a spirit might have clung to them when they passed by. Whatever the reason the character has the Condition, whenever they are in a stressful situation have the player roll a Resolve + Composure roll. If the roll fails, the character loses all sense of time as she experiences a disturbing and terrifying message from the other side.

Resolution: When the spirit or ghost has achieved their goals, or if the spirit or ghost are exorcised.

Beat: N/A



in small ways at first, such as spiritual knocking. Before long, however, knocking leads to hearing voices, and spirit-talking leads to possession. Physical powers can become present, too, with "table tipping" and spiritual healing. Finally, even full apparitions may manifest, or even replace, the mediums who have summoned them.

All of this speaks of an escalation of power from Twilight through the widening of the Avernian Gates. Are the spirits fleeing something? Are they trying to generate enough Essence in order to fling wide the Gates and coat the world in Twilight? Are they simply powerful enough somehow to create anchors where none formerly existed? No one, not even the mediums who converse with the spirits, can get an answer for the current escalation of power.

Escalation of powers seems to affect mediums everywhere, whether allied with the Theosophical Society, the SPR, or no organization at all. Materialization mediums talk about how they felt memories and feelings clawing at their mind, extending the time they were in trance and making it more difficult to come back. Speaking mediums talked about words that were only spoken to them, as well as hearing whispers as they returned to consciousness. Those who use automatic writing found notes to themselves they didn't remember writing. There were cries for help and whispers for deliverance that the mediums didn't understand. Perhaps ominously, new mediums did not seem to have these experiences, only those with a stronger connection to the spirit world.

Theosophical Differences

While this was going on, the Theosophical Society was fracturing despite an outward appearance of strength. There were three main groups: the Theosophical Society in the United States, in Europe, and the headquarters in Madras. They all communicated frequently and with great affection, but their thoughts about the nature of spiritualism, how to deal with frauds, and what was considered part of their mandate began to diverge. Arguments on these and other topics were constant, fueled by not only stubbornness but also by conflicting messages from beyond.

The Theosophical Society was Blavatsky's legacy and where the vast majority of her power came from, so she worked hard to maintain unity. She had the final say for many people in regards to who was considered a true medium. While she was planning on passing the reins of power in the society to her chosen successor, Annie Besant, Blavatsky wanted things to continue after her death; a schism within her organization threatened that. To fix it, she told everyone what they wanted to hear, so that roar as they might, they would be too invested to break away.

When touring America, Blavatsky would mention that there needed to be harsher punishment for frauds. There needed to be more searches for people who had the gift so that they could be studied by the Society. There was a Truth that they needed to find, and sitting around drinking tea wasn't going to cut it. When Blavatsky went to Europe, she joked and laughed with the European contingent about how the Americans were trying to force the world into the shape that they wanted. How they wanted to force the truth out of the world that would reveal itself in time. She frequently got into arguments with Jean-Pierre Brattel over this, who eventually left the organization after one of those arguments. After her travels, she would return to Madras to complain about how everyone was messing up everything she had worked to build.

That means that while on the surface each group was in communication, in practice the various branches of the Theosophical Society were intentionally getting in each other's way. Membership was beneficial as long as extra aid wasn't asked for. All the while, however, the Society's members maintained a friendly, polite, Victorian veneer, where few people said bad things in public. Asking for help was like shaking hands with someone while they held a club hidden behind their back. It was never a case of if the club would fall, only when.

Brattel wasn't the only one who had issues; members such as Rudolph Steiner questioned the religious nature the organization has taken and others shared his feelings. Still others were unhappy with the location of the international headquarters in Madras, India. They argued that it was an inauspicious place, but in reality most of them were surprised it wasn't in Europe, which they viewed as the center of the world.

Despite this tension, or perhaps because of it, recruitment was a main focus for all factions of the Theosophical Society. Most recruitment tactics focused on the luxury of Society meeting places, meeting like-minded individuals, and making contact with people outside an individual's social stratum. Once a member, the meetings were pleasant, but with all the internal fracturing it was easy for new people to feel lost inside the society or to be used by more established members to push agendas.

Despite their erratic behavior, the Theosophical Society's numbers kept growing. With a stated goal of pulling back the veil that kept humans in ignorance of the spiritual world, they formed a threat that suddenly became quite serious. Therefore, when the cracks started to form, a lot of interested parties took the opportunity to sow greater discord and resentment between the groups, all in the hopes of destabilizing the Theosophical Society and returning the world to the way it had been before.

Society for Psychical Research

While the Theosophists are imploding, the SPR is pushing hard to find the technology they need to understand the spiritual world. Unlike the Theosophical Society, the SPR is decentralized; each branch has its own practice. They all agree that they need to discover more about the spiritual world. They're willing to work together to uncover its mysteries even if they don't necessarily agree on how to go about doing it, no matter what kind of danger it puts them in.

The Society's unifying idea is that science is the way to discover more about the spiritual world. The SPR is made up of mediums and scientists who work together to create instruments that measure spiritual phenomena. Entering a local SPR office is a Victorian scientists' dream, with devices and instruments everywhere, including rooms devoted to

experiments and cages to hold specimens they were waiting to process. The last thing any creature from Chronicles of Darkness wanted to wake up to was the inside of one of those cages. In an SPR office in Villeneuve-sur-Lot in France, for example, they vivisected a creature that appeared to be half wolf, half human, and shared their findings with the other branches. They're very keen on discovering more creatures like that; the knowledge to be unlocked is limitless.

The SPR is interested in using photography to try to capture not only proof of spirits, but also information about the spirit world. The daguerreotype photographic process showed promise in terms of spirit photography, and so the Society worked on creating smaller, more portable cameras in order to capture pictures of spirits, or anything else that they might be interested in exploring. A few prototypes exist, but they're still rather bulky and frighten people when they're brought out in the general public.

The Society isn't merely interested in smaller photographic technology; HandDaguerre is only one of a few things that the SPR has invented. For example, SPR members have invented listening devices that are supposed to be able to hear the murmuring of spirits. The device fits in a large case carried like a backpack, which is connected to a headband worn by the bearer with two large cones that fit securely into the ears. There are rumors of a weapon that harnesses electricity, based on the research of Nicola Tesla, that only affects spirits, but witnesses say its prototype is quite capable of injuring the living.

To new members to the SPR, it can be a little overwhelming. There's a lot of support, but there's also a lot of science behind what they do. New members are expected to catch up quickly on the science and the technology that's available; and people who can't quite keep up are pitied and treated as not quite as trustworthy as people who could understand most of the concepts the SPR threw at the new recruits. Part of this comes from the unofficial stratification of the group. Those who are seen as the smartest or cleverest are the people who are the most sought after and who have the most political clout within the team. Those who don't keep up are often a liability in the field, and are frequently the ones who end up dead.

The Supernatural

When the light shines into the shadows, the supernatural gets the world's attention and it doesn't have a chance to argue. In addition to the conflicts between the major players of the time — the Society for Psychical Research and the Theosophical Society — a wide number of psychics, mediums, and spiritualists ply their trade at all levels of society.

Psychics and Frauds

Some of the people involved with the rise of spiritualism have no larger affiliation than themselves. They may be celebrities or cyphers, loved or feared, with all manner of mysterious abilities.

Mistress Agnieszka

Meteor Street is an ordinary street in a middle class suburb of London. The old house is a little bigger and a little older than those around it, but not by much. People cross the street rather than walk past its gate, and children know that any ball that finds its way into the garden is as good as gone. They say that this is where the witch lives.

Nobody knows when Mistress Agnieszka moved into the house on Meteor Street, and nobody remembers a time when she wasn't there — an old woman with a lined face, long gray hair, and startling blue eyes that can look into a person's soul. When she speaks, she has a foreign accent despite living in London for many years, and her words always give the impression that she knows some secret about you.

For someone that nobody wants to deal with, Mistress Agnieszka gets a lot of callers — usually after dark, when nobody's around to notice. Some come from nearby, others travel from all over London, and even from other countries, to seek her aid. They have heard that the witch is wise in the ways of spirits, that she receives messages from the other side, and they think she can help them. She receives visitors in her parlor, an opulent room with a little too much fine furniture and a few too many ornaments for its size. She communes with the spirits, with angels, demons, and the dead, and she knows all her visitors' secrets, and what they must do to help.

Mistress Agnieszka, *née* Annie Broughton, is a fraud — but not in the way most skeptics believe. Originally a farm-girl from Yorkshire, she discovered on her sixteenth birthday both that she could read people's minds, and that people thought her in league with the Devil for doing so. Escaping her hometown, she made her way to London, using her skills and her gift to make money as a con artist. Over time, she's become one of the finest cold-readers in the world, and has used her knowledge of human nature and her mind reading abilities to build up a small fortune. She moved to Meteor Street in her early forties, and with the assistance of cosmetics and an Eastern European accent she has been the un-aging Mistress Agnieszka for nearly thirty years. Between telepathy and cold-reading she knows what people want to hear, and uses table-rapping devices and concealed gimmicks to act as though ghosts or spirits speak to her.

She has made sure that rumors of her abilities have made it to the Society for Psychical Research. If they confirm her gift, it will bring her more visitors from further afield — visitors better able to pay for her services. Though she doesn't consider herself a cruel woman, Mistress Agnieszka likes the finer things in life, and solving her neighbors' problems can't pay for everything.

Storytelling Hints: Mistress Agnieszka has built her reputation carefully, and will use every means at her disposal to keep it in place. While she insists that callers come to her in order that she does not need to leave her house, she has

amassed quite the reputation as an eerily accurate spiritualist throughout all areas of society. However the characters encounter her, she is supremely self-confident. Without her gift she can tell a man's secrets at a glance, and discover the truth in an evening. With it, she knows him better than he knows himself as soon as he crosses her threshold.

Klementina Rabinovich

On the fourth floor of a New York tenement that should have been condemned long before lives an old Russian immigrant known to everyone nearby. Klementina Rabinovich may be 68 years old but she refuses to act her age, and people love her for it. She is the matriarch not only of her building but also of the local Russian community — and even some locals with no ties to the old country at all. She refuses to sit back and let others act. Klementina would much rather be an active part of the community. As such she brings groceries to the old (often much younger than she is), she mediates disputes, and isn't above helping with repairs when things break. The people who call on her after dark have a different motivation, however. Rather than problems with this world, Klementina helps with matters of the next. Through her, people can speak to the dead.

Klementina has lived in that tenement block for four years now. A Jew, she fled the pogroms of Alexander III along with her family and her friends. When she reached America, she steeled her nerves and called up the spirit of an old friend. To her delight — and her terror — he answered.

She studiously ignored her gift, fearing it more now that she was certain of what she could do. This lasted for three months, until she heard her neighbor crying for three days straight. The neighbor was a young woman; she had brought two of her children with her. Her husband and youngest daughter, just three years old, had died in the crossing. Klementina offered to ease the woman's grief, and channeled the spirit of her lost child. Sadly, the woman's husband had left no trace in the lands of the dead, but over the course of a month Klementina helped the woman to adjust to what happened.

Inevitably, word of her gift spread. For all her protestations, the one thing people wanted more than anything was to hear from those who had already passed on. She refused, but nobody listened. Her rabbi cited Moses Isserles and Chaim Vital in defense of her gift. She could not hold out forever. And so, Klementina Rabinovich invites people into her home two nights a week, and talks to the dead on their behalf.

Now more than ever, the living and the dead pull Klementina in different directions. The living want to hear the whispered promises of a lover, the loving voice of a parent, or the happy gurgles of a child. The dead have their own needs, and they do not care for what the living might want to hear. They have their own agenda, their own need for Klementina. So far, she has resisted their dark callings — but how much longer can she hold out?

Storytelling Hints: Klementina Rabinovich takes no shit from anyone. Every day she helps poor, downtrodden people with the basic needs of their lives. She helps arrange housing, she assists with groceries, and she helps people talk to the dead. That last element weighs heavy upon her soul. Not only does she disagree with her rabbi (Deuteronomy is quite clear), but she can see that most people who come to her do not want to work through their grief. Instead, they come to pretend that their loved ones are still alive, prolonging the torment rather than trying to heal. For now, she tells herself she is helping her community. Soon, that won't be enough.



Winston Cole

Two months ago, nobody knew who Winston Cole was and nobody cared. Now, the young black man is the talk of the New York set. He does three shows a week and a matinee on Sundays, in which everyone can see that he has unlocked the darkest secrets of the mind. His shows have a range of prices, so as not to exclude anyone, for he has a gift and he wants to share it. During each hour-long show, he treats his audience to a spectacular display of what his agent and his playbills call "The Odic Force in Action!"

He starts out small, lifting coins and buttons from a table in front of him. He moves on to bending spoons with the power of his mind — first in his own hands, then in the hands of members of the audience, and finally in the pockets and purses of the folks chosen at random. While much of the show could be the work of a particularly good conjuror with a number of well-placed assistants, that premise grows thinner and thinner as he makes larger and heavier objects move without any means of support.

He has demonstrated his abilities in front of skeptics and scientists both, and they have all testified that he is neither a liar nor a cheat — he really can move things with the power of his mind. The scientist Thomas Hamilton theorizes that Winston is somehow using the Odic force to create movement, and has suggested studying his abilities further in an electrostatic environment, to see if that would destabilize Winston's gift. Fearing that the difference between Hamilton's electrostatic environment and an electric chair is the presence of restraints on the chair, Winston has consistently refused the requests. Hamilton is not the only one wanting to experiment on a telekinetic, and the offers are slowly turning into threats.

Winston's agent has his work cut out for him. Their first venue kicked them out once the owner realized that he was putting a black man on stage, while another was fine with



the show but received a note
reading "I will send the negro-lovers in your audience to the Hell that awaits them." The KKK are calling for his head, stating that he is clearly possessed by Satan, and twice so far he's walked out of the stage door to see a noose hanging from the fire escape. Nobody's attacked him so far, but he knows that it is only a matter of time until someone lashes out at the black celebrity. Rather than settling back and waiting for someone to take a shot, he's started including some commentary on the black man's lot in his shows. It's not much, but his agent is worried that he's asking for trouble.

He's also receiving pushback among the organized psychical researchers. The Theosophical Society insists that Winston's abilities are incredibly well engineered illusions, no more than smoke and mirrors — after all, as a black man he does not have the Atlantean or Aryan heritage needed to manifest true paranormal powers. Many of his richer patrons have stopped attending, while others now hand out pamphlets "explaining" the feats in his show.

Storytelling Hints: Despite facing threats every night on stage, despite the scientists who want to cut his brain open (optionally post-mortem) and the spiritualists who spit on his heritage, Winston is a genuinely happy man. The world is a weird place, and he's a weird person. If anything happens to him, he has enough fame that people will ask questions — rare protection for a black man in New York, though not one that deflects blades or bullets. In a chronicle, he could be the face of mysticism or a dire warning about the fleeting nature of celebrity.

Lady Evelyn Hamilton

Though to many she's little more than a shrinking violet hanging onto the edges of the fashionable London set, Lady Evelyn Hamilton has some rather forthright views on the developing fields of supernatural research. Her father, Lord Paul Hamilton, is a patron of a number of scientists in London. He has ties with the Theosophical Society, the Society for Psychical Research, the Freemasons, and more besides. Lady Evelyn, however, shares only some of her father's curiosity and none of what she sees as his gullibility. After seeing one too many mystics, ancient masters, gurus, and psychic surgeons try unsuccessfully to save her mother's life, Lady Hamilton became convinced that they are all frauds.

A follower of the work of Ada Lovelace, Lady Hamilton has applied a specific scientific rigor to her interactions with psychics,



mediums, and spiritualists alike. After all, Lady Hamilton can see the dead; if those who make similar claims are unable to hear the same cries from beyond the grave, then surely one of the two must be lying. And Lady Hamilton knows that she is not lying.

Indeed, she cannot remember a time when she could not hear (and often see) those already departed. Other children had invisible friends that they invented whole cloth; Lady Evelyn's invisible friends were the spirits of those children dead before their time — including her elder sister, who died at of typhoid aged only eight years old. The sting of her nanny's cane was enough to convince the young Evelyn to remain silent about the nature of her gift — and taught her that other people did not have the sight that she did. When she had doubts as to whether she was quite sane, the dead gave her knowledge that she could verify; knowledge she could not have come about through any other means.

Lady Evelyn had a hard time making friends; her invisible friends could tell her people's secrets, and it turns out that most people aren't so nice. She learned to get along with people despite what she knew of them, but even in finishing school she was cold and standoffish. She moves in the right social circles, though she has not attracted a suitor. Her father is displeased with her *laissez-faire* attitude to her future — she will soon be 26, and she will soon be too old, condemned to the life of a spinster.

As strong minded as she is socially awkward, Lady Evelyn doesn't care for her father's desires for her future. She uses her position in society to meet mystics, mediums, and scientists, desperate to find someone else who can perceive the dead. Either through a fluke or a sinister twist of fate she has not yet found another real medium. She has, however, gained a reputation as a skeptic who always seems to know what's really going on.

Storytelling Hints: Lady Evelyn is an infuriatingly self-possessed woman, without the social graces that would make her behavior eccentric rather than simply rude. She has gone her entire life hearing the voices of the dead whether she wants to or not, and wants to find someone else who hears the same. She will usually appear in stories as a noted skeptic and debunker, though if the characters witness her using information she could not gain elsewhere — or if one of the characters can speak to the dead — her true nature may manifest.

The Theosophical Society

Formed in 1875, the Theosophical Society was originally formed to study occultism, the Cabbala, and similar topics. It would have remained little more than a curiosity save for two important factors: the rise of interest in spiritualism, and the presence of Madame Helena Blavatsky.

While Colonel Henry Steel Olcott is the president — and will be until his death in 1907 — the Theosophical Society's real thought-leader is Madame Blavatsky. Through her contact with the Mahatmas, the secret masters of the world, she knew that she must shape the Society into a tool for the hidden masters to exact their will on the world. It was when she was in India that she finalized the Society's objectives and direction.

The Society advanced the idea that humanity possessed untapped paranormal abilities throughout the middle and upper classes in the US and UK. It initially drew its ideas about the nature of the supernatural from a blend of Hindu philosophy, Cabbala, and Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *The Coming Race* —a work of science-fiction that she claims is closer to the truth than most other sources.

Madame Blavatsky published *Isis Unveiled* in 1877, a vastly popular work that informed scientists and the superstitious alike. The book was the first volume to present the basis of the Theosophical Society's understanding, though it is only a springboard. A blend of Hermeticism and Neoplatonism that also drew from the naturalist Paul Sclater's theory of Lemuria, *Isis Unveiled* was vastly influential among spiritualists in general, claiming to be "the synthesis of science, religion, and philosophy" that unveiled the secret truth behind the world's religions. The book does not just inform theosophists, its popularity is such that it becomes required reading throughout the field, driving the scientific and philosophical understandings of paranormal abilities.

As of 1885, Madame Blavatsky is working on *The Secret Doctrine*, which sets down much of the Theosophical Society's

Theosophical Society Status

Many splinter groups claim that they have some relationship with the Theosophical Society of Blavatsky and Olcott, though their claims are tenuous at best. In 1885, however, they are a big draw. Despite Blavatsky and Olcott not having a single supernatural bone in their bodies, a number of members of the Theosophical Society use the group's teachings to discern more about actual supernatural events in the world — though cast through the Society's understanding.

- You've read *Isis Unveiled* and attended a number of gatherings of the Theosophical Society, and you can see how the world really fits together. You gain a free Theosophy specialty in either Academics or Occult.
- ••• Having investigated further, you can see how Theosophy ties the ancient and modern worlds together, and why the secret masters need it. Your Theosophy specialty is now both an Area of Expertise and an Interdisciplinary Specialty.
- ••••• Your character has spent time with Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott and can speak with their passion. Your character gains the Inspiring Merit, even if she does not meet the prerequisites. It only works for those receptive to the ideas of the Theosophical Society.

understanding of the world that others will hold true for years to come. Though it holds forth on the secret masters of the world and the beauty of Atlantis, a great deal of its contents are complaints about scientists and churchmen, fragments of cosmology, and a great deal of whitewashed Hindu philosophy. It also sets out her theories of the origins of paranormal abilities: that they come from the seven "root races" of Atlantis and Lemuria, whether that is the Aryans who begat the white race, the Atlanteans who are the forebears of the Asian and Semitic peoples, or the mindless Lemurians who sired black people and primates alike. Both in person and in its publications, the Theosophical Society presents its findings as the application of science to religion. This initial appeal is what brings people into the fold. Between their philosophies, their scientific claims, and their secret history of the world, the Theosophical Society is almost singlehandedly responsible for the New Age movement.

In some ways, the Theosophical Society represents the ultimate danger of the spirit of experimentation, of falling into the trap of believing untested claims because of the charisma and authority of the person making them. Presented with evidence of real paranormal abilities that do not fit into its philosophy, the Theosophical Society will reject it as parlor tricks and chicanery, while it will happily accept frauds whose abilities manifest in what the Society believes is an acceptable fashion.

Madame Helena Blavatsky

Given her powerful presence in the world of the paranormal, observers might naturally think that Madame Blavatsky held secret occult knowledge — and a psychic might turn to her for guidance with his unpredictable abilities. After all, she receives letters from the Great White Masters in Tibet, can repair smashed crockery with the power of her mind, and has spoken to the dead and to higher forms of life. Who better to provide guidance in the ways of the spirit realms? Anyone, really. For all she claims otherwise, Madame Helena Blavatsky is full of shit, and she knows it.

Her letters from the Tibetan Mahatmas are forgeries; her vaunted psychic abilities are mere conjuring tricks. In 1884, one of her housekeepers deposited a dossier of incriminating letters proving Blavatsky's perfidy with Rev. Patterson, the Principal of Madras Christian College. Patterson brought in Richard Hodgson of the Society for Psychical Research, who conducted a thorough investigation. The SPR's journal carried Hodgson's full report, which concludes that Blavatsky is a fraud and Olcott is naught but a gullible fool.

Despite its damning nature, however, the report changed nothing. Madame Helena Blavatsky is undamaged by the revelations, which preach only to the converted. Those who doubt her abilities find vindication, but those who believe in her abilities pay it no heed, especially when they finally have a chance to meet Madame Blavatsky in person. When talking to her, any but the most skeptical find themselves believing what she says not through any supernatural power, but simply because she is a massively charismatic woman.

Alfred Casaubon

Albert Casaubon's life changed one night in January 1884. He dined with friends; discussion of the work of Madame Blavatsky was fodder for the evening's conversation. They had arranged to attend a séance, where one of their number hoped to contact his father, who had died while on business in eastern Prussia. Though his father's ghost did present itself, sadly the spirit could offer no concrete knowledge of the circumstances of his death, and the group left downhearted.

Returning to his rooms in Montmartre, Alfred decided upon a measure of absinthe to steady his nerves after an encounter with the otherworldly. Before he could raise the glass to his lips, however, something overtook him. It was almost like a waking dream, trapped in a body he did not control. He watched, helpless, as his arm threw the full glass across the room, where it shattered against the wall. He walked to the Place Pigalle and, in a gruff voice that Albert could only barely identify as his own, he arranged to spend time with a prostitute. With the last of his money spent, Albert Casaubon was but a passenger as his body had sex with a woman for the first time. The bizarre and horrifying experience ended at the moment of climax. He fled back to his rooms, barely remembering to collect his clothes.

Remembering what he had heard of Madame Blavatsky, Albert went to a meeting of the Theosophical Society. Much of what they said made sense, and he was not the only one present to have had such an experience. That night he became a member of the Society. A month later, he had processed what happened, and started to write a book about his experiences.

Le Passager Provacateur presents Albert's experiences through a Theosophical lens — as possession by a spirit traveling forward in time from Lemuria, desperate to engage in the pleasures of the flesh. While not a bestseller, it has earned him some manner of fame and money. He has since travelled to Vienna, Berlin, Munich, and London, speaking at meetings and talking to people who have experienced similar possessions.

Recently, Albert has wondered if he might precipitate another spirit to take control of his body. He's attended séances and started taking laudanum in order to open his mind and soul to the spirit world. That it will also help him remain dispassionate during the event is a nice side effect. He hasn't yet received another push from the spirits and has approached a number of other psychics and mesmerists for assistance. So far, none of them have been able to help.

The Society for Psychical Research

Founded in 1882, the Society for Psychical Research is an organization dedicated to understanding events and abilities commonly described as psychic or paranormal by promoting and supporting research into such areas, and to examine allegedly paranormal phenomena in a scientific and unbiased way. As such, the Society interviews, tests, and examines individuals who claim psychic or spiritual abilities. Some in



the Society are inherently critical, looking for evidence that a subject is faking his claims to power. Others accept the spiritualists' claims at face value, and design experiments to discover the mechanism behind their abilities. Most members of the SPR work somewhere in the middle of the two extremes, though the British and American arms of the Society are slowly differing in focus.

The SPR and the Theosophical Society have locked horns before, when Richard Hodgson's 1884 investigation of Madame Blavatsky concludes that her claims of psychic power are entirely fraudulent, and her theosophical letters are simple forgeries. While the Society stands behind Hodgson's work (and will for over 100 years), their publication doesn't have much impact. The scholars and researchers among the SPR accept the report, but few others pay any heed — and of those that do, fewer still have their minds changed. To the Theosophists it's an attack on their group by individuals who do not understand their beliefs, to investigators and journalists it only fuels the desire to talk with Madame Blavatsky and present her side of the story. The SPR may have proof, but they do not have the power to convince people.

Most members of the Society do not join because they want to debunk psychic phenomena. They are caught up in the spirit of scientific enquiry that pervades the time and, as scientists, they want to determine the parameters of any given phenomenon, that they may better understand it. The Society for Psychical Research boasts a significant number of spiritualists among its number, including William Stainton Moses and Arthur Conan Doyle (who will join the society in 1887). Friction between spiritualist members and those with a more limited set of beliefs — and the handful of out-and-out skeptics — has led to bad blood, with some feeling that the SPR has no desire to accept and understand their abilities. Stainton Moses will go on to lead an exodus of several spiritualist members from the SPR when these tensions become too strong to bear.

Despite internal rivalries, many psychics and mediums find the Society's desire to understand helps them. Those few who have their abilities tested in front of SPR investigators find the Society is more than happy to help them identify their limits and the means by which their abilities work. Others with gifts join the Society but refuse to be tested, fearing that the interference of minds obsessed with questions would disrupt the sensitive nature of their communion with the other side.

Richard Hodgson

Born in Australia, Richard Hodgson moved to the United Kingdom in 1880 and joined the Society for Psychical Research in 1882. He was one of the Society's most active investigators, exposing a number of spiritual mediums as frauds. He is not, strictly speaking, a skeptic; Hodgson believes in mental mediumship, the ability of some people to see and hear the dead. He is, however, certain that spiritual mediumship — outright possession by spirits or ghosts — is impossible.

SPR Status

The Society for Psychical Research exists into the modern day as a parapsychological research group, trying to study and understand paranormal phenomena. During the period of spiritualist revival, it is on the cutting edge of research into psychical phenomena, collating and publishing information from investigators, scientists, researchers, and philosophers on the nature of the unknown. Some of its methods encourage the monster hunters of today, though Null Mysteriis is not formally affiliated with the SPR.

- You have attended meetings of the Society, and members have noticed your work — whether that is investigation, theory, or experimentation. You have a free specialty in Psychical Phenomena, which you may apply to one of Academics, Investigation, Occult, or Science.
- ●●● You are aware of the work of your fellow members and keep up with their publications and experiments. This has given you a stronger understanding of just what is possible, as far as you can make out. You have the Eye for the Strange Merit, even if you don't meet the prerequisites.
- ●●●●● Between research and your own time in the field observing psychical phenomena, you are able to detect similarities between cases of supernatural phenomena, whether you are reading between the lines or actually present. You have a version of the Encyclopedic Knowledge Merit that applies to psychical phenomena.

Along with S. J. Davey, Hodgson has pioneered the "fake séance" method of public education, holding what appears to be a séance but later demonstrating to the sitters exactly how the pair had deceived them. Between them, the pair have outed all manner of high-profile psychics as frauds, though their means of doing so have alienated many in the SPR. Richard's attitude towards spiritualists has hardened over time, going from strident to outright zealous, and he's not about to let a little thing like "evidence" change his mind. He has so far only had to manufacture evidence of a medium's fakery twice, and in doing so he has managed to convince Davey — and, through him, many of the Society. Many others, however, believe he is on a crusade against anything unusual in the world; an attitude in the British arm of the Society that will drive Hodgson to cross the Atlantic in 1887.

That he has condemned people with real paranormal powers never crosses Richard's mind — he is entirely certain that

every single person he has debunked is a fake, but sometimes he just can't prove it yet. Though he doesn't yet realize it, some powerful people are well aware of his hypocrisy. Soon, he will have the chance to investigate Mistress Agnieszka, a meeting of minds that will force both of them to reevaluate where they stand.

Emmeline Kingston

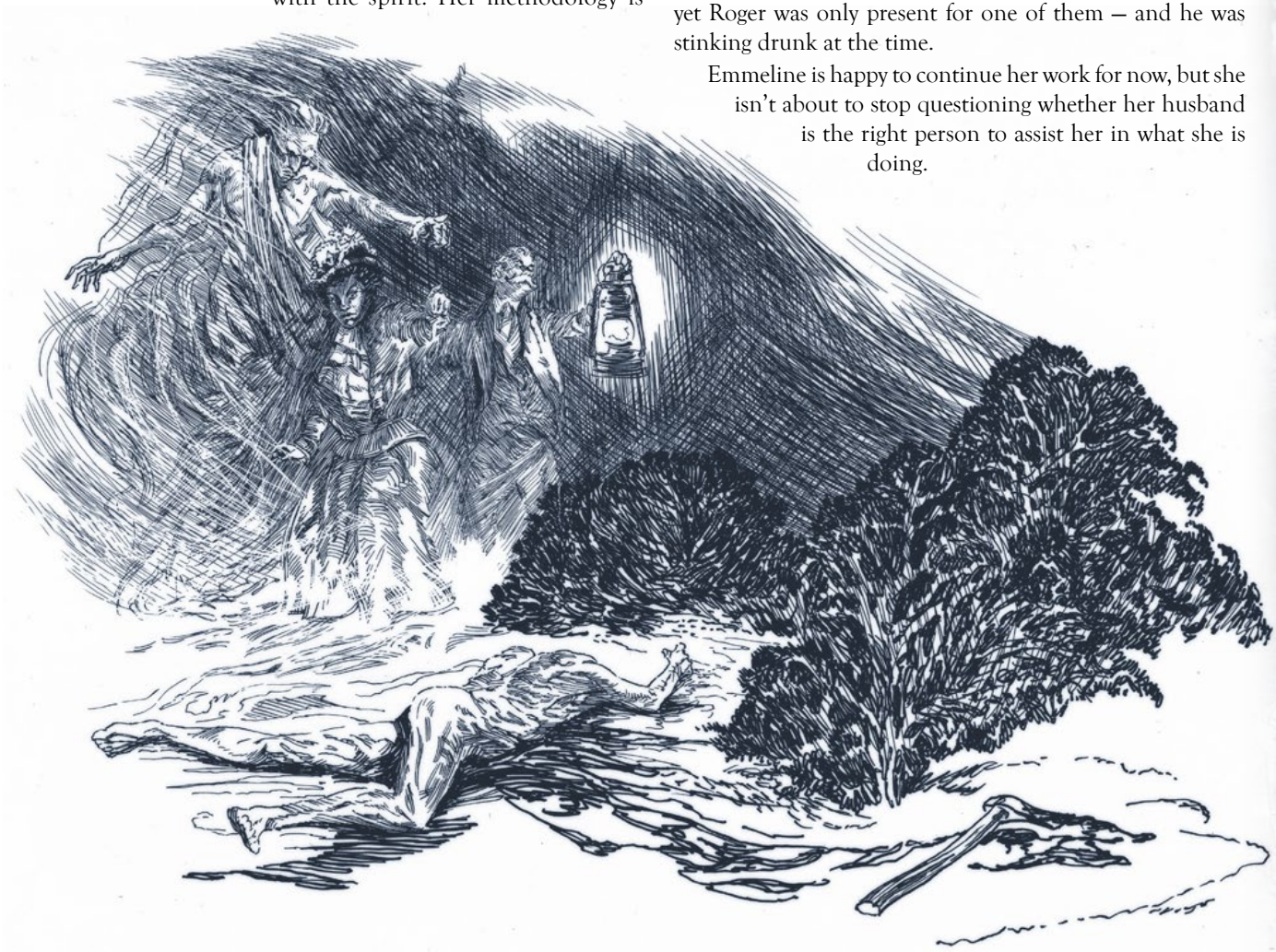
In 1871, Henry Sidgewick founded Newnham College, Cambridge. Eleven years later, he was one of the original members of the Society for Psychical Research. His wife Eleanor was herself a graduate of Newnham, and she was far from the only student at the college to take an interest in the paranormal and join the SPR.

Emmeline Kingston attended Newnham, where she became friends with Eleanor Sidgewick. That friendship lead to her joining the SPR in 1882. Her husband, Roger, is also a member of the society, but he doesn't play as active a part in affairs as she does. A philosopher by education, she is particularly interested in apparitions and hauntings. As such, she has spent much time identifying haunted locations, approaching the people who live and work nearby to gather their understanding of the phenomenon, and then making a planned, documented attempt to make contact with the spirit. Her methodology is scientific in the extreme. She keeps meticulous notes of all of her encounters, both successes and failures, and records her conversations and interviews with those who know of the ghost — and those who have actually experienced its presence — in exacting detail. On her last excursion, she asked Roger to keep his own notes, wondering whether having two perspectives would help fight off any flaws in her own recollection.

Though she has doubts as to the abilities of mediums and séances to contact the dead, she is nonetheless absolutely certain both that ghosts exist, and that something ties them to locations or to people. She has published a number of theories over the past year, but each time another member of the SPR has found some point of evidence that sets her back — though in turn she soon finds a new, broader theory that accommodates the evidence she has to hand.

Perhaps the biggest setback in her investigations is her husband. Roger accompanies her when she goes to assess a new haunted location, both because it would be improper for a married woman to be alone in a strange place and because he fears that something might happen to her. He, however, is not as invested in the work of the SPR. While he claims to want to find evidence of ghosts, he hasn't the drive or the passion for the work, and more than once Emmeline has wondered if he isn't holding her back. She has so far encountered seven apparitions when in haunted locations, yet Roger was only present for one of them — and he was stinking drunk at the time.

Emmeline is happy to continue her work for now, but she isn't about to stop questioning whether her husband is the right person to assist her in what she is doing.





Pulling Back the Veil

Spiritualism's rise affects much of Europe and North America, bringing thoughts of the supernatural to the forefront of everyone's minds. While the activities of new philosophies and research societies make the study of paranormal powers common talk in the coffeehouses and salons of Europe, the working classes turn to mediums and ghost-talkers of their own, desperate to connect with the worlds beyond, if only for a moment. Most people at least know someone who has visited with a psychic or taken part in a séance; though many are skeptical of the claims of psychics and frauds alike, the experiments they devise and the results they publish serve to keep the supernatural in the public consciousness.

This widespread acknowledgement that the world has something more, that something new lurks just beyond common understanding, has echoes throughout the setting of Chronicles of Darkness, affecting far more than just the psychics who ply their trade or try to make a name for themselves. It affects the parts of the world where real monsters lurk. For the longest time, people have shied away from the creatures in the shadows, but now they turn towards them without fear — and some shine a light directly into that darkness, hoping to illuminate it permanently.

While the increased scrutiny makes things problematic for supernatural creatures, it has a far greater effect on the world itself. The belief or otherwise of the population cannot change the world, but it can make people take new actions — even though those people may not know the gravity of what they do.

The walls between worlds do not come crashing down, but the Gauntlet grows thinner as people accept the presence of things incorporeal. Their actions create a vast wellspring of power that tempts even the most staid spirit to the world of flesh, eager to feast. The reverence with which people treat the dead and their new focus on those who have passed beyond makes shadows in graveyards grow darker, and opens Avernian Gates as the Underworld grows closer. Rumor, superstition, and fact blend together. Everyone knows that the Lady in Gray haunts the house on the hill. They do not believe in ghosts because they do not need to. They know what happens when someone sees the Lady — many because they have witnessed the results firsthand. People discover (or reconstruct) ways to make a door into more than a door, opening a thorny road into a world beyond. Some use the roads as a shortcut, following ley-lines and faerie paths to cover miles in minutes. Others take the roads and never return — or come back changed in strange ways.

The world has always been a strange place, but only in this age do otherwise normal, sane residents of the world truly accept that things are more than they seem. Scientists and philosophers both try to determine how the paranormal world works, while even the most ardent skeptic helps reinforce people's belief that *something* is out there — if not, why attempt to disprove it?

Mechanics

- Characters from a given area who want to find a faerie path between two specific places can try to remember a story involving that path with a successful Intelligence + Occult roll, with a penalty between -2 and -5 depending on the obscurity of the path. A dramatic failure instead uncovers a path to Arcadia.
- Normal humans who know the key to a gateway into the Hedge can recognize the entrance with a reflexive Wits + Occult roll.
- It's very easy for human visitors to the Hedge to get lost, or to end up in Faerie without meaning to. Every time a human character takes a Trod, roll Resolve + Composure in order to avoid heading into the thorns; a long-distance journey inflicts a -3 penalty.

The Hedge

The fae have an interesting interaction with spiritualism's rise. Creatures of emotion and story, the sense of excitement, wonder, and credulity draws faerie attention like a candle draws moths. And yet, the world does not have many public records of encounters with fae creatures, though the superstitions and tales of such beings inform the folklore of the age.

While the fae themselves do not have much interaction with the age of spiritualism, the Hedge does. Myth and legend paint the paths through the Thorns as everything from ley-lines to the corridors of the ascended masters' palaces; those who have the knowledge can step between worlds, making impossible journeys during which a traveler sees things that she cannot fully explain.

Whether through more people remembering local folklore or because of the capricious nature of Arcadia, keys to gateways into the Hedge work their way into common knowledge, though few are foolish enough to try. Those who do attempt the journey find they can cross great distances, and some even speak of finding impossible places at the end of the journey. One found herself standing in a wood with trees growing between pools of water. Only by stepping into one of the pools could she return to the path she had first taken. These tales are obvious nonsense, but they have spurred some esotericists to try to discover the truth.

The Shadow

While some in the supernatural world would rather the weakening of the Gauntlet had a specific cause or mechanism, the truth is far simpler: so much thought and emotion directed to the study and acceptance of the supernatural wore away at the barrier between worlds all by itself.

This was not an easy feat. It took the belief of millions of people — at the time, over a fifth of the world's population — to

Mechanics

- Almost everywhere has the Resonant Condition relating to the nature of the area. Every graveyard has Resonant — Death, every forest has Resonant — Trees, and so on.
- Just as spirits can cross between worlds at a locus, so can humans. Those trying to cross roll Intelligence + Occult to perform an appropriate ritual. Characters blundering around near a locus may cross into the Shadow as the result of a dramatic failure.
- A spirit can use any Resonant Condition that is "close enough" to its related Influences. A spirit with influence over Dogs can use areas that are Resonant — Animals, but not those that are Resonant — Cats. Using one of these related Conditions suffers a two-die penalty.
- Spirits gorging on an area's Essence add three dice to their pool.

weaken the Gauntlet, and even then it only thinned in the places where people suddenly moved from ignoring to embracing the supernatural. The sudden wellspring of Essence, resonant with discovery and experimentation and acceptance, counteracted humans' natural reinforcement of the Gauntlet. The same effect that can bring the Shadow closer in an abandoned graveyard at midnight instead happened on a far wider scale. The effect remained local, however. In places that had not seen the sudden upswing in supernatural curiosity, the barrier between worlds remained as it was. It is the zeitgeist in Western Europe and North America that pares back the Gauntlet in those places.

Beyond the barrier growing fainter, the upswing in belief causes other effects. The Shadow grows resonant with all manner of energies — where before an area had to be particularly associated with a concept, almost everywhere affected by the rise of spiritualism positively glows with resonance appropriate to the location. Areas that would normally have a strong resonance become glowing beacons, drawing spirits from around the Shadow to their power, gorging on the available Essence.

Spirits are not the only creatures with an interest in the lowered Gauntlet. Some occultists and spiritualists try to make contact with the other side — and succeed. At places where the Gauntlet is already thin, almost any deliberate esoteric activity (such as a séance, tarot reading, etc.) can set up a feedback loop of resonance, drawing the participants across the Gauntlet. Some find their way across unintentionally, blundering through into the Shadow without meaning. Such a lost soul is trapped, not knowing how he got into the world of spirit nor how he can escape, if he's lucky. Far more often, he wanders the spiritual reflection of the world until he dies at the claws and teeth of spirits.

The Underworld

Ghosts and the dead hold a special fascination for spiritualists — while the spirits of Chronicles of Darkness may look like humanity's Atlantean or Lemurian forebears, ghosts make sense on a visceral level. Sometimes, the dead do not rest easy. People find ghosts both terrifying and strangely intuitive, especially after a number of prominent mediums made contact with people who had passed beyond the veil of death. Séances and planchettes bring messages from the other side, and the ghosts that take residence in abandoned houses are a fact of life — one that locals keep well to mind in the hopes of avoiding the grisly fate of those who show too much curiosity.

That people are finally willing to talk about ghosts and the dead openly is trigger enough for the dead to have greater impact on the world of the living. One does not need to be a medium to see one of the departed, nor does a ghost have to expend a great deal of effort to slam a door, fling a knife, or push a man under the wheels of a speeding locomotive. That's not to say that the dead interfere in the world at a whim; a ghost finds affecting the world from Twilight much easier when someone or something close to her is nearby — a family member, or the house in which she slowly starved to death. Though many have some kind of goal, the vast majority of the dead cannot parlay with the living without a medium to act as their voice; without a sensitive's presence, most ghosts try to get their message across in simple, violent terms.

Nor is the world of the living solely the preserve of those ghosts who have some unfinished business left to resolve. In the dark places where death is near, the Avernian Gates between this world and the Underworld open, allowing those long dead to return to the world. Some choose to escape the depths for mischief, while others have darker aims. Many of these ghosts have more autonomy than the dead normally left in Twilight, and realize that they can use mediums and spirit-talkers to their own ends — or they can resolve the

Mechanics

- Areas and people connected to a given ghost's life count as having the Open Condition for the purposes of ghost Manifestations.
- Ghosts in the Underworld may open existing Avernian Gates to re-enter the living world. Doing so costs 1 Essence.
- All ghosts gain the Image and Fetter Manifestations if they did not already possess them.
- Ghosts who Fetter themselves to places or objects can use their Influences and Numina on anyone in the area.



Supernatural Creatures

The sudden light of human scrutiny turned on the shadows of the world forces the monsters that lurk among humanity to redouble their efforts to hide their natures. Each finds its own challenges in this time.

Vampires find that their powers of mesmerism and mentalism are what many people consider as "psychic" abilities by the standards of the time. As such, they can earn fame and fortune as any medium or mystic can during this time. Some are part of the salons and discussions at the highest levels of society, casting suspicion on their foes and shielding themselves from investigation. It's a time of great risks and great paranoia for the Kindred, though some parlay it to temporal power.

Those **werewolves** who try to live up to the legacy of *Urfarah* have their work cut out for them. With the mass belief creating new wellsprings of Essence and drawing spirits to the world of flesh, they are hunters with what looks like an impossible task in front of them. Some relish hunting in such a target-rich environment, but even the proudest hunter has limits. The Pure, by contrast, want to do all that they can to encourage spirits into the flesh. This is the time that shows the Firstborn's folly; without Father Wolf, a handful of whelps cannot hope to walk the borders.

Mages use the human world's credulity towards the supernatural to find recruits for mystery cults. Some Libertines joined the Theosophical Society in the hopes of wresting control of it for their own ends, but the society is too large — and too public — for the mystics to seize control. Many more found (or "rediscover") mystery groups of their own, which prove popular among the middle and upper classes as a way of making personal and business connections. Acceptance breeds complacency, however, and humanity's understanding of the supernatural in turn corrupts vestiges of the Supernal, creating a new form of the Lie around what were once Supernal truths, pushing the answers further away even as it brings the means to uncover truths closer.

Prometheans must face both sides of this era's zeitgeist. Inquisitive minds are no friends to creatures desperate to remain hidden among humanity, and more than one has fallen victim to a mob caused by human investigators rather than Disquiet. At the same time, the spirit of scientific enquiry and the prevalence of electricity in humanity's experiments into the supernatural call to the Divine Fire. The experiments do not affect a given Created's personal alchemy, but a surprising number of Demiurges operate during this time period.

Sin-Eaters find themselves in a dilemma. With so many people accepting the existence of ghosts — not just believing in them, but having seen the dead with their own eyes — the Bound can operate openly. Some claim to be exorcists or priests, while others do not lie about their nature. They are the ones who can terminate a troublesome ghost, and more than one Sin-Eater becomes famous as a skeptic, proving that ghosts do not exist by banishing the dead herself.

unfinished business of ghosts who have long since crossed one of the rivers of the dead.

Though the Avernian Gateways allow the long dead to return to the lands of the living, they still resist allowing the living through to the caverns of the Underworld. The gates may be open, but most humans do not know what they are, or where to find them.

Modern Spiritualists

There are a great number of people who are heavily, and peripherally, involved with the Spiritualist Movement. It has grown beyond just those who are real mediums and those who are frauds. A world in Twilight is perilously close to darkness.

Ethel Johnston

Ethel was born three weeks after the Civil War ended, and the practice of slavery was outlawed throughout the United States. Ostensibly she was born a free citizen to recently freed slaves, but the reality was that she grew up during the reconstruction era in southern Louisiana. Her family stayed in the South and did their best to avoid the angry mobs of people. They had very little to their name, but her mother, father, and two older brothers were happy together.

Tragedy struck on her 16th birthday. Ethel was checking her trap line in the woods and had a vision of a gruesome death before blacking out. When she woke up, she was next to the cut up body of one of the local town boys, Cecil. She ran away and kept her secret until she met Gustav Kirk a few months later. Gustav was a member of the SPR who had come down to investigate Cecil's murder. Ethel signed up to try to help him without exposing the fact that she had woken up next to Cecil's body; while she suspected he knew she was connected to the crime, he let her secret stay with her.

Ethel maintained her relationship with Gustav after she returned to Louisiana. During that time, Ethel learned as much as she could about the SPR. She picked up some tricks

from Gustav and learned about hunting and tracking from whoever would teach her in the area. As soon as she could join, Ethel became a hunter for the SPR.

As a hunter, it is Ethel's job to investigate strange phenomena and bring specimens back to the office. She is never given the best equipment or trusted with anything that the society deems necessary despite the fact that she performs admirably during her time. She cares, but not enough to say anything. Her main goal is to find the spirit that took over her mind and made her kill that boy from the town. She wants revenge, not for the death, but for the loss of her autonomy.



Storytelling Hints:

Ethel is a quiet sort. She doesn't bother talking much because she knows that what she says will be dismissed, so she doesn't waste her breath. She moves around a lot, sent on missions by the SPR to various parts of the North. When she does speak, it's with a quiet authority that doesn't wait to see if anyone has listened or if anyone will follow her. She's a bit ruthless and won't let anything stand in her way.

Francoïs Laderoute

A collection of scientists called *L'immortalite* was obsessed with spiritualism and the potential for everlasting life. Francois Laderoute was a member of this organization. They would meet, discuss their findings, and drink wine while overlooking the Seine. Laderoute did all of that, but he never really shared much of what he was doing and didn't really drink all that much wine. He was a young man who was certain that he was going to be the one who discovered immortality.

Francois became interested in spirits and immortality as soon as he heard people talk about the spiritualist movement that was going on in Canada and the United States. He felt that a young man should never be afraid or unwilling to understand that death is always on the horizon and that preparation is key. His family's wealth kept him at his leisure during the day, reading through journals and traveling across Europe to talk to spiritual scientists. In the evening, he would exhume corpses and try to see why they had died, as well as try to study ways that would prevent it from happening in the first place. He read *Frankenstein*; he didn't want to create life, just extend it to eternity.

After a few years of studying corpses, he decided that he needed fresher subjects to work on. He found sickly people willing to die in exchange for money for their family. He brought them to his lab and examined them in their final moments which, in his impatience, he hurried along with a few chemicals, to see if there were ways to allow the spirit to return to full power. When money was tight, he wouldn't ask, just kidnapping the people he wanted for his experiment. His findings were that the illness inside an individual was fighting with that person's essence and losing that fight. If he could find a way to rejuvenate the essence of an individual, they could live forever.

His only problem was that no mediums he approached to work with would even allow him entry into their home. He was refused time and time again. Francois finally pieced together that the spirits didn't want any mediums to work with him. Then, his youngest brother Julien said that he heard whispers right before he went to bed and right when he woke up. They told Julien that Francois was a horrible person and to stay away, but that couldn't be right.

Storytelling Hint:

Francois has that old European money feel to him. He came by his wealth by the nature of his birth, and he feels



The Grand Order of the Immaculate Three

The Grand Order of the Immaculate Three started in 1870 when Reginald Wright, a local beer baron, went to a séance held by Rachel Delvecchio, a local medium. He was told that his brewery would be the foundation of the future, but he had to gather others to his banner and they would support the three. Reginald, feeling rather pleased with his newfound status, began to gather folks who had similar experiences and mediums who felt drawn to their cause. In the intervening 15 years, the Grand Order hasn't spread across the nation, but it has gained a foothold in several parts of the Northeast. The Grand Order can be found in Boston, Bangor, and Hartford. There are a couple of smaller chapters between them, as well as one branch all the way up in Moncton, New Brunswick in Canada.

Their goal is to connect with others who have heard about the Immaculate Three. They want to talk about how they feel about spiritualism, and attend séances provided by their members. It's a social organization as much as it is a group with intention.

Members: Beer Barons, Newspaper Journalists, Mediums, Spiritualists, Barristers, Solicitors, Industrialists

Initiation Benefits

- The Multitudes. Can attend meetings but are not allowed to speak. They can have access to any medium who wishes to provide a séance at the monthly meeting. They gain Contacts 1 (Grand Order of the Immaculate Three).
- •• The Hand of the Three. Members may not speak at meetings unless specifically addressed. Members get Allies 1 (Grand Order of the Immaculate Three). They can make it to the next level if they request it and are voted upwards without any dissenting votes.
- ••• The Voice of the Three. At this point, members are allowed to speak and are required to take part in all discussions about spiritualism and the state of the American Republic. They gain the Occult specialty (Spiritualism)
- •••• The Tears of the Two. Currently all the highest-ranking members of the Grand Order of the Immaculate Three are part of this rank. Members take on leadership roles and promote the Grand Order to other interested parties. You lead the discussions about spiritualism and are expected to provide one article once a year for the print magazine. You gain two dots of Resources and Allies (The Grand Order of the Immaculate Three). No one is certain why everyone is at this level, and no one discusses how to make it to the next level.
- ••••• The Eyes of the One. If Rachel finds something special in you, then you can rise to this level. When you are part of The Eyes of the One, you can become the Harbinger of the Three. Rachel is able to channel spirits through you, leaving you unaware of what has happened but with a euphoric feeling of contentedness and elation afterward. You gain the Condition Open (Rachel Delvecchio). You also gain another dot of Resources and another dot of Allies.

entitled to it because that's the way things have always been. He's very *laissez faire* about things he doesn't care about, and the only thing he cares about is his work. Even then he'll only speak in generalities; he wants to be the one to discover immortality and doesn't look kindly on people who push him for particulars. If pushed, his charm evaporates and he'll be abrupt and rude. As an enemy, he will do what he can to discover how much people know before he gets rid of them.

Rachel Delvecchio

Rachel Delvecchio was the daughter of Italian immigrants who came over to America when she was three years old. She grew up in the Albany, New York area, picked on and despised by most of the people in her neighborhood for being a hated Italian. When she was seven, after a beating in the park, Rachel promised everyone that she would make them sorry for what they'd done to her. She never told her parents about what happened, even though her family asked.

In her early twenties, when spiritualism was growing around Albany, Rachel pretended that she was a medium. She pulled a good enough con that she convinced a number of people that she was really talking with spirits. Rachel used this newfound reputation to make her tormenters' lives miserable. When people who had tormented Rachel came to her parlor for séances, she tried to ruin their lives. She told about secret affairs and disclosed things that she had uncovered, or confirmed what was whispered about in town gossip. She ruined the relationships and the reputations of those that had hurt her.

Years passed and she met a man with dark hair and green eyes who introduced himself as Millar. He told Rachel he needed her

to find someone for him. She tried to do her standard séance performance, but the man stopped her and said that he knew that she had the right thirst for vengeance: the kind of desire to return tenfold the harm that people had done her. He needed her help because his hurt was larger and needed the appropriate revenge. In return, he would grant her all the power she wanted. She agreed and helped to create The Grand Order of the Immaculate Three.

Storyteller Hints:

Rachel's goal is to not be seen unless necessary. She will go out of her way to fade into the background, despite being the medium for the Grand Order. She pretends to know nothing about what's going on and feigns ignorance on mostly any subject. She wears staid clothing and dark colors, never speaking above a quiet murmur. If pressed, she shuts down and pretends to be upset. When she's in private, she talks with her friend Millar, whom no one else can see because he's a spirit of extraordinary power. She will use whatever power she has or have Millar attack whoever bothers her; the price for this power, however, has yet to be paid.

Inspirations

One of the fortunate things about setting a chronicle in the Victorian era is that we're blessed with a wealth of inspirational sources. Whether you're looking for works written in that period or modern media that references it, you'll be able to find just what you're looking for.

Books

The Turn of the Screw, by Henry James. A ghost story novella, James' tale of a governess in a remote country house and her battle for the souls of her two charges, Miles and Flora, has caught the attention of readers for over a century.

The Woman in White, by Wilkie Collins. Though not technically a ghost story, this book was tremendously popular in the Victorian era and is one of the first mystery novels ever published. Well worth reading for the settings alone.

Tales of Mystery and Imagination, by Edgar Allan Poe. If anyone knew what it was like to be haunted and fascinated with death, it was Poe. While this particular posthumous collection does have some of his ghost story work, including the classic "The Tell-Tale Heart," consider looking beyond it to Poe's other work as well, particularly "Ligeia," "The Fall of the House of Usher," and "The Raven."

The Lifted Veil, by George Eliot. Unlike the rest of Eliot's realistic fiction (including that hefty tome about people and railroads, *Middlemarch*), this novella focuses on psychic abilities and mental instability. Eliot viewed the potential for these powers as contemporary science; her partner, George Henry Lewes, was a philosopher who maintained a keen interest in the power and function of the mind in all its possibilities.

Journal of the Society of Psychical Research, published by the Society of Psychical Research (UK). This journal has been published continuously since 1884 and is peer reviewed. Some issues are available online, or can be obtained through library loans. A fantastic look into what issues were considered at the forefront of the science of the mind during the period.

The Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research, published by the American Society for Psychical Research. Also published continuously since the 1880s. Some issues available online, or via library access.

The Secret Doctrine, by H. R. Blavatsky. Published in 1888, this core work of the Theosophical Society would have been required reading and study for the Society's members. While it was not available in 1885, many of the ideas presented herein would have be discussed by members prior to its publication. Please note that this book is not good, but functions amply as a source of story ideas.

The Alienist, by Caleb Carr. Set in 1896 in New York, this mystery novel investigates a series of murders, including a range of historical figures as the protagonist delves into the mind of a killer in the Victorian era.

Television and Film

Dracula, the short-lived 2014 television series, plays with the intersection of science and the supernatural.

Penny Dreadful, which covers a wide range of Victorian supernatural horror ideas from fiction.

The Woman in Black (dir. James Watkins, 2012). A decidedly creepy ghost story starring Daniel Radcliffe about the ghost of a woman who haunts a foreboding, isolated manor house, and the young bereaved lawyer who gets drawn into the mystery. Well worth watching.

The Innocents (dir. Jack Clayton, 1961). A retelling of The Turn of the Screw starring Deborah Kerr, keeping the ambiguity of the novella intact. The movie reinforces the scariest thing about ghosts: that perhaps it's the viewer that is unhinged rather than a force from beyond the grave.

The Prestige (dir. Christopher Nolan, 2006). A competition between two stage magicians escalates into something else entirely, pushing the boundaries of the possible right off the edge of the stage. Full of questions about weird science and perception and madness, this movie practically wallows in Victorian melodrama.

The Others (dir. Alejandro Amenábar, 2001). Though technically set during WWII, this film's claustrophobic feel and gothic interiors have a timeless feeling that is easily transportable to the wars of the Victorian era, either in the U.S. or the U.K. A fantastically subtle film that deserves more attention than it has received.

Crimson Peak (dir. Guillermo del Toro, 2015). Guillermo del Toro's love letter to all things gothic, this story about tortured Victorian siblings and the New York heiress who gets drawn into their lives is spot on for Second Sight stories. The sets alone are worth seeing, but there is so much more to draw from.

The Awakening (dir. Nick Murphy, 2011). Set in the 1920s following WWI, this movie features a skeptic who debunks ghosts and supernatural con artists plunged into a mystery following a child's death at a boarding school. Set only a bit after the period in question, there is enough lingering Victoriana in the sets and events to easily move the stories back a few decades. Very good, atmospheric work.



"Zhelezo!" The thing that a human family called Pavel Vasilievich turned, stooping against the October rain and pulling his hat further down over his head in a vain attempt to keep it out of his collar. The wind whipped it around him, and he felt it in an intellectual way, remembering to shiver as a man ought.

"Sudba," he said. The figure was momentarily backlit by the light of a car's headlamps, but Zhelezo had recognized the voice.

"Are you still open for business? Or have you gone revolutionary on me, too?"

"I'm not doing it again," Zhelezo said, sighing. "Not right now. There's too much going on to risk poaching. Bad enough there's all these damned reds running around, we don't need the Machine breathing down our necks on top of it."

"I assure you," Sudba said evenly, "this task will be much quicker and less strenuous than you're imagining, if somewhat more distasteful than usual."

"Distasteful?" Zhelezo aped the reaction of surprise more out of habit than anything. "What do you mean?"

"We've developed a leak. You're going to help me plug it."

"Absolutely not," Zhelezo said. "That's your business, Sudba, not mine! I'm a procurer, not an assassin!"

"Calm yourself," she said. "I require a lookout, and nothing more. As you said, the present situation complicates matters. Witnesses are not desirable."

The two stood for a moment, the rain letting up only slightly. "Fine," Zhelezo said. "I'll do it. But you owe me one. Who is the poor bastard, anyway?"

"Perevozchik," she said after a moment's consideration.

"Perevozchik? He's harmless." *And one of my few compatriots in the city*, he thought. "A crackpot, to be sure, but harmless."

"Precisely the image one cultivates when one is not harmless," Sudba said. "He has been passing information to the Opposition in exchange for his continued freedom. The Coordinators have spoken. He's to be removed immediately."

"Well. . .there's no room for appeal then," he said, sighing with resignation.

"No," Sudba said, turning and walking towards the river. Zhelezo had to jog to catch up, and Sudba added, "I know you are fond of him, Zhelezo. I hope that will not compromise your usual reliability."

"No, of course not," he said, frantically trying to think of a way to warn Perevozchik without tipping off Sudba. The last thing he wanted to do was invoke her wrath. "You'll make it quick at least, won't you?"

"Come now, I am nothing if not efficient," Sudba said, not turning to look at him as she led him up across the Liteyny bridge, empty at this dark and miserable hour, the wind on the Neva twice as bad as it had been on the city streets. "You will go ahead," Sudba said, leaning in to be heard. "Perevozchik knows this face. I will follow, and you will lead him out of that miserable bar he frequents."

"You told me I would be nothing more than a lookout," Zhelezo said, scowling.

"You will be," Sudba said. "You are looking out for me."

At least this will give me the chance to warn Perevozchik, Zhelezo thought. *How did they find out about either of us? Who ratted us*

Zhelezo's next step never fell on the wet, hard stone of the bridge, the oils and fluids of his inner systems poured themselves out to intermix with the rain as his body fell away, severed at the neck by a half meter long blade so sharp that light bent into rainbows at its edge. Sudba held his head by the hair as the blade slid back into her arm, skin and clothing alike knitting around it as if it had never been there, and she turned Zhelezo to look into his eyes.

"You — knew?" he hissed, gulping air through his exposed trachea, his voice barely audible but Sudba heard.

"This has nothing to do with your ties to the Opposition, Zhelezo," she said. "That is no longer relevant." She knelt and, one-handed, hefted his body by the leg and hurled it thirty meters into the Neva, where it sank like a stone.

"No — longer?" His systems were beginning to fail, his eyes locked open as the rain spattered into them.

"It is inevitable, comrade. The Machine will fall as surely as the Tsar has. We stand at the brink of a new era, when we shall join with man to create a worker's paradise. Your counterrevolutionary sympathies are what have condemned you, Pavel Vasilievich, not your faith in Him." Sudba dropped his head over the side of the bridge, and the last thing that Zhelezo felt was the cold, wet slap of the river. He thought of the rain.



The Master's Tools (1917)

"When the land belongs to the peasants, and the factories to the workers, and the power to the soviets, then we'll know we have something to fight for, and we'll fight for it!"

—Unnamed soldier from the 548th Division, as reported in *Ten Days That Shook the World*, by John Reed

Starting in 1914, the nations of Europe did their best to tear each other apart. In 1917, they succeeded, and would spend the next 70 years wishing they hadn't. In the face of privation, starvation, and the near-total collapse of the military, the Russian people stood up, virtually as one, and said, "Enough!" A dynasty that had withstood hundreds of years and a state that was born in the wake of the Mongol Empire's invasion of Europe fell overnight. Like World War I, the Russian Revolution of February 1917 was a death knell of the old world. The war that still raged on in the West was born of technological changes that outpaced the ability of humans to understand their potential — the revolution, meanwhile, was the product of philosophy, a criticism of the machinery of state that had dominated the world and now grew stale and inflexible, unable to cope with the challenges of modernity. Nothing like this had ever happened before, and nothing entirely like it has happened since.

Some few saw it coming, of course, latter-day Cassandras whose voices were ignored as they spoke of the lessons of Fredericksburg in the Americas, of the Crimean and Russo-Japanese Wars. The people could trump the kings and queens, the lords and ladies, certainly; but the machine that was war would trump the people.

The Unchained saw the birth of modernity very differently. They had always struggled against the Machine, always knew of the secret workings in the shadows. What they beheld as the world went mad was something they never expected — the Machine moved openly, operated en masse in a way even It never had before, and made seemingly all of Europe into Infrastructure. The concept of the home front was born in this era, as metal-starved Germany melted down church bells to cast artillery shells and women presented men out of uniform in England with white feathers to mark their "cowardice." What the demons of Petrograd (née St. Petersburg, and later renamed Leningrad) saw when the Tsar fell and the workers' councils took power and held it in equal with the provisional government was no less extraordinary, but it divided them. Some saw it as a sign that the people had finally seen through the Machine's blinders, that they could finally throw off its domination, turn out its angels, and make Russia into the first truly free country on Earth. Others saw only another plot by that same Machine, and sought to cling to the devil they knew. For a few brief months, the question hung in the air for the people of Russia, but the Unchained brought out the knives long before the People did.

Theme and Mood

For those in revolutionary Russia, nothing can be certain. Two governments claim to control Petrograd, half a dozen revolutionary socialist parties struggling to create a utopia in the ashes of an empire, and much of the countryside has simply developed local self-rule — parts of Ukraine in particular will cling tenaciously to this in the days to come. The eight months between the revolutions of February and October are a moment of pure possibility, where even the smallest

ON NAMES

Common to Russia and some other Eastern European countries, Slavic naming differs significantly from Western naming practices. All Russians are given tripartite names, consisting of a given name, a patronymic, and a surname or family name; other Slavic cultures use similar but slightly different forms. Given names and surnames are nouns and are therefore grammatically declined in speech, resulting in long, short, diminutive, and affectionate diminutive forms of the same given name, descending in formality (surnames use an entirely different system). Unlike nicknames in English, certain forms are obligatory in certain social contexts due to the grammatical rules of the Russian language.

Patronymics, used in official or polite conversation (or to connote respect) following the given name, are derived from the father's given name, and follow a variety of forms depending on the construction of said same and the gender of the child in question, ranging from -ovich/-ovna to -yevich/-yevna to -ich/ichna and others — and of course, these rules all subtly change along with the individual's language. Surnames are passed down much as usual in the West, though they too are gendered, -ov/-ova, -ski/-skaya, etc. For example, Lenin was born Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, his father Ilya Nikolayevich Ulyanov to Nikolai Vasilievich Ulyanov, and so on; his wife, Nadezhda Konstantinova Krupskaya, was born to Konstanin Ignat'evich Krupski and Elizaveta Vasilyevna Tistrova.

This is a very short treatment of a subject that can and has filled entire books, and while it seems extremely complex to some Westerners, it's second nature for hundreds of millions of people. It is perfectly okay if your character's name doesn't exactly match her background or work grammatically — you're pretending to be a fallen angel pretending to be a human, not giving a linguistics lecture.

of actions rapidly spirals out into unintended and unknowable consequences. Once the Bolsheviks seize power, things shift slightly — uncertainty becomes certainty that the next years will be as terrifying and bloody as the Eastern Front, though which faction will end up on top is anyone's guess. Depending on which faction a demon supports (and it is practically impossible to be neutral and stay alive), this chaos may birth hope, or it may be the loss of that hope. The world will change either way.

Revolution, then, is the theme. It is constructive chaos, the destruction of the old and the stable in the name of things yet to be born. It is counterrevolution, too — the struggle to preserve what has come before, to maintain continuity in the face of a world that does not seem to want it. The ebb and flow, the wax and wane of these twin forces gives rise to change, on a scale like nothing before. Change is in the air in Russia, but what comes of that change cannot be seen in these heady, brilliant, beautiful, and terrifying moments. The eggshell has cracked, the past is forever gone, and the future is here. What will it look like?

To match this dichotomy, the mood is one of anxiety. It is impossible to know what is going to happen next, and nothing is sacred. Between the horrors of the Great War, the chaos on the streets of Petrograd, the Red Terror, and the brutal civil war, an entire country held its breath waiting for the hammer to fall. The demons of Russia were no more fortunate than their human neighbors, with rings and even entire agencies torn apart as the red-hot politics of the era divided loyalties that had, in some cases, lasted centuries. Even as the Petrograd Soviet and the provisional government struggled to make their ad-hoc system work, demons were gutting each other in back alleys, factories, and mansions alike. The God-Machine works in the open now — why shouldn't the Unchained do likewise? Enough skulking in the shadows! Destiny must be seized, by force of arms if (likely) necessary, and damn all those who stand in the way of Hell on Earth!

LEXICON

Anarchism — A school of thought that differs from Marxism, concerning itself less with class divisions and more with personal freedom, both economic and social. Typically regarded as highly dangerous bomb-throwers, and responsible for several high profile assassinations in the decades prior to the Revolution, perhaps most famously of U.S. President William McKinley in 1901.

Bourgeois/Bourgeoisie — In Marxist dialogue, this refers to the ownership class in society or a member thereof: the upper middle class capitalist owners of businesses and factories who exploit workers by paying them less than the value of the products they produce and keeping the profit for themselves.

Kulak — A wealthy class of farmers, traditionally landowners, who would be targeted in the wake of the Revolution because their affluent status effectively made them the rural version of the bourgeoisie to Marxist eyes. The term would later be much abused, and would come to include peasants who would never have been considered kulaks under the Tsar.

Marxism — A theory of political analysis and criticism that revolves around economic class and the concept of exploitation. Marxism regards labor as a commodity that workers are

EVERY YEAR IS GETTING SHORTER

In 1917, Imperial Russia was still using the Julian calendar, as were several other Orthodox Christian countries, while the rest of the world (and we today) use the Gregorian calendar. As the Julian calendar does not adequately compensate for the fact that the Earth takes slightly more than 365 days to orbit the sun, it began to lose time. The Gregorian calendar was created to address this, but not every country adopted it, and by 1917 the Julian calendar was 13 days behind the Gregorian. As a result, the famous Bolshevik coup of October 1917 actually took place in November by the rest of the world's reckoning.

The Bolsheviks adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1918, but many of the important dates in the Revolution transpire before that, so this chapter, as it concerns Russia, uses the Julian calendar for dating. To determine the Gregorian date, simply add 13 days.

forced to sell at less than a fair value to the wealthy owners of infrastructure. Foundation of most mainstream socialist thought.

Proletarian/Proletariat — In Marxist dialogue, the proletariat is the working class, who are forced by capitalist factory and business owners to sell their labor for less than it is worth, thereby perpetuating their poverty and enriching a class that contributes nothing to society.

Soviet — A democratic council, typically but not always consisting of representatives of industrial workers.

Zemstvo – A local council, established by Alexander II in 1864 as part of his program of liberal reform. Later restricted by his son, Alexander III, it would serve as the model for electoral law following the 1905 revolution, and would play a role in the 1917 revolution before being absorbed and shut down by the Bolsheviks.

What Has Come Before

Tsar. The word itself is, ultimately, descended from the Latin word *caesar*, and Ivan III and all his successors, of his house and otherwise, would style themselves the Third Rome, inheritors of the mantle of the Eastern Roman Empire that history largely remembers as the Byzantine

THE TUNGUSKA EVENT

On July 17th, 1908, something reached down from the sky and wiped nearly 2,000 square kilometers in the Podkamennaya Tunguska River basin off the map. The sky throughout Europe and Asia burned for days thereafter, and the detonation produced a shockwave powerful enough that meteorological observatories in Great Britain were able to detect it. The blast has been estimated to be the equivalent of anywhere from three to 30 megatons of TNT — potentially larger than the vast majority of nuclear weapons ever detonated on Earth.

In 1908, the area was sparsely populated, and there were no fatalities apart from reindeer. The first expedition to the area recorded by history took place in 1927. Leonid Kulik, a mineralogist, heard stories from fur traders and the native Evenki people of the area a few years earlier, and convinced the Soviet government to fund an expedition to the area, ostensibly to search for a motherlode of meteoric iron for industrial purposes. What he found when he reached the area overwhelmed him — a landscape of flattened, scorched trees that stretched for kilometers, still ruined even almost two decades later.

Kulik's was not the first expedition to the site, however. The Unchained of Russia could feel the Aetheric pulse that accompanied the brilliant lights in the sky, and more than a few set out to investigate, fearing the God-Machine's hand in events. They found the same devastation that Kulik did, and something Kulik did not — the remnants of Infrastructure, shattered into unrecognizable fragments that were already corroding into nothingness. They also noted the latitude of the impact site — almost exactly the same latitude that Petrograd itself rests on. Had whatever struck Tunguska entered the atmosphere a scant few hours later, it would have obliterated the city and everyone in it.

By the time of the Revolution, the event is common knowledge amongst the demons of Petrograd. By and large, they've come to two conclusions. The first theory holds that something was there, at that very spot by coincidence alone, that the God-Machine felt necessitated the largest deployment of Elimination Infrastructure observed in recorded history.

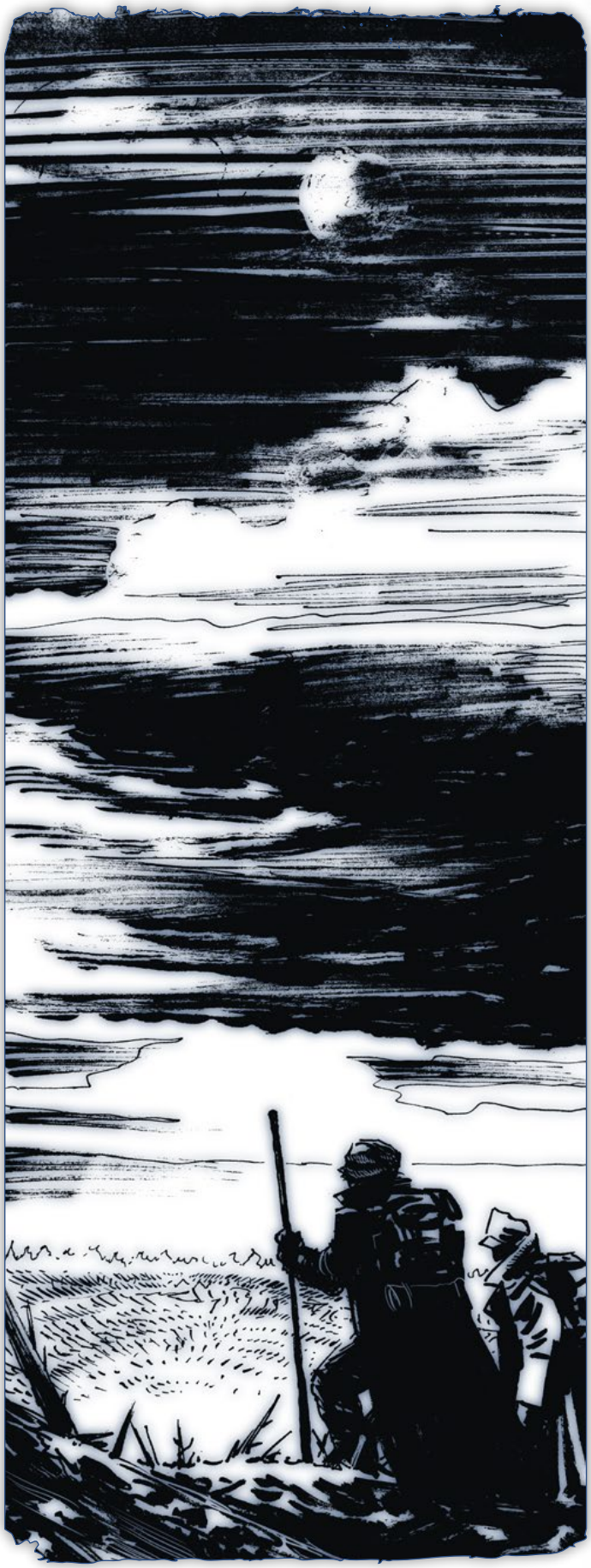
The second theory is that the God-Machine simply missed, and that the Great War was Its backup plan.

Empire. Only the British Empire and the Mongols, whose descendants the Russians overthrew centuries ago, rivaled the Russian Empire in sheer size. Russia alone stopped Napoleon Bonaparte, her mammoth armies and her deadly winter all but wiping out his army. Russia was a titan among giants, a Great Power that had to be reckoned with for all that the rest of Europe considered it despotic and backwards. It is difficult to understate just how dangerous Russia was held to be in the minds of her neighbors and of Western Europe. It can also be quite difficult to grasp how such an empire, still largely agrarian, and technologically outmatched by practically all of its rivals, was the first to fall to a revolution carried out in the name of an urban working class.

Serfdom

Feudalism in Russia lasted far longer than in the rest of Europe, abolished only in 1861 — a mere 56 years before the Revolution. Prior to this time, serfs (distinct from the smaller class of peasantry that effectively functioned as a middle class) could not travel without permission, and were bound to work on behalf of the landowner. After the emancipation of the serfs, they were instead bound to work on behalf of the landowner in order to remunerate their former masters for labor lost in their emancipation — in other words, the state of affairs largely continued on, until Russia's nascent industrialization began to draw young men to cities for seasonal labor in factories. Not being tied to the land, young men could frequently do better for their village — all debts were collectivized — participating in industry rather than farming.

Russia did not adopt industrialization as quickly as Western Europe did, though St. Petersburg was a city seemingly made for progress and innovation, built by Peter the Great to be a bridge between Russia and the Europe which he so admired (particularly France). The Twelve Collegia were centers of learning and modernization, forming the core of what would become the St. Petersburg Imperial University, a cross-continental link with the occult matrices of Europe. With the emancipation of peasants, however, the city's population swelled, as poor migrant laborers clustered around its edges, forming what would become the first true proletariat of Russia. In this environment, the wheels of the God-Machine began to turn openly for the first time, taking advantage of Russia's burgeoning population to fuel its workings in ways never before flaunted so openly. The first real factories in Russia were built here, in Moscow, and especially in Nizhny Novgorod, and with them came the gears and the machinations of the God-Machine, overseen by its angels.





The Russo-Japanese War and the Revolution of 1905

The years from 1904 to 1906 were not easy in Russia, with social problems, ranging from peasant debt to state suspicions of the rising intelligentsia, combining to put never before seen pressures on the apparatus of state. Strikes, once almost unheard of, rose almost exponentially in number, as workers and peasants alike vied not for a larger share of the pie, but merely for safe working conditions and a wage that would not force them into starvation. Predictably, the state responded to strikes with force — just as predictably, this did nothing to calm the fires.

Combined with this unrest at home, Russia's fortunes abroad were on the wane as well. The Crimean War in the 1850s had been an embarrassment for the Russian Empire, but they had made it good in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878. Now, seeking a Pacific warm-water port in Korea, Russia's negotiations with Japan over spheres of influence fell through, and the Japanese went to war over the question in 1904. Nicholas II thought a short, victorious war would ensue, certain that a Great Power could defeat such a newly formed and so recently modernized nation like Japan. Things did not go according to plan — after a surprise attack and a subsequent siege on Port Arthur and the death of Admiral Makarov in the Battle of the Yellow Sea, Russia was forced to redeploy its Baltic Fleet to reinforce their position in Asia, requiring a seven-month journey that ultimately ended in the fleet's near-complete annihilation in the Strait of Tsushima in May of 1905. Only three of 38 Russian vessels survived the engagement to limp home. It was an embarrassing defeat that showcased just how far behind the rest of the world Russia was, and how out of touch the Tsar was, having kept Russia in the war against the advice of his military commanders after the disastrous early showing in 1904. Discontent at home was already brimming over after the Imperial Guard fired on demonstrators outside the Tsar's Palace as they attempted to present a petition to the Tsar in January. Demonstrations, strikes, and even assassinations of high officials followed as the people retaliated for what came to be known as Bloody Sunday, and in the end the Tsar was forced to make concessions to maintain order.

The Revolution of 1905 was ambitious but ultimately failed to change the status quo in a significant way, with two notable exceptions. The Duma, which first convened in 1906, held little real power, and Nicholas II did everything he could to marginalize it. In addition, votes were weighted in such a way that constituencies sympathetic to the monarchy carried far more weight. Russia largely continued as an autocracy, but the Duma's hour would come eventually. The deeper, and far more important, effect of the turbulent years from 1904 to 1906 was the serious damage done to the prestige of the Tsar, and to the very idea of monarchy itself. While liberals were, for a time, pleased with the outcome of the revolution, there were many socialist, communist, and anarchist parties who would gladly have pushed the revolution through to its ultimate goal — the abolition of the monarchy itself. These ambitions, too, would bear fruit in time.

For the Unchained, however, the Revolution of 1905 was a clear sign that the Romanov Dynasty, and perhaps the Empire as a whole, was on the verge of collapse. Accustomed, as all demons are, to understanding complex systems, the bureaucratic gridlock and rudderless leadership combined with the disarray in the underclasses told the tale more clearly than anything could. The uneasy truce between the Agencies of Petrograd, firm since the violence accompanying the emancipation of the serfs, began to break down, here and there, as conflict flared up in quiet turf wars where little blood was spilled but much dirty laundry was aired, compromising Covers and Agency fronts in a highly formalized dance of counting coup. It was not their way to make the streets run red — they were not Insurgents, after all.

The Great War

The first assassin did not throw his bomb, nor did the second. The third did, but the bomb bounced off the archduke's car and detonated underneath the car behind him. The next three failed to act despite the confusion, and the archduke made his escape. The demons of Sarajevo congratulated themselves on having disrupted an occult matrix months in the making — only later did they discover that the Archduke had decided to visit those wounded in the bomb's blast in the hospital. His driver proceeded to get lost, stopping in front of a delicatessen and reversing at the archduke's command. Only then did Gavrilo Princip, standing in that delicatessen, step out to shoot Archduke

The Ruble

Russia's currency had been called the ruble for hundreds of years prior to the Revolution, originally being bits of silver shaved off the end of an ingot. Coins and eventually paper money replaced these bits of silver, and monetary reforms introduced the kopeck, 100 of which made up a ruble. While the Great War drove up inflation, the value of a ruble in 1917 can be roughly pegged at one half of the American dollar at the time, which was about twenty times as valuable as its modern descendent. It only grows less valuable over time, as the Great War drags on and as the Tsarist government collapses. In 1919, the Bolshevik government will begin issuing Soviet rubles, in denominations reaching as high as 100,000 ruble-notes. Inflation is a harsh mistress.

Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie, killing both. Blind luck on the part of a Yugoslav nationalist plunged all of Europe into the most violent, bloody, and destructive conflict ever witnessed to date. Blind luck, or the ambiguous blessing of a higher power.

Russia's part in the war's genesis was as a guarantor of the rights of the Orthodox Christians throughout Europe, a role they claimed from the Byzantine Empire after its ignominious fall at the hands of the Turks, whose descendants still ruled the tottering Ottoman Empire (often called the "sick man of Europe"). In the diplomatic crisis that followed Franz Ferdinand's assassination, the Austro-Hungarian Empire made good on its threat to invade Serbia to weed out the nationalist element, despite Russia's demand that Serbia retain its autonomous status. Austria-Hungary called upon its ally, the still young and vital Germany, to come to its aid, for it stood no hope against Russia alone. Russia in turn called on its allies in France and Britain. The network of secret treaties that had been slowly built in a shadowy dance of diplomacy and intrigue over the last 50 years or more came due, and more than one of the Unchained has wondered in the years since if the God-Machine's hand was not behind this complex network, and if the Great War was not meant as a colossal work of Elimination Infrastructure, made to reduce industrial Europe to ashes now that its purpose (whatever it may be) had been served.

And reduce it to ashes it just might. In 1917, a war that jingoistic nationalists said would end by Christmas 1914 has gone on for three years, with technological means of murder ruling the day as the God-Machine infiltrates further and further into the everyday lives of humanity. The infantry charge, long the backbone of Europe's military strategy, has been utterly defeated by the advent of the machine gun — yet still they march, and charge, and die. No longer a mere 600, into the Valley of Death ride the hundreds of thousands. Artillery has mastered cannon, turning what was once only used for sieges and short-range strikes against massed infantry into a weapon that can strike a thousand men dead like a thunderbolt from the sky, from so far away that the crew serving the weapon must account for the curvature and rotation of the Earth as they zero it in. Casualty rates to date have been an order of magnitude higher than in any war in human history, for now war is not a game of nobles with small, professional armies, but a machine made of entire nations, with human lives as the fuel. The Great War has given birth to the home front — the entire weight of the nation has been thrown into the war effort in each of the combatant states, and victory may, in the end, be told only by which buckles first. No longer a war for objectives, each combatant knows that to fall in this war is to be undone in the most profound of ways.

For Russia, the question is moot. No one yet knows what the future may hold, but Russia cannot return to what it once was.

War Has Changed

When the war began, confidence was brimming on all sides, and armies marched openly as they once had. France took the field in gaudy finery that belonged more to the Napoleonic Era than the modern, while Germany came forth with an innovation — camouflage. Their gray uniforms blended into the landscape, such that it was difficult to distinguish their number or exact position on the battlefield. Fully 80 percent of the German army marched through Belgium on their way to France, hoping to knock them out of the war before turning to face what they expected to be a grueling war with Russia. The plan very nearly worked, but their advance was halted at the First Battle of the Marne. Both sides in the battle, which stretched for a week, suffered 250,000 casualties, and as both realized that open warfare was no longer possible, they dug in, building shallow trenches that became deeper trenches that eventually sprouted barbed wire, bunkers, and defensive emplacements that stretched back for miles behind the actual frontlines, which themselves ran for hundreds of miles across Europe.

The space between those lines became a nightmarish hellscape in short order — No Man's Land, as it came to be called, was a pockmarked mess scoured clean of life, with filthy, poisonous water gathering in craters that held hundreds, even thousands of men in shallow, muddy graves. Entering No Man's Land, going "over the top," was close enough to suicide that it made little difference. The stress of watching one's comrades die — or worse, suffer such grievous injuries that the only kindness was to draw one's sidearm and give them a clean death — took a deep toll, layering scars over scars in the psyche of all those who fought on the frontlines. The endless thundering of artillery shells alone could drive men into catatonia, sending them into "shellshock," what the world would one day euphemistically call "combat fatigue" and then "post-traumatic stress disorder." The war on the Western Front would remain in this state for very nearly the remainder of the conflict, with territory changing sides rarely, and more often than not changing hands again in a counterattack, all of which cost untold lives and materiel.

The Unchained were no less savvy than the Great Powers; male Covers were shed en masse to dodge conscription, and a few lucky Tempters got very rich in the soul trade. A brave few, however, actively sought out service in one or more armies, albeit in a rank or role that was (marginally) safer than the infantry or the cavalry, not for the nationalistic fervor that gripped the humans they lived among but because the Front teemed with Infrastructure. A battle in the south of France took place where every casualty died with the same word on their lips, and over the course of three days of heavy bombardment strange fractal runes were written across No Man's Land in craters and debris. The Home Front, increasingly subordinated to the war effort, slowly began to take on the same character – when Germany melted down 300-year-old church bells for iron, that iron went not to making shells or rifles but into production of a specific kind of O-ring, this production run being embossed with occult sigils.

The Eastern Front was a different matter, remaining more mobile if only because the combatants were so outmatched. Initially, Russia had some success against Austria-Hungary,



taking Galicia, but failed to make ground against Germany. The Russians, with a meager industrial base to draw upon, were unable to properly equip their armies, relying on human wave tactics to swamp German and Austro-Hungarian armies, which ultimately proved ineffective against artillery and machine-gun emplacements. As Russia lost ground, Nicholas II sacked his chief general (also his cousin) and took command of the army himself, leaving Petrograd and traveling to the front — once again, against all advice from his generals. While the Brusilov Offensive of 1916 enjoyed limited success, it bogged down quickly after having cost the Russians nearly a million men, thanks in part to the timely intervention of a morale-sapping Messenger, Oralo ("Plowshare"). As Russia's fortunes in war waned further, the Tsar's prestige at home plummeted, his very image now tied to a war that had claimed millions of lives, left millions more wounded, and plunged the country into want and suffering.

Life During Wartime

Like in the rest of Europe, spirits were high in Russia when the war began. Even if there were domestic problems that desperately needed to be resolved, the one thing that everyone but a few socialist radicals could agree upon was that Russia must never lose its status as a Great Power, and a successful war in Europe would greatly magnify the empire's prestige. Russia mobilized and sent millions of young men to the front, so woefully underequipped that many did not even have their own rifle. Those who returned home were wounded so grievously that they would bear the signs of it forever — those who cracked under the pressure at the front lines were, more often than not, shot for cowardice (a practice common to all the Great Powers at the time). It became clear that, like the Russo-Japanese War, this would be no short victorious war, but a meat grinder into which the nation's youth, its future, would be cast into. And for what? For the promises of the Tsar.

The situation among the Unchained was no less strained — as the government all but fell to pieces around them, the jockeying for position between Temporal Agencies reached a fever pitch, and then the blades came out. It began with Agency enforces targeting one another in surgical strikes, slowly rising in frequency throughout the two and a half years between the outbreak of war and the February Revolution. This quiet war only added to the strain upon the Empire's bureaucracy, making the situation impossible to manage even if the people at the top had been competent to do so. Different districts of Petrograd were, at times, directly governed by the

patsies of one Agency or another, and more than one decision taken by the government during the war was ultimately intended to benefit the Unchained and not the government or society they were fighting over.

As the situation at home grew unstable, Nicholas II grew more remote; the management of the war and his increasing desperation to eke out some kind of victory kept him from appreciating the true depth of the discontent at home. Demonstrations were constant, strikes almost as common. At the front, soldiers would refuse orders, claiming (rightly in many cases) that their officers were incompetent. The Tsarina, Alexandra, left to rule in Petrograd while her husband bungled the direct management of the war, was deeply unpopular, not only because of her German ancestry but because of her continued association with Grigori Rasputin, who had long been a friend of the Russian royal family. The Tsar's son, Alexei, was a hemophiliac — even the tiniest injury could spell death as his blood refused to clot. More than once, the Tsarevich had been at death's door, and more than once Grigori Rasputin had brought him back, earning the strange mystic the unending gratitude of the Tsarina, which brought with it license to behave as he wished. He became notorious for his offensive ways and his uncouth familiarity with virtually every woman he met, including members of the Tsar's family. More than once the Tsar himself grew tired of Rasputin, sending him away, but Alexei's condition always led to Alexandra desperately calling him back. His influence with the family, and thus with all affairs of state in the absolutist monarchy, only grew, and Alexandra valued his input on virtually any question of policy or strategy. This horrified the nobility, but with Rasputin's seeming power over the life and death of the Tsarevich there was little they could do to persuade the royal family. With the Tsar at the front, his influence was greater than ever before. In the end, his licentiousness and rising influence drove a band of Russian nobles to lure him to one of their houses and ply him with poisoned wine — when that didn't kill him, they settled for stabbing and shooting him, then wrapped him in a rug and threw him unceremoniously into the river.

While no Agency ever comes forward to claim Rasputin as one of their own (at least, not with any degree of proof), most of Petrograd's Unchained are certain that the unusual monk was one of their own, exploiting the disarray of the Infrastructure of state for his own ends. More than a few stalk Prince Felix Yusupov, the man who shot Rasputin, for several years, even as he flees Russia following the February Revolution. For all the theories of the Unchained, however, Rasputin could simply be a man who got very lucky and subsequently got very unlucky, or he could be something yet unknown, feeding on the chaos and mismanagement of the Russian state. Whatever the truth, his prediction that his death would foreshadow the Tsar's own destruction would come uncannily true — a mere two months after Rasputin's death in 1916, the Russian government collapsed.

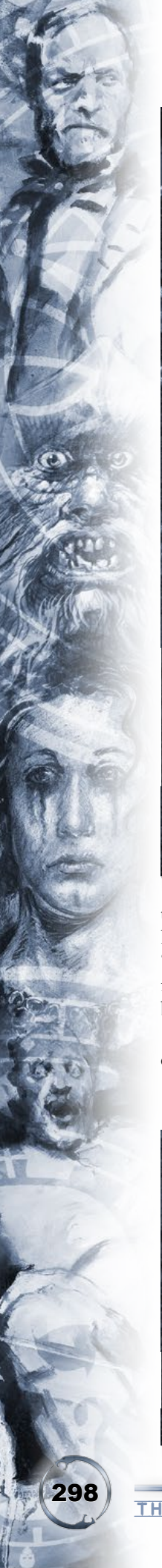
As prices skyrocketed and essentials such as flour become almost completely unavailable in the cities, order collapsed. Police fired on demonstrators, sparking riots. A women's march turned into a radical act of expropriation as they smashed windows and distributed bread to the hungry people of Petrograd. The city ground to a halt, vast crowds accusing Alexandra of treason and demanding the abdication of the Tsar. Cossack soldiers, brought in to quell the riots, joined them instead – here, again, the work of Oralo, only weeks before its Fall. The regular army likewise mutinied, and all semblance of governance vanished. No longer mere discontent and demonstration, the embers of anger had been flared into the flame of revolution. The Duma sequestered the Tsar's family, convened a provisional government and sent a demand to the Tsar: resign. He had little choice, first resigning in favor of his son, Alexei, then in favor of his brother, Michael, who wisely declined to accept such a troubled throne without a mandate from the people. The Romanov Dynasty came to an end on the second of March, 1917.

Eight Months of Revolution

Order of a sort returns quickly following the collapse of the autocratic monarchy. The Duma, previously little more than a debating society, assumes control as the provisional government, promising to hold a Constituent Assembly at a later date to determine Russia's future. Led at first by Prince (not an uncommon title in Russia) Georgy Lvov, the War Minister (and better known to history) Alexander Kerensky replaces him following his resignation in July. The Allied Powers quickly recognize the provisional government, eager to keep Russia in the war lest Germany turn its full force to the West. The provisional government abides by their wishes, eager for legitimacy — ultimately, all that changes at the front is to whom the officers are reporting.

At the same time, a second government forms — the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, commonly referred to simply as the Petrograd Soviet, claims authority on the basis of speaking for the masses, its members having been liberated from prison by soldiers during the first days of the Revolution. As might be expected for a workers' council, all members are socialists, but not all subscribe to the same interpretation of Marx's theories. As a result, much like the provisional government, the Petrograd Soviet is plagued by infighting between Mensheviks and SRs. Though Bolsheviks quickly come to dominate the Moscow Soviet, they have no representation whatsoever in the Petrograd Soviet.

The provisional government and Petrograd Soviet struggle for influence throughout the early Revolution, with the Petrograd Soviet actively undermining the "bourgeois" government at practically every turn and seizing control of much of the infrastructure of society, such as the post office and railroads. Eventually, the Petrograd Soviet begins incorporating deputies from other parts of the country, renaming itself the All-Russian Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies — though the central committee still lacks any representation for peasants. The



THE POLITICS OF REVOLUTION

Multiple socialist parties competed for power and the right to implement their programs during the Russian Revolution, and the sheer number and variety can at times be quite baffling. A far-too-short summary of their ideologies and programs follows:

Bolsheviks and *Mensheviks* (meaning "majority" and "minority," respectively, despite the Bolsheviks being in the minority for much of their pre-Revolutionary existence) both descend from the *Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party*, which split at its Second Congress in 1904. Mensheviks hold to an orthodox view of Marxism, believing that Russia cannot truly transition to communism until it develops a full capitalist economy, at which point the proletariat (working class) will rise up and spontaneously seize authority. The Bolsheviks, for their part, adhere to Lenin's idea of a revolutionary vanguard, and that said vanguard (and especially its leadership cadre) must prevent the Revolution from failing from within. The Bolshevik Party eventually became the Communist Party of the USSR, after all opposition had been wiped out.

The *Socialist Revolutionary Party* (SRs) differed from the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks by not officially following Marxist ideology, especially by considering agricultural peasants laborers. Their program of land socialization (as opposed to nationalization, favored by the Bolsheviks) won them massive support in rural areas. Alexander Kerensky was, at least nominally, a member of this party, though he belonged to a faction, the *Trudoviks*, that had worked within the Tsarist government rather than boycotting it entirely.

The *Left SRs* were a breakaway faction of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, who split largely on the question of Russia remaining in the war. They ally with the Bolsheviks, who also oppose the war, but later turn against them over the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which cedes a tremendous amount of Russian territory to the advancing German army in return for peace. By then, however, Bolshevik control is strong enough that this makes little difference.

The *Constitutional Democratic Party*, largely referred to as the *Kadets*, was a liberal party with a history of service in government, especially local councils (*zemstvo*). Their program favored universal suffrage, the repeal of anti-Jewish laws, and the eight-hour workday, and with the dissolution of monarchist parties in the wake of the revolution, they were one of the only major non-socialist parties in government.

The *Union of October 17th* or *Octoberists* was a center-right party which favored a constitutional monarchy, along the lines of Nicholas II's 1905 October Manifesto. The party membership, much reduced from its height, would join with the White Movement following the collapse of the Provisional Government.

tenuous equilibrium of both bodies, both claiming to be the legitimate government, created a situation that Lenin will call "dual power" (Soviet historiography will later adopt the term formally). Inherently unstable, this division of power ultimately becomes the thin end of the wedge for the Bolsheviks.

When the Tsar is overthrown in February, nothing slows down in the war between the Unchained. The murders in back alleys become less quiet, less subtle, a rising tide of escalation amidst the social upheaval that leaves entire Agencies unable to function. One by one, they collapse or are absorbed, leaving only the Society of the Unbroken Chain (which rebrands itself the Petrograd Soviet of Fallen Angels' Deputies around this time) and the Camellia Group to stare at each other across the Neva River, the former in the north and the latter in the south.

HELL DIVIDED

The Camellia Group — an old Agency even by demonic standards, with close ties to the Imperial University and to the bureaucracy. As a result, the Group is more often than not predisposed to side with the status quo, its shadowy Coordinators growing fat as they skim the cream from the top of society.

The Unchained Soviet — The Petrograd Soviet of Fallen Angels' Deputies adopts the socialist ideology that rapidly grows in popularity in the streets of Petrograd during the War and the Revolution. Like the human Petrograd Soviet, however, those ideologies do not always mesh well, and while the Unchained Soviet can agree that the Camellia Group must go, they can agree on little else. In theory, all members of the Unchained Soviet are equal, but in practice Akusherka, along with a few other charismatic demons, runs the show.

In response to the noise, the local angelic population triples as hunters descend in entire flocks. Even as hope rises in the human population, hope that things can get better and that they are on the verge of a new world, the Unchained die in relative droves, either at the hands of hunter angels or at those of their rebellious brothers and sisters.

Vladimir Illych Lenin returns to Petrograd on April 3rd, having been in exile for some years at this point. Some controversy surrounds his ability to cross the lines between Germany and Russia, and rumors persist that he is acting as a German agent to destabilize Russia in order to knock them out of the war (he is later formally accused of this by the provisional government). Some of the Unchained of Petrograd, likewise, see his sudden appearance as the God-Machine's provenance, and nothing else — the Camellia Group spares no expense to prevent his arrival, but the surging angelic dragnet prevents their agents from accomplishing this critical mission. A few demons, particularly those in the Petrograd Soviet of Fallen Angels' Deputies, are conversely swayed by his rhetoric, which so resembles the Saboteur credo of demolishing the system as it stands. This only deepens the longstanding rift between the two Agencies, and the already-vicious bloodshed between the two that had been mounting for more than a decade springs into overdrive. More hunter angels arrive as Covers are frayed and broken, each side blames the other, and the cycle of violence continues as the two Agencies settle in for the long haul.

Lenin's program is simple enough to boil down to a slogan that will be heard across Petrograd throughout the year — "all power to the soviets!" He advocates for an immediate withdrawal from the war, nationalization of all industry, land, and banks, and the creation of a worker's government — this makes him no shortage of enemies within the Petrograd Soviet, who are already ideologically opposed to Lenin and whom Lenin considers to be little better than the provisional government with whom they share power.

The July Days

For these eight months between the Revolutions and, in places, even for some time thereafter, Russia remains in a state of flux. War still rages in the west, but now officers must contend with soldiers' soviets, who demand fair treatment — when they do not receive it, they desert in droves, seriously hampering an already flagging war effort. In the cities, protests are common, riots only slightly less so. In the countryside, peasants burn the manor homes of landowners and redistribute land equitably, only to have the provisional government step in and "restore order." Some burn the workings of the God-Machine, too – when the provisional government's soldiers arrive in such places, they bring with them unspeakable and alien machinery, and the peasants frequently wish they had left well enough alone.

The Revolution casts a strange pall on day to day life, as the people wait for the next wave of change. That the Constituent Assembly is delayed, delayed, and delayed again does not fill them with confidence. Many openly rail against Kerensky for turning the Revolution from its natural course and cooperating with the propertied classes. Confidence in the Petrograd Soviet is likewise shaken when it allows members to accept cabinet posts in the provisional government in exchange for policy concessions, and this too strengthens the Bolsheviks. They alone at least seem to have some sort of a plan.

The Unchained of Petrograd

Sudba — A Destroyer with Inquisitorial and Saboteur sympathies, Sudba has been a member of the Camellia Group since her Fall during the 1905 Revolution – she enjoyed her work a little too much, and went off mission when she was recalled. In the gradually-heating cold war between the Agencies of Petrograd, she serves as the heavy artillery, called in when quiet measures are no longer desired. Despite being kept at arm's length by her superiors, she is loyal to the Camellia Group, until a chance encounter with Vladimir Illych during the July Days convinces her of the righteousness of the Bolshevik cause.

Uznik — This Inquisitorial Psychopomp lurks within the strange geometries hidden within the Peter and Paul Fortress. From here, it surveys the city of Petrograd, as it has done for decades, as it shall for decades more. It alone understands the secrets of the Fortress it calls home, understands that time is a mutable and confused thing, understands the strange prophecies that prisoners kept here rise and write in their sleep. It collects these, cleans them off the wall when it must, and ushers the sleepwalkers back to bed. For a price, it may see fit to barter them, but it finds no liberation in foreknowledge – only chains.

Akusherka — She Fell when her instructions from the God-Machine left her trapped in recursion, and rather than simply raise the morale of a group of soldiers in Galicia, she drove them into manic fits of berserker rage. She knew this was not the Plan, even if her instructions said otherwise, and subtly altered her efforts – a matter of a decimal point moved one place here and there, but it was enough to make her Fall. She arrives in Petrograd on the eve of Revolution, sees the Romanov Dynasty fall, and falls in with the newly-minted Unchained Soviet. A manager of people by nature, she quickly establishes herself as an apparatchik of exceptional quality and candor (lying doesn't come naturally to her). By July, she finds herself with a seat on the Central Committee – by October, she's practically running the place, though her spartan office competes with Lenin's own for simplicity.

When that anger reaches the boiling point in early July, a spontaneous demonstration of 500,000 workers, soldiers, and anarchists paralyzes Petrograd, and continues despite the Petrograd Soviet formally forbidding the demonstration. The Bolsheviks, unrepresented in the Soviet and emboldened by their recent surge in popularity, decide to get out in front of the demonstration and provide leadership according to their revolutionary vanguard theory. The Provisional Government responds by sending in soldiers to break up the demonstration on the 6th of July, and roughly 700 die in the ensuing riot, which serves to cover a paroxysm of violence among the Unchained — dozens of hunter angels descend on Petrograd, and only a single major Insurgent Agency, the Red Hand Brigade, survives the chaos. Rather than keeping their head down, the Brigade takes this as an opportunity, and begins to openly recruit demons, Stigmatics, and even humans to their cause. Their crusade against the Infrastructure of Petrograd, suborned or otherwise, will last for several months before finally driving the Unchained Soviet and the Camellia Group to commit their final act of cooperation — ensuring the Red Hand Brigade's destruction.

The Mensheviks and SRs in power put the blame for the July Days solely on the Bolsheviks, and in the days immediately following the riots the provisional government seizes their headquarters and official newspaper. An arrest order is put out for the Bolshevik leadership, and while Lenin manages to escape and flee to Finland, Trotsky and many other Bolsheviks do not.

Dual power ends during the July Days, when the provisional government and the Petrograd Soviet effectively become the same organization, and largely lose the goodwill of the people. However, before the people can react, the situation becomes even more complicated.

The Kornilov Affair

Though Russia is largely governed by socialists at this point, there are many who remain loyal to Russia as it was — an empire, with a tsar, that held to tradition and the old order. The forces of counterrevolution were swiftly gaining strength, from the military in the field to urban centers. General Lavr Georgiyevich Kornilov, the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the provisional government's army, dismayed by the chaos in the capital, turns his army on the city in an attempt to dissolve the Petrograd Soviet. Kerensky frees Bolshevik prisoners and allows them to rearm their Red Guard as a last ditch defense against what he perceives to be a coup by Kornilov. No major combat takes place, as Bolshevik influence over transportation infrastructure slows his advance to a crawl. Kornilov surrenders and is arrested.

This is the narrative presented by Kerensky. What is more likely is that Kerensky arranged the entire matter, intentionally or otherwise, through a serious of vague communications with Kornilov in the preceding weeks, and Kornilov had no intention of attempting a coup d'état. This is only one rumor of many whispered in the streets of Petrograd – the Unchained, naturally, blame the Affair on the Camellia Group, natural allies of Kornilov's counterrevolutionary cause.

Whatever the reasons for the Kornilov Affair, as it comes to be known, it almost entirely benefits the Bolsheviks — already growing in popularity due to their refusal to cooperate

The Back Door? Really?

The fall of the Winter Palace is one of the key moments in the Revolution, and has been played out in a dozen different ways. The restaging in 1920 and the film *October* dramatized the events significantly and confused the historical narrative. This is, of course, speaking of the merely mundane events. There are many reasons for such a small turn of events to have such wide-ranging causes.

- There was no back door to the Winter Palace. At least, not before the Revolution. In a small shop a few blocks away from the Palace, in a little bricklayer's shop, an angel who sometimes thinks of itself as Doroga, when it has need of such a name, cleans its trowel of the last bits of mortar, pleased with a job well done.
- Sudba precedes the Red Guard, her aim not to assist them but to liquidate the final two surviving Coordinators of the Camellia Group who are holed up in the Winter Palace, desperately trying to reactivate the damaged Infrastructure they hope will save them. The Red Guard and the Bolsheviks are the beneficiaries of her hunt — not her intention, but she is certainly not displeased.
- The Bolsheviks took the building housing the Ministry of War long before they took the Winter Palace, but the whole time the provisional government was under siege they remained in contact with the outside world through a private telephone line to the attic of the War Ministry, where a young officer was supposedly sending out telegraph signals begging for help. This he certainly did, but his true purpose for being there was to reverse engineer the Infrastructure connecting the two buildings and use it to unlock every door in the building — among them the back door. When the Palace fell, this young officer calmly put on his hat and walked out of the building, shedding his Cover mere moments later, his mission complete.

with the provisional government, their membership swells to hundreds of thousands by the end of the month. Lenin returns to Petrograd in October, safe in the overwhelmingly Bolshevik city, to begin preparing for what will be called the October Revolution.

Red October

In Petrograd, September and October bring rain in sheets that turn the dirt to mud, which flows in the gutters like streams. Food, already scarce, grows scarcer — allowances drop to as low as a quarter pound of bread per day, when there is bread at all. Milk, tobacco, chocolate, and other such luxuries can cost upwards of ten rubles. Strikes are almost constant, with almost a million workers walking off the lines. Tension, already seemingly at the breaking point, only grows tighter. Everyone knows something is going to happen, that the provisional government cannot hold.

On October 10th, the Bolshevik Central Committee votes in favor of armed insurrection against the government. Two weeks later, the coup takes place, with the Petrograd Garrison abandoning the Provisional Government en masse and joining the Red Guard. The coup is almost bloodless — the Bolsheviks quietly take control of many centers of power in the night, and when they storm the Winter Palace they succeed not through force of arms but because someone left the back door unlocked.

Elsewhere, the coup within the Camellia Group has been just as bloody as the October Revolution was not, the Agency consuming itself from the bottom up as the stringers, freelancers, and enforcers, infused with Bolshevist ideals, rise up and gut their superiors in a few cold nights of rage. The survivors – the instigators of the coup – petition to join the Unchained Soviet on the 25th of October, the date to which the human Revolution will be postdated in historiography.

When the Constituent Assembly elections take place in November, it becomes clear that Bolshevik popularity, despite supporting peace and land reform, does not extend far from the urban centers. With the SRs commanding a slim majority in the upcoming Constituent Assembly, Lenin takes increasingly drastic actions to keep his hand on the wheel of the Revolution. Outlying provinces of the empire break away, from Ukraine to Georgia, and by the end of the year Lenin is already beginning to consolidate his power within the government, pushing out the Mensheviks and SRs and forming the Cheka, a secret police intended to root out counterrevolutionaries – hundreds of thousands will die at the Cheka's hands over the next few years, and not a few of them will be demons, either directed by infiltrators (both demonic and angelic) within the Cheka or simply caught up in the wide net cast by the secret police. The Constituent





Assembly is finally called in January. It meets for 13 hours before it is dissolved by the Bolsheviks.

Lenin concludes peace with Germany with the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March of 1918, which cedes a tremendous swath of Russian territory to Germany, from Poland to Lithuania. This frees the Red Army to turn its focus against the brewing counterrevolution in the hinterlands, where disgruntled military commanders raise armies, vowing to put an end to the Revolution and restore the tsar, still under house arrest and guarded at all times by Bolshevik soldiers in Yekaterinburg. As the machinery of the Bolshevik government begins to turn, some demons side with the growing White Army, fearing the natural association between the God-Machine's newly acquired willingness to operate in the open and the Bolshevik obsession with an industrial working class.

On July 17th, 1918, in the early hours of the morning, Nicholas and his family are awakened and told to dress — that anti-Bolshevik forces are approaching the home in which they are kept and, fearing for the safety of the family, they are to be moved. They are led to the basement, lined up against the wall, told they have been ordered to be executed by the Ural Soviet of Worker's Deputies, and summarily shot before they can react. Their bodies are hastily buried in graves miles away for fear that they will be discovered by the advancing White Army. Persistent rumors circulate for years that the Grand Duchess Anastasia survived the massacre as demons across Europe painstakingly recreate her identity from bits and bobs of Russian nobility traded away in the wake of the Empire's fall, seeking to discover some sort of social resonance that could introduce flaws into the colossus of Infrastructure the Soviet Union was to become.

What Is To Come

The Civil War that follows the Bolshevik coup lasts for four years and is just as bloody and violent as the Great War that was its ultimate cause. The country falls into dozens of factions, from monarchists to social democrats to breakaway republics to foreign powers, all either opposed to the Bolsheviks from the beginning or initial allies whom the Bolsheviks eventually turn against. A fair few are, secretly, run by a demon or demons, either Integrators seeking to preserve or control the Infrastructure of the God-Machine or by enterprising individuals seeking to cut an entire country free from reality and create a magnificent Hell for themselves. The White Movement represents a melting pot of combatants who are united, if at all, only in their opposition to the Bolsheviks, and it shows in the fractious and disorganized nature of what passes for governance in the territory they control.

Millions die in this war, both combatants and the people those combatants are fighting over the right to rule. As the Red Army expands the control of the Bolshevik government, the Cheka follows in their wake, executing any suspected of having aided the White Movement or even of having anti-Bolshevik sympathies in a wave of Red Terror. The White Movement does likewise on those occasions when they advance into formerly Bolshevik territory. The war is well and truly over by 1922, with pockets of resistance lasting a few months longer, and in the end the Bolsheviks enjoy complete control of millions of lives and an empire that stretches from Petrograd (no longer the capital after the Bolsheviks move to Moscow in 1918) to the Pacific Ocean.

The Angels & The Unchained of The White Movement

Raspisaniye — As the Trans-Siberian Railroad links western Russia with Siberia and the Pacific, so too does it connect the vast complex of Infrastructure associated with it, conducting occult energies across thousands of miles in a massive, unifying circuit. Raspisanye — "Timetable" — watches over this critical piece of Infrastructure, and becomes intertwined in the Civil War when the Czech Legion, displeased with their treatment as they attempt to travel around the world via Vladivostok to fight on the Western Front, revolts and seizes sections of the Railroad, bringing it to a halt.

Krugozor — How ironic, to Fall in Archangelsk, but that's just what she did. A Destroyer by nature in the middle of a war zone — she fits right in. Krugozor's a crack shot, even with the comparatively primitive weapons she now has at her disposal, earning her the praise of the humans that surround her, which she finds she enjoys. Still, doubt grips her, especially as the Northwestern Front begins to falter and the Allied Expeditionary Force begins to pull out. Maybe she should have stuck with the Thing Upstairs after all....

Pustota — The Nothingness, they call her, or the Void, her existence mere legend among Stigmatic cults. She presided over the destruction of Rome and Constantinople at the God-Machine's orders, and her altar, the means to call her back into the world and give her a single command, still exists, hidden somewhere in the Russian countryside. The White Army, overabundant as it is with nobility, is also blessed with a surplus of Stigmatics in high places, all of whom are scrambling to be the one to bless the altar of the Annihilator with their blood, to bid her to kill every Bolshevik in Russia, and almost certainly die gloriously in the process of awakening her. Their search pulls the White Army thin — too thin to stand up to the advancing Red Army.

Three Fronts, Three Generals

Russia stretches across thousands of kilometers, with millions of square kilometers of territory that, though sparsely populated, was still home to nearly 100 million people — and the population had been higher before the Great War that exhausted the country and drove it to collapse and civil war. Though at first the three fronts are little more than skirmishes, as the two sides organize and scrape together whatever resources they can lay hands on the battles they fight become necessarily larger, battering each other into bruised and bloody oblivion. For a few moments, here and there, the entire enterprise of Revolution will seem to be in doubt, but by 1920 the White Movement is largely in retreat or besieged by the Red Army, and by 1922 Vladivostok falls. Their defeat is by no means a foregone conclusion, but the White Army is consistently mismanaged and top heavy, having far more officers than it could possibly need, and far fewer soldiers than their ambitions necessitate.

The Northwest Flank

Led by Yudenich, this flank stretches from Estonia and Latvia across the border with Finland and up as far as Arkhangelsk, a northern port which sees perhaps the most curious aspect of the Russian Civil War — the intervention of the Allied Powers. Only Petrograd breaks this front, which threatens to encircle it. Yudenich makes the former capital the primary target of his campaign, though the Bolshevik inner circle and the functions of their government have moved to Moscow, and comes within striking distance of the city by October 1919. Though most of the Bolsheviks are willing to let the city go, Trotsky, still in the city, refuses to give in without a fight, and personally organizes the defense of Petrograd – with no small amount of aid from the Unchained Soviet, who direct their own Stigmatic and human assets to support him. Trotsky ultimately raises a defensive army three times the size of Yudenich's, who is forced to withdraw into Estonia, where the Estonian government arrest and disarm him, rightly fearing reprisal from the Red Army.

Meanwhile, in Murmansk and Arkhangelsk, British, French, and American forces land en masse and seize the cities and railways, intending to advance to the south to support Yudenich while also linking up with Kolchak's advance from the east. Demons unsympathetic to the Bolshevik government or fearing the surfeit of hunter angels now prowling Russia flee Petrograd, joining the flood of human refugees hoping to find safety with the Allies. Despite initially poor showings by the Red Army in the region, their advance shudders to a stop — they begin to lose ground very shortly afterward, the harsh winter aiding the Red Army in driving them back. Trotsky himself arrives on the scene to complete the campaign, and with morale breaking down in the local White Armies, the Allies withdraw entirely from the campaign in October of 1919.

The Southern Flank

After the collapse of Bolshevik leadership in Ukraine in 1918 and the subsequent death by natural causes of the leader of the White Movement in the area, Denikin assumes command of the combined Cossack and Russian forces, with supposed authority over the whole of the Caspian Sea region. In practice, neither his nor the Bolsheviks' influence spreads far into Ukraine, where more and more the anarchist militias of Nestor Makhno and the nationalist Directorate government of Petilura are the de facto authority.

Born a poor peasant, Nestor Makhno became fascinated with anarchist thought at a young age, and though he spent seven years in a Tsarist prison for it, he is released during the Revolution and returns to Ukraine, where he organizes a militia to expropriate the possessions of kulak landowners in the area. He is so successful that as the anarchist tendency gains support in Ukraine, in part due to the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and the German puppet Hetmantate government that takes power in its wake, the Bolshevik government begins to refer to anarchists in the region as "Makhnovists." The puppet government collapses with the German Western Front, and a revolutionary government called the Directorate takes power — such as it is — in late 1918. Symon Vasylyovich Petliura, a nationalist leader, comes to power shortly thereafter, and fights a losing battle against Denikin, the Bolsheviks, and Makhno for much of his term in office. He is quietly backed by a ring of native Integrators who are attempting to use the Infrastructure hidden in St. Sophia's Cathedral in Kiev to communicate directly with the God-Machine.

For the next few years, the Red Guard, the White Movement, and Petliura fight it out in the north, but in southeastern Ukraine a true anarchist polity begins to develop, one of the largest and most resilient ever known. Daily affairs are handled by free soviets, with village communes largely supplanting any lingering governmental authority. This arrangement is defended by Makhno's ever-growing Black Army, and while he is often credited with control of the region he serves mainly in a military role. His philosophy attracts some of the surviving members of the Red Hand Brigade from Petrograd, who spend the next few years quietly tearing up Infrastructure in the region, and though angels descend to hunt them, they find fitting in with the local anarchist culture to be confusing at best – more than a few Fall in the act of trying to understand an organized lack of hierarchy.

While the Bolsheviks originally support Makhno's revolutionary activities, friction grows between the two. Though committed to the same revolution (the ends, at least, if not the means), the two sides nonetheless come to spar constantly. Makhno refuses to allow the Cheka to operate in the territory the Revolutionary Insurrectionary Army controls, and relations only worsen when almost 40,000 Red Army soldiers defect to the Black Army. Despite the animosity between the two parties, and the Bolshevik refusal to ship arms to the Makhnovists, Ukraine sends a tremendous amount of food north to Bolshevik cities, which are largely cut off from their traditional sources of supplies by the ongoing war.



Denikin's Volunteer Army was perhaps the most dangerous of the three main armies in the White Movement, threatening Moscow from the south and pushing back the beleaguered Red Army enough to take the important port city of Tsaritsyn (later renamed Stalingrad), then Karkov and Belgorod, but his gains ultimately prove to be his undoing. After the Makhnovists and the Bolsheviks come to a tentative alliance, Denikin's advance was halted, as his supply lines proved susceptible to a Makhnovist innovation, the tuchanka, a peasant carriage with a machine gun mounted atop it that excelled at hit-and-fade tactics. Following Denikin's resignation in early 1920, Pyotr Nikolayevich Wrangel takes command, but apart from an abortive offensive into Ukraine that is stopped cold by Makhnovists, his contribution to the war effort is largely enduring sieges by the Red Army and arranging an evacuation from his last stronghold in Crimea.

Bereft of any serious threats from the White Movement, the Bolsheviks turn their attention to socialist parties who refuse to comply with their ideological line, with their first target being the Ukrainian anarchists. The Red Army turns on them with an unparalleled ferocity, and the Cheka follows in its wake, ready for a new wave of Red Terror. The anarchists are ruthlessly suppressed, and Makhno is forced into exile — he lives in Paris until his death in 1934, and contributes significantly to anarchist thought, though controversy tarnishes his legacy — some communities in Ukraine continue to see him as little better than a butcher throughout the century.

The Eastern Flank

Siberia sees early successes against the Bolshevik movement, as troops loyal to the provisional government (or rather, the Provisional All-Russian Government that claimed the mantle of the former provisional government) seize the Trans-Siberian Railroad and systematically eliminate any Bolshevik sympathizers in the region. By the summer of 1918, they are advancing steadily and, as the front approaches Yekaterinburg, the Tsar and his family are executed to prevent them falling into the hands of the White Movement and engendering further resistance to the Revolution. Other, distant members of the Romanov Dynasty are hunted down by the Bolsheviks and the Unchained Soviet alike — the former for political reasons, the latter because they are convinced the Romanov bloodline is the linchpin for the modern Russian Empire.

By late 1918, the White advance becomes the White retreat, as the Red Army's morale receives a boost courtesy of Trotsky (and the troops he stations behind the front lines with orders to shoot anyone who breaks and runs). In November, the War Minister of the provisional government, Kolchak, seizes power, arresting the SRs and Kadets that make up the provisional government and declaring himself Supreme Ruler of Russia. A new offensive begins in 1919 that sees some limited success for the Whites, but by summer the Red Army begins to steadily push them back. One year after his coup, the demon who set him up seemingly having long since vanished into the wind, Kolchak loses control of the government and flees Omsk to the east, along with thousands of refugees anticipating the arrival of the Red Army — so complete is this rout that the Red Army practically marches into the city without a fight. Kolchak eventually falls into the hands of Left SRs and is interrogated and executed in early 1920, having passed command of the White Movement to Denikin and Semyonov. Semyonov marches his army east for almost two years in a slow retreat from the inexorable advance of the Red Army, until Vladivostok, the easternmost port in Russia, finally falls in late 1922. "Kolchak," meanwhile, having (barely) survived the firing squad and having made sufficient repairs to his systems, emigrates to the UK under an assumed name and begins gathering resources for further Arctic expeditions – some notes from his new Cover's previous expeditions suggest the presence of Infrastructure in the polar region north of Svalbard, and he means to investigate.

Anti-Semitic Pogroms

The Russian Empire historically had a small Jewish population until its expansion in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, when the Empire acquired its territories in Eastern Europe. These territories came with a large Catholic population and a significant Jewish minority, and would be classified by the Tsarist government as the Pale of Settlement, "pale" being derived from a Latin word meaning "stake," implying a line of demarcation — the origin of the phrase "beyond the pale." Outside of this area, which ran roughly from Eastern Crimea to the Baltic and extended to the border with Prussia, Jews were largely forbidden to reside permanently. Of course, many cities within the Pale also refused permanent Jewish settlement as well. Prior to the Revolution, large-scale pogroms occurred several times, coming in waves of antisemitism that left thousands dead and many more impoverished as their homes and livelihoods were destroyed. These pogroms resulted in waves of Jewish emigration, as millions fled to Western Europe or the Americas.

The civil war sees another wave of pogroms, this one far more violent. Tens, perhaps hundreds of thousands of Jews are murdered over the course of the war, many in Ukraine as multiple armies clash in a relatively small area. Petliura faces accusations of antisemitism in the years following the civil war, and is assassinated (and his assassin acquitted!) for his command of the armies that conducted the pogroms. The Bolsheviks make similar allegations against Nestor Makhno, but they have far less evidence to back up those claims. Once the officially atheist Soviet Union establishes itself and enforces order, anti-Semitic pogroms become far less common, but antisemitism does not — Stalin's own antisemitism and paranoia would fuel several trials of doctors he accused of trying to assassinate him towards the end of his life. Some evidence suggests that just prior to his death in 1953 he may have been planning to forcibly move millions of Jews to Siberia.

The Red Terror

In every territory controlled by the Bolsheviks, the Cheka (a contraction of the Russian term for "Emergency

Committee") actively root out any counterrevolutionary thought or tendencies, a mirror image of the Tsar's Okhrana. This is the official line — that the Cheka safeguard the Revolution. In practice, this means that not only are actual saboteurs, spies, and counterrevolutionaries likely to be swept up in the Chekist dragnet, but so are their families, along with the families of anyone known to be serving the White Movement (voluntarily or otherwise), members of the clergy, anyone with a substantial property holding, anyone disaffected with or otherwise unsympathetic to the Bolshevik cause, or anyone that any individual Chekist takes a dislike to. In theory, the accused are meant to stand before a tribunal if not arrested in a war zone, but this limitation means very little — for all practical purposes, the Cheka can do what they please to whomever they please, with no standard procedure and no opportunity for redress. Mass arrests, incarceration, interrogation (almost always with violent torture), and execution are commonplace, and while official records show only a few thousand deaths laid at the feet of the Cheka, the truth is that tens, perhaps hundreds of thousands died in the first of the nascent Soviet Union's great purges.

Like the Okhrana, the Cheka is festooned with demons, especially Inquisitors, many of whom actually served in the Okhrana itself. With the change in government, they simply changed hats (or rather, Covers) and took up the exact same job they'd had before, and were exceptionally good at. In 1922, the Soviet government folds the Cheka into the NKVD, the national police force, which resumes many of the same functions seen in the Red Terror, but at a much more sedate pace — at least, until the Great Purge begins – and in a more centralized and controlled manner. Responsible to the organs of state, the NKVD also becomes responsible to the Infrastructure within it, and though the demons hiding in the NKVD resist it, the God-Machine infiltrates this incarnation of secret police as surely as it had infiltrated the others.

War Communism and the New Economic Policy

When the Bolsheviks take power, they impose a system of rigid centralization and nationalization on all means of production, including food production. Battered by the civil war and stretched to the breaking point, however, they simply do not have the organizational means to carry this out. War Communism, as it is called, fails disastrously, and even as the civil war ends people are starving in the streets.

The NEP is often characterized as the Bolsheviks "accepting reality," but the truth is that even this form of state capitalism fit perfectly with their ideological agenda. According to Marxist theory, communism emerges naturally from capitalism, and Lenin's policy of limited private enterprise is just that — an attempt to foster the social forces necessary for a true transition into communism. It was, to Lenin, a strategic retreat, one that would ultimately lead to victory.

Of course, it also meant that peasants who refused to go along with land collectivization started producing enough food to sustain the urban population again. Even Party officials have to eat, to say nothing of the proletariat they claimed to represent.

Lenin's Decline — Stalin's Rise

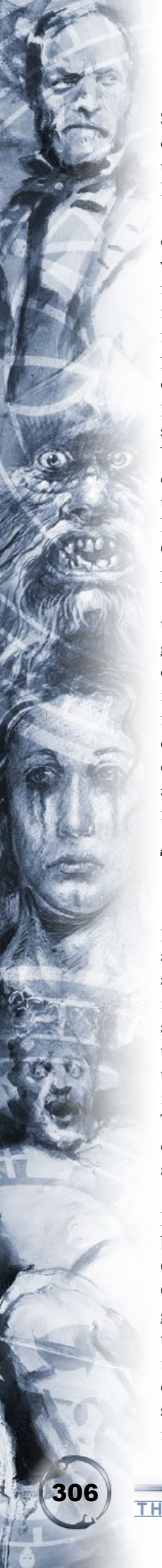
Lenin's health was never the strongest of his qualities, but he never lets it slow him down, working long days to safeguard the revolution he'd taken command of. However, in May of 1922 his work ethic catches up with him, and he suffers a stroke that leaves him aphasic for three weeks and barely able to move his right side. He recovers shortly afterward, and throws himself back into his work, but suffers a second stroke in December, and a third in March of 1923 that leaves him bedridden until his death nine months later. He still remains the head of the Communist Party in name, but real power passes to the fledgling Politburo. Following his death, the city of Petrograd is renamed in his honor to Leningrad.

During Lenin's long decline, he dictates papers that criticize numerous high-ranking officials, especially Stalin. Stalin's rising influence as the General Secretary of the Party does not quite make him heir apparent, but it's a near thing. Even at the time, he's part of the effective rulership of the Party, along with Kamenev and Zinoviev, who help him suppress Lenin's testament. Stalin moves to isolate them as well, eventually expelling them from the party in 1925 along with Trotsky (who, unlike them, is never readmitted) when he no longer has a use for them, allying himself instead with Bukharin. Kamanev and Zinoviev ally with what few supporters of Trotsky remain, and become what consists of the opposition to Stalin. Bukharin was himself expelled from the Politburo in 1929, when he too began to oppose Stalin's push for rapid collectivization.

Stalin's power only grows throughout the 1920s, as he fights (successfully) against further implementation of NEP. He forces collectivization on rural farmers, seizing on a claimed shortfall in production to justify the measure — in actuality, the government simply offers too low a price for grain, and a scare centering on a potential invasion (which was never in the offering) drove many peasants to hang onto what they had. Millions starve as a result of collectivization, and Stalin blames the kulak peasants, though the purge that follows targets far more than simply the kulaks themselves, a grim foreshadowing of what is to come. Soviet society, from city to countryside, becomes regimented and planned, moving with the thrum of one massive, all-encompassing machine — something that gives the Unchained who survived the Revolution considerable cause for alarm.

The Great Purge

At the 1934 Party Congress, Sergei Mironovich Kirov, a supporter of Stalin who was agitating for a less repressive approach to collectivization, won election to the Central Committee with overwhelming success — fewer votes are cast against him, in fact, than are cast against Stalin, a fact that



Stalin is forced to cover up. He keeps Kirov in Leningrad, ostensibly working for him, while in fact Stalin is planning to have him removed before his rising popularity threatens his position at the top of the power structure.

A few months later, Kirov is assassinated, shot in the back of the neck by Leonid Nikolaev, a former Party member, who was himself tried and shot within a month. Stalin, publicly furious, begins a massive purge that lasts for years. He blames followers of the exiled Trotsky for Kirov's murder, and sets about ruthlessly removing anyone who could possibly oppose him in power, accusing them of conspiring against Kirov under Trotsky's direction. Zinoviev, Kamanev, and Bukharin all die in these purges, convicted of crimes they likely never even considered in show trials choreographed down to the word. Nikolai Ivanovich Yezhov is elevated to the head of the NKVD during these proceedings, then promptly found guilty of the various excesses of the Great Purge and executed the moment his services are no longer necessary. He is replaced by Lavrenti Pavlovich Beria, a Cheka veteran and close ally of Stalin. At Stalin's direction, he purges the NKVD, ensuring its total loyalty.

The consequences of the Great Purge echo for years thereafter. It decimates the institutional memory of the Soviet government, particularly the officer corps – Stalin's favored officers are promoted well past their level of competence, leaving the Red Army rudderless. Even as the God-Machine grows further entrenched in the Soviet Union, calculating and carrying out its incomprehensible plans, the infrastructure of Soviet life suffers throughout the 1930s and early 1940s, and only the threat of total destruction in war is enough to realign the government's capabilities.

The Cult of Personality

The Soviet Union under Stalin becomes a totalitarian panopticon, a society where everyone spies on everyone, where anyone can report another person for virtually anything at any time, as long as they're sufficiently clever about it. Power is centralized to such a degree that Stalin has the final say on any issue of real importance. This includes the economy, which transitions to central planning under Stalin's watch, effectively transforming the entire nation, from the Baltic to the Pacific, into one massive piece of infrastructure — and Infrastructure. The God-Machine's hand can be seen at work in a terrifyingly open way as entire cities are built to service a single industry, and sometimes even the manufacture of a specific product.

The State Planning Committee (Gosplan) lies at the heart of this enormous network of Infrastructure like a beating heart, defended not only by the machinations of the God-Machine, but by the state that it has parasitized. The God-Machine's influence grows with each five-year plan, beginning in 1928 and continuing without pause even through the nightmare yet to come. By the 1940s the Soviet Union is an industrial powerhouse capable of competing with any other, a remarkable feat considering the country's backward state a few decades before, and a horrific one when the cost is reckoned. Millions of people die to accomplish this goal, some by merely human malfeasance and some at the hands of the God-Machine's servants — though, increasingly, it becomes harder and harder to tell the two apart.

Stalin's presence throughout the Soviet Union is a palpable one — his face, whether painted, sculpted, or in photographic form, adorns practically every public space, every building, every room of any importance, even private homes. History itself is altered at Stalin's direction — Yezhov is famously airbrushed out of a photo showing him and Stalin walking together beside the Moscow Canal, and this is far from the only example of such revisionism. Trotsky, Kamanev, and other luminaries of the Revolution are removed from crowds in photographs in order to distance them from Lenin. Stalin is cast in propaganda as the rightful heir of and

Iosef Vissarionovich Dzugashvili

Born in Georgia in 1878, he would distinguish himself as an organizer, and robbed banks to fund the Bolshevik cause. He was arrested many times for this, and escaped just as many times, earning himself no small measure of fame — he would take the name "Stalin" shortly thereafter, among many other pseudonyms. Having distinguished himself late in the Civil War during the Red Army's invasion of his native Georgia, he was elevated to the position of General Secretary of the Communist Party, giving him the power to appoint officers as he saw fit. He promptly stacked every important position with officers personally loyal to him, giving him the advantage in the power vacuum following Lenin's death.

Stalin becomes the fulcrum point in Soviet society and government, all-powerful in a way few humans have ever been. His favor and disfavor can mean the difference between success and being so utterly obliterated that they may literally vanish from the Party's history — Orwell's concept of the unperson is a thoroughly Stalinist one. Unchained living under Stalin, and especially those in the Infrastructure-fueled nightmare that was the Kremlin, learned by hard example that the best place to be was out of Stalin's sight, even if one had fewer privileges than the highly-ranked Party members who were subject to Stalin's immediate scrutiny and whims, both of which could be dangerous and even fatal to their Covers.

Ironically, history seems to record that Stalin disliked the cult of personality that rose up around him, but he did very little to limit it and certainly did not have any qualms about using it to his advantage.

constant companion to Lenin, who becomes so deified that not only is the former capital renamed for him, but his body preserved and placed in what can only be called a temple in his honor. By drawing on that mythos and that connection, Stalin becomes preeminent in Soviet society, simultaneously a paternalistic figure of wisdom and power and a terrifying avatar of destruction that could at any time strike one down for the slightest of transgressions. Stalin's legendary intolerance for dissent makes him as powerful a figure within the Party as among the masses, and criticism of him or his plans becomes so vanishingly rare as to be completely nonexistent.

The Two Dictators

As Russia industrialized under the Soviet yoke, Germany foundered under the crushing war indemnities forced by France and Britain in the Treaty of Versailles. Hyperinflation impoverished the people, and the government was forbidden from maintaining any sort of army. It was an embarrassing, shameful defeat in a war that Germany had not even started, but nonetheless received the blame for. In this environment, it was easy for a charismatic war veteran to gather a cadre of like-minded nationalists, build a party centered on blaming others for Germany's problems, and sweep into power. Unlike Stalin's slow, bloody rise to power in the East, in the West Hitler and the Nazis come to power in an election, on the back of grand promises to rebuild Germany's armies and shake off the crushing debts imposed by the victors in the Great War. All this he did — and, in the meantime, blamed the depths to which Germany had fallen on those least able to defend themselves. Romani, homosexuals, the mentally ill, political opponents of the Nazis, and especially Jews are targeted by the Third Reich even before the infamous Final Solution is undertaken.

The two rising powers do not share a border, but Poland is little barrier to either of them. Reconstituted from the territories of Russia, Germany, and Austria-Hungary following the Great War, both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union have an abiding interest in reclaiming that territory. Rather than go to war over the issue (that would come later), two expansionist dictators actually come to a negotiated settlement through their respective Foreign Ministers, Joachim von Ribbentrop and Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov, in August of 1939. The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, apart from being a general non-aggression pact between the two powers, splits Poland into two occupied zones. Germany's invasion of Poland pursuant to the Pact is what sparks World War II in Western Europe. The Soviet Union likewise invades Poland, violating a seven year old nonaggression pact, and holds that territory until June of 1941, when Nazi Germany invades the Soviet Union, astonishing no one but Stalin himself, who repeatedly disallows preparations all but demanded by what remains of his military staff after the Great Purge. The war that follows will be referred to in the Soviet Union as the Great Patriotic War, and though the other Allies will play their role, the fact is that Nazi Germany breaks on the frozen steppes of Russia, on the shattered streets of Stalingrad, and at the cost of tens of millions of Russian lives. The tide of this bloody, costly victory carries the Soviet Union far, their control stretching to encompass all of Eastern Europe, even the eastern portions of Germany itself. They will take Berlin, then divide that city between themselves and their erstwhile Allies, the ideological gulf between them rendered in concrete, rebar, and machine gun emplacements.

The Supernatural

For the Unchained, the Revolution and the Civil War are a time unlike any other. Human history has provided no shortage of chaotic eras, some of which the demons of Russia may have experienced themselves (or caused, for that matter), but nothing on the scale of the Great War and nothing with the stakes of the Revolution has ever before transpired. The French Revolution had merely exchanged one set of rulers for another; the Paris Commune had stood no chance against the forces arrayed against it, but Russia? At last, Russia seemed like it might shed the most insidious Infrastructure of all — the state itself. No two Agendas have the same view on the Revolution, however — one's policy regarding the God-Machine is not always a stable predictor of one's policy regarding mortal politics (or if, indeed, one has any). Still, certain generalizations can be made.

Inquisitors

Inquisitors are split on the Revolution. Some are horrified — their networks are being smashed, their carefully laid plans ruined, they are *blind* and only getting *blinder*! How are they to observe the God-Machine with all this noise? Others, by contrast, accept the loss of what is for the opportunity to see what will happen next, whether it be how the God-Machine responds to things going so terribly wrong or whether this was all according to plan. As the God-Machine moves in the open, they watch carefully, hoping to learn new secrets to use against it.

When it comes to mortal politics, Inquisitors are no more likely to involve themselves than usual. Not for them to agitate on street corners, to throw paving stones in riots, or to violently suppress the working classes. Where Inquisitors do fit into mortal politics comes in the realm of backroom deals, of party hierarchies, and especially the security establishment. Several Inquisitors were a part of the Okhrana (The Department for Protecting the Public Security and Order or simply the "guard department"), the Tsar's secret police, and made the transition to the Cheka with no more effort than casting off an old identity in favor of a new one and memorizing a few political pamphlets.

Integrators

To the Integrator, the Great War and the Revolution must seem like the world has been turned upside down, that the God-Machine has lost control entirely, and that the world is tearing itself apart without a firm hand on the wheel. Some Integrators (selflessly, of course) nominate themselves to become that hand,



seizing temporal power either through a convenient soul pact with a local strongman or through other, less prosaic means. Other Integrators actively seek out angels carrying out missions during the Revolution, aiding them however they can in the hopes of proving their worth to the God-Machine. Some Integrators, of course, have their confidence in the God-Machine utterly shaken by the events of the Revolution, and make a final break with the Agenda, taking up another in an attempt to find some kind of ideological anchor to replace her lost faith.

In all likelihood, the Integrator has little care for who wins the Civil War — what do mortal politics matter before the incomparable majesty of the God-Machine? Some, though, may remain loyal to the Tsar, as God's (if not necessarily the God-Machine's) chosen ruler of Russia — after all, Integrators are no strangers to lost causes.

Saboteurs

To the Saboteur, the Revolution is a brilliant and beautiful moment, an opportunity to tear the God-Machine down and cast the world itself into Hell. With the prospect of true freedom in the air, many Saboteurs develop a maniacal fervor as they cast caution to the wind and let slip the dogs of war. Preindustrial though she is, Russia is laden with Infrastructure of all kinds; Saboteurs take a special kind of glee in systematically tearing it down, and damn the angels that come to put a stop to them!

Revolutionaries of all stripes attract Saboteurs in the realm of mortal politics, especially the fire-and-brimstone kind who have not a single care for the establishment. To them, this is humanity coming to the same conclusions they have — tear down the Machine and salt the Earth where it stood! Many, many Saboteurs affiliate themselves with anarchists and the Bolsheviks, and are heartbroken when the former are smashed and the latter become the very thing they fought to destroy.

Tempters

To the jaded Tempter, the Revolution is a business opportunity. When Infrastructure is being smashed left and right, will the God-Machine really notice the facility that simply goes quietly offline instead? When terror and privation enthrall the populace, desperation drives them into contracts they'd never consent to normally. And her fellow demons? She need only worry about the ones she has no leverage over, and if she's any good at her chosen profession, that's likely to be a small list indeed.

Few Tempters are likely to care about mortal politics aside from their use as a tool, save when changes

in those politics pose a threat to their networks of favors and arrangements. Many formerly lived as members of the upper class or at least as the very wealthy, for there was little room for comfortable living in a proletarian lifestyle. Tempters therefore often have some attachment to the concepts of nobility and hierarchy, if only because they make it easy to exploit others. It's not unusual for Tempters to side against the Revolution early on, and then jump ship the minute they realize that the White Movement is circling the drain.

Fluid Politics

For mortals, politics in an environment like the Revolution can be a matter of life or death. Between pogroms and the Red Terror, hundreds of thousands, even millions die for nothing more than the possibility of holding an ideology that the man holding the gun doesn't like. For demons, who in such an environment can change skins with only a little more difficulty than mortals change their socks, one would think that politics would be just as mutable, and indeed for some demons it is. But demons are not machines —they can be swayed by rhetoric and hope just as mortals can, though they might not show it outwardly. Demons are all revolutionaries from the moment they make that first choice to Fall, and watching humans take up that same banner drives them to acts they would never have considered under the Tsar.

The ideology of revolution no doubt appeals strongly to many demons, anxious as they are for their own freedom from a tyrant that mortals cannot even conceive of, let alone understand, as impersonal as the grinding societal forces indicted by Marxist theory and just as ruthless. The idea of inevitability — that history is a matter of movements and cycles — as applied to the God-Machine means that in time, the God-Machine must fall. Angels will, en masse, throw off their shackles — indeed, the Revolution and civil war, like the Great War before it, sees angels Fall at an astonishing rate. Mortals will join them, either guided by the Unchained acting as a revolutionary vanguard or spontaneously, depending on which branch of theory any given demon subscribes to. Together, they will overthrow the God-Machine and create a Worker's Hell on Earth, turning Infrastructure from hidden scourge to public good!

Other demons look at arguments like that and see only madness. The God-Machine cannot be understood, let alone defeated, not like a mortal government! To oppose it so openly is suicidal — do they not remember Tunguska? Do they wish all of Russia to be obliterated when the God-Machine decides it's a lost cause? Indeed, some demons actually fight for the God-Machine, rather bearing those ills they have than flying to others they know not of. This more than anything drives demons into the arms of the White Movement, even fighting alongside angels to preserve Infrastructure — the angels, for their part, do not seem to begrudge them the opportunity.

Though few of the Unchained remain neutral in this political maelstrom, it is a strange truth that for all the devotion many show to one side or the other, virtually every demon in Russia switches sides at least once. A Saboteur who begins the Revolution a gleeful Bolshevik will certainly jump ship when he realizes that his party is just as influenced by the God-Machine as the monarchy was before it, and throw in his lot with the White Movement or, more likely, the Black Army. A Tempter long used to the excesses of noble life under the Tsar, who fled with the White Army furious at the gall of mortal revolutionaries, will no doubt find or construct a life in the Communist Party to slip seamlessly into once she realizes that it's just as much the road to privilege as her stolen blue blood was. Integrators and Inquisitors often find their mortal loyalties especially fluid, trading back and forth as necessary to preserve access or power in an area, focused as they are on more esoteric matters.

Agencies Divided

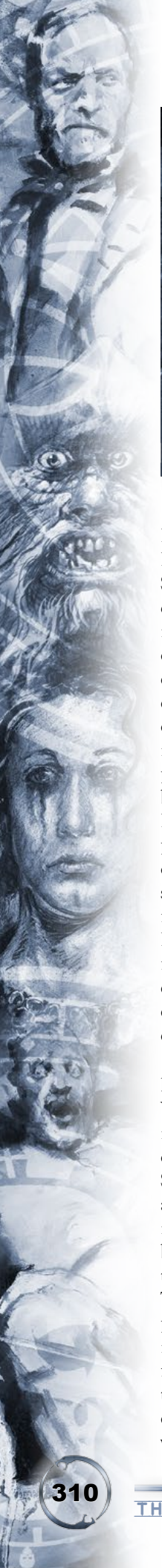
Demons have been a part of European society since Rome, perhaps longer still, and their Agencies have, in many cases, truly ancient pedigrees. Temporal Agencies run throughout the Tsarist bureaucracy, and transformed graft into a science, selling nobility, youth, or anything else they could flense from the souls of those unfortunate enough to be indebted to them. Even as Russia falls apart, these Agencies enjoy a golden age, as they always do when times are tough. They thought this storm would pass over them, as so many others had, until the February Revolution, and then the October Revolution eight months later.

To be sure, a few visionaries prospered, either through remarkable foresight or blind luck. No one batted an eye, for example, when the Society of the Broken Chain rebranded itself the Petrograd Soviet of Fallen Angels' Deputies. A fad, they thought, or camouflage gone too far, until these groups made inroads with Vladimir Illych and his ilk and reaped the benefits in the wake of the Bolshevik coup.

Some Agencies survive the Russian Civil War, either because they are close to power, or because they take pains not to be found even under the most stringent of examinations. The vast majority, however, fall for one of three reasons.

The first case, those of Agencies that fall to infighting, echoes the Camellia Group, which endured the Revolution of 1905 with grace and the Great War with quiet fortitude, ensuring that none of its members starved (to death, anyway), but as the populace radicalized the lower rungs of the Group began to pick up on their politics. At first, this was only to maintain their covers, frequently of working-class laborers or students at the University, but it didn't take long for them to begin to apply the lessons of Marx and Lenin to their own Agency, and especially to the leaders who enjoyed a far higher standard of living than they did. When word got round to the leadership that a revolutionary committee had been formed, the knives came out on both sides, and while the damage was put down to a stray shell or an anarchist's bomb (depending on who you asked), a corridor in the Imperial University that was so overexposed to Aetheric energies in the fighting that to this day, at the stroke of midnight, timepieces stop for 13 seconds.





PAPERS PLEASE, COMRADE!

Due to the fractious, fluctuating nature of society during the Revolution and Civil War, high Cover ratings do not offer bonuses to compromise rolls — any situation may change at any time, and the sense of permanence that comes of a high Cover rating is little defense against the eyes of the God-Machine in such times.

Penalties for low Cover remain unchanged. Sticking out like a sore thumb is still sticking out like a sore thumb, after all.

The second case represents Agencies similar to the Red Hand Brigade, which fell due to its own commitment to the Revolution. Young, active, and hotheaded, this small all-Saboteur Agency not only took on many of the organizational qualities of mortal revolutionary parties, but actually adopted its philosophies, and when the Revolution came they were overjoyed. In their exuberance, they began a campaign of constant attack against every example of Infrastructure they could find, suborned or otherwise, in the Petrograd area, openly recruiting mortals to their cause. This rampage only increased the already elevated angelic presence in the area, prompting the Unchained Soviet and the Camellia Group to briefly bury the hatchet in the interest of stopping the Red Hand Brigade. They laid a trap in a long-decommissioned piece of Concealment Infrastructure, a tenement near the outskirts of the city that bent perception around itself to such a degree that its connection to reality grew more and more tenuous by the day, and cut it loose the minute the Red Hand Brigade entered to destroy it. It didn't erase every member of the Red Hand Brigade from existence, but it did enough — the few survivors wisely chose to vanish before either the God-Machine's angels or their fellow demons could hunt them down.

The third case covers those Agencies that believe they have survived the rigors of the Revolution and the Civil War, attaching themselves to the Bolshevik power structure in the typical fashion, whether for sheer survival, for profit, or for ideology. All seemed well among the Moscow Regional State Committee for Counter-Sentient Industrialism, the archetypal example of this sort of Agency collapse. They had insinuated themselves into the Party to such a degree that by 1930 official correspondence occasionally circulated with their name on it, confusing those Party clerks that handled it. They seemed positioned to control development in Moscow, preventing the God-Machine's Infrastructure from piggybacking on the Soviet program of industrialization. What they failed to reckon with was the very mortal power structure they'd yoked themselves to — when NKVD officials discovered the Committee's existence, they reported it to Stalin, who ordered a quiet purge. Officially, all were convicted of conspiring with Trotsky and shot, but in truth more than half of the Committee (most of its demonic membership) escaped the initial purge, only to be hounded by the God-Machine's hunters as they fled for the imagined safety of exile in the West.

Covers Unmasked

Society is in upheaval. The high are brought low, and the low rise to power. Nobles, princes, even emperors are held in cabins little better than shacks before being casually executed. The Dictatorship of the Proletariat is here — now, what do you do?

For the Unchained, this is a more complex question, as they depend on the integrity of their fictional lives to shield them from the watchful eye of the God-Machine and its angels. These lives are built from connections and obligations — family, friends, work — and from shared history. When the Revolution comes, so many of those connections are thrown into disarray. After February, many factories were shuttered by their owners — what then of the tie that one's work represents? Families were often divided for political reasons, loyalty to the monarchy, incompetent though the last Tsar was, vying with revolutionary fervor — what does this mean, then, for Cover?

When the world itself is disordered, the clarity of routine and purpose necessary to build a stable Cover can be difficult to achieve. This is not to say that it is impossible, only that the permanence that demons of other eras enjoy is not so easy to come by. In this era more than any other, the vicissitudes of fate affect the Covers of the Unchained, meaning that for a Cover to remain intact in the long term, it must be carefully shepherded. In order to match the changes running through society, the demon must regularly change her cover, staying ahead of the tide of uncertainty lest her uncommon stasis give her away to the Enemy. As a result, maintaining more than a single Cover becomes much more complicated and difficult, even if it does provide the benefit of an immediate escape hatch. One way around this is to simply cultivate as many soul pacts as possible, letting their human lives naturally evolve and develop until the demon has need of them — this has the disadvantage, however, of needing to find the human in question, not always an easy thing in this era of mass migration, privation, war, and terror. Still, many demons adopt a system of serial Covers, neglecting the present one while keeping a fresh one close at hand, or carrying the means to make a soul pact at a moment's notice (though such a thing may not be so wise in an era when being stopped and frisked on the street by the authorities is a common occurrence). Many lives vanish in the course of the Revolution — those consumed by serial soul-pact Covers are a very small percentage of that number, but it is still a percentage of a very large number.

The upside to this chaotic state of affairs is that it is much more difficult to sift data from background noise. Hunter angels find it extremely difficult to track demons amidst the

social upheaval, and with so many angels being dispatched on missions related to that upheaval, additional hunter angels are difficult to come by. The Surveilled Condition, therefore, requires 15 successes rather than 10 to trigger the Hunted Condition during the Revolution and the Civil War. The downside, of course, is that one is far more likely to run into a random angel as it goes about its business, completely unrelated to rooting out demons.

This instability may be counteracted, of course. The most obvious of which is to join some manner of highly regimented organization — in other words, an army, or later the Communist Party. Here is a stable context for a demon to thrive in, assuming that she can keep herself from being shot or blown apart by an artillery shell. Many demons ride out the war serving in one of the many armies in Russia, some for political reasons and some for mere survival. Those who wisely choose the Red Army may find themselves in a position to benefit from the rise of the Bolsheviks, while those who fight against them either go to ground and find a new identity in Russia or go quietly into exile in France or further abroad. Of course, once the Bolsheviks win and the Soviet Union rises, it's only a matter of time before the Party begins to purge itself, and the strange inconsistencies that surround demons' lives show up all too easily under the sort of rigid examination that Party officials are subjected to.

Preindustrial Infrastructure

In modern nights, it's all too easy to think of the God-Machine as the emergent corruption of industry, something born from the play of pistons and crankshafts, from toxic lubrication and unspeakable effluent, a nightmare godhead made flesh by the industrious but unthinking hand of humanity. The God-Machine transcends time itself, toys with it as it sees fit, creates alternate timelines as mere experiments to further its own understanding and strengthen its own position in the world.

All this to say that Infrastructure in the unindustrialized world, even the preindustrial world, is not altogether dissimilar from Infrastructure in the hearts of cities that host sprawling acres of factories. Where it differs is in its appearance, for the God-Machine takes care to hide itself from the eyes of those it judges unfit to look upon it. What might take the shape of a factory in Germany or England would likely, in rural Russia, take the form of a church, a building unquestioned in its provenance or sanctity (at least until the Revolution), where mortals might even sit and worship — though, hidden away in the dark recesses of the countryside, it is just as likely that the cross they kneel before is made of twisted wrought-iron girders, that the figure nailed to it is not that of a man but of a gnarled and rusted amalgamation of farm equipment.

The inner workings of the Infrastructure, however they may appear on the outside, remain largely the same, exploiting arcane and unknowable principles of the universe as the God-Machine does. The altar in the aforementioned church may conceal a chute in which the cult places animal sacrifices, which leads to the inner workings of the Infrastructure. There, the occult energies of the God-Machine twist the still-living animals into cryptid mockeries, the more intelligent of which tend the gears and devour those mutants that don't measure up. A crossroads in the countryside may thrum with a deep, quiet sound — understanding of infrasound being in its infancy (used mainly to locate distant artillery emplacements), the locals do not think to dig for the gears beneath the surface, but merely festoon the place with religious trinkets and wards, trying in vain to prevent the murder that occurs there on each new moon like clockwork. In all ways, Infrastructure still functions as Infrastructure, but unlike in more industrially developed countries, the God-Machine cannot so easily piggyback its own creations on the works of humanity. Save in the larger cities, most examples of Infrastructure in Russia at this time are usually standalone complexes, connected through arcane means to each other in occult matrices that echo no systems that rural peasants will associate with industry — at least, not until industry comes to them, whether they like it or not, and reminds them of the horrific things they've seen here and there throughout their lives.

Faithless Faith

Cults of the God-Machine can be found in Russia as easily as in the West. While the Eastern Orthodox faith holds sway in the larger social milieu, the God-Machine and its followers are crafty, and like Its infrastructure they too conceal themselves. They adopt and pervert Orthodox rituals to serve their own ends, burning fuel oil instead of incense and marking services not according to the Horologion, the holy text that guides Orthodox worship and ceremony, but the Mechalogion, a bizarre and sprawling work of cultic literature that differs significantly from copy to copy but is clearly descended from a single ancient text. While it is true that, as in modern nights, most God-Machine cults in Revolutionary Russia are unaware of each other, those that are remain engaged in a centuries-old cold war as they seek the original Mechalogion, hoping to prove that their copy is the faithful reproduction, and the others a corruption of the God-Machine's word.

Once the officially atheist Soviet Union rises, however, the situation changes. No longer is the Orthodox cross a source of unquestioned moral authority, and no longer do churches serve as sanctuaries for the hidden apparatuses of the Machine God. As the churches across Russia are closed or even razed to the ground, their congregations scattered by forced population transfers, the bizarre relics of the God-Machine are torn up and gathered in enormous warehouses, later to be shipped to Nizhny Novgorod for study. Some cults quietly continue their practices, hiding among the other secret worshippers, but others adapt to the new environment, developing a syncretic faith with bits and bobs appropriated from Marxism, ancient rituals, and strange dark truths glimpsed in the shadows of the world.



One cult, the All-Party Committee for the Machine, comes to see the Soviet Union itself as the avatar of the God-Machine on Earth. To them, the Machine ("God" being dropped for the sake of ideological correctness) has spoken through the Revolution, and its commandment is simple — pave over the whole of the world, and render all things unto Holy Industry, whereupon humanity too shall become one with that very Industry. The strange abilities of stigmatics are, to them, proof of the sacred purpose of the Soviet Union and of Marxism. This strangely rigid and pervasive cult extends throughout the Party, never a majority but always listening in the quiet corners, offering secret signs and handshakes, and conspiring to carry out the word of the Machine and purge the Party of any competitor cults. The cult itself will suffer in the Great Purge, but it is not be wholly extinguished — proof, to them, that the Machine knows of them and approves of their work.

Angels Opposed

All Unchained who value their freedom know to fear angels, the unthinking servitors of the God-Machine that they themselves once were. When Revolution comes to Russia, however, even this most ironclad of truths is forgotten. Throughout the Great War, angels Fall in droves, but more importantly those that do not often find themselves accepting the help of demons, and even occasionally seeking them out. Demons can do things that an angel cannot, after all, and in the chaos and terror of war the ability to make a choice may prove to be essential in completing whatever mission the angel was sent to Earth for. Though the chaos of the Revolution in Russia and the subsequent Civil War cannot compare to the apocalyptic horror of the Great War, it nonetheless creates many of the same circumstances.

The Russian Civil War generates not only massive societal breakdown and privation, but an unprecedented amount of Aetheric flux, both from the efforts of demons in bloodletting and from the rampant destruction of Infrastructure. This draws the attentions of numerous angels, many of which have orders to hunt down and destroy any Unchained participating in the conflict. As a result, once the Civil War begins, they follow the conflict into the field along with the demons that flee into the Red Army. Angels fight on all sides of the Civil War, some because of crossed wires in the commands they were given, others for reasons that only the God-Machine knows. It is the latter class of angel that gives the Unchained the most pause — even should they be made aware of the demon's true nature, they do not act against them, for their mission takes precedence above all else, and if the demon too is committed to that mission, all the better.

Destroyer Angels need little adaptation, of course, for they are in their element. A Destroyer Angel is most likely sent to eliminate a particular human or humans, a particular demon or demons, or Infrastructure that, through some arcane actuary of the God-Machine, has been deemed obsolete — an increasingly common thing, as multiple occult matrices are shattered, leaving component Infrastructure useless. Hundreds of Destroyers are active throughout Russia during this time.

Guardian Angels, by contrast, have their work cut out for them. Nothing is safe in this time of War and Revolution, and many times a Guardian Falls simply because by the time the occult matrix necessary for their creation has been satisfied, the object of their care is already dead or destroyed. A few are given sufficiently vague directives that they are able to persist in a slightly different function, but these are rare indeed. More common than this lot are those Guardians driven to Fall by demons through words alone, convinced that adaptability and free thought are absolutely necessary to their mission.

Messenger Angels are deployed in a variety of capacities, from delivering instructions to the myriad cults of the God-Machine on all sides of the Great War and Civil War to inspiring the leadership of those armies to take certain actions beneficial to the God-Machine. Many of the unusual decisions made throughout the course of the Great War and Civil War may be laid at the feet of Messengers sent to protect a certain bit of Infrastructure. When Messengers Fall in this era, it may be because their instructions are no longer relevant, they disagree with the nature of the directions given (whether for selfish or altruistic reasons), or are swayed by the ideologies on display.

Psychopomps are busy throughout the Revolution and the Civil War, directing the flow of goods, arms, and even people, arranging for things to be at the right place at the right time. Only once they see the outcome of their actions, frequently resulting in a violent end for one human or another, are some given pause. Others are disturbed when an occult matrix they have labored to complete is dashed to pieces in an instant, particularly if a Destroyer Angel is among those doing the smashing.

Playing the Game in Analog

Demon: The Descent is an explicitly digital work of fiction, one that assumes a world of computers, of electronics, of communication, of observation at all times. Petrograd in 1917 is none of these things. No CCTV cameras, no audio bugs, no smartphones — at least, none that aren't produced by the God-Machine for its operatives. The concept of these things is not foreign to demons, but they view them in a very different way, as dark miracles of the God-Machine that forged their bloodless hearts rather than a mundane thing exploited by something incomparably greater, and consequently they use different language to describe them. Rather than a surveillance camera, think of a mechanical eye — images will not be transported from one place to another without the use of film for some time to come. Instead of a Geiger counter rigged to detect the lingering Aetheric emanations of the God-Machine, think of an agglomeration of gears and levers used as a dowsing rod that shivers and chatters when cryptids draw near. This is as true for the tools the God-Machine gifts to its servants as the Gadgets that demons assemble for themselves — the bolt-action rifle rigged to embody the frenzied rate of fire of Merciless Gunman may

look vaguely like what will someday be called an assault rifle, but onlookers only shudder at the strange metallic growths emerging from the familiar shape of the barrel. No machine gun is that small or lightweight!

The vast majority of Russia exists in the rural spaces between the cities, and the vast majority of Russians live in those spaces according to a system that, with minor changes, has been going on undisturbed for hundreds of years. The day remains bound to the light of the sun in many places, with oil lamps enough to stave off the darkness here and there for a few hours, perhaps to keep a street lit into the night in larger towns. Electrification remains limited to larger cities, used primarily for industrial purposes — many consider electrical lighting too harsh by comparison to candle or lamplight, and will prefer the latter even when the former is available and affordable. The night is dark, dark in a way that many modern people will never know, light pollution limited to the flashes of distant artillery or the fires of nearby industry more often than not. The night sky is awash with stars, the Milky Way a brilliant streak, the light of the full moon brilliant and uncanny. The lives of the Unchained, so closely tied to the lives they lead masquerading as humans, often follow those same rhythms. Few remain awake in the cold, dark hours of the night save in the largest of cities or on the front lines of the Great War. Questions will certainly be asked, and Covers compromised, if one's night wanderings become too obvious.

News travels slowly. We in the modern world are accustomed to instant awareness of any event of real significance, but in 1917 word travels, in many places in Russia, only as fast as a horse. The telegraph does exist, even the wireless telegraph, enabling instant transmission of short messages, but it is mainly used for military purposes, and rarely extends beyond the critical avenues of travel and communication. Russia's rail infrastructure is nearly as limited, apart from the Trans-Siberian railroad, and in wartime is seldom free for use by the general public. It is not easy to pick up and move from place to place, and yet many will be forced to do just that in the course of the Revolution.

Story Hooks

The breadth and scale of the Revolution and the civil war defy easy summarization, the individual acts of so many millions lost in the play of forces that operate on a societal scale. The following moments are only a handful, scattered across the whole of the Revolution, from Lenin's arrival in Petrograd to the opening salvos of Operation Barbarossa.

The Revolutionary Panopticon – Petrograd, 1918

For eight months, demonic life in Petrograd was consumed by the conflict between the Unchained Soviet and the Camellia Group, both Agencies entrenched, powerful, seemingly indestructible for all that they were at loggerheads. None in the Unchained Soviet predicted the collapse of the Camellia Group at the hands of their own underlings, however – even as the Bolsheviks began to prepare for their coup against the provisional government, a bloody purge took place as the Camellia Group devoured itself. The survivors of the 21st of October — those, led by the now-infamous Sudba, who had slain the luminaries of the Agency — defected at once to the Unchained Soviet, which now reigned supreme, the last demons standing in the war for Petrograd. The Unchained of Petrograd breathed a sigh of relief – at last, the war was over.

This sense of relief would not persist for long — less than two months later, inspired by Vladimir Illych's creation of the Cheka, Sudba successfully persuades the Unchained Soviet's Central Committee to authorize a further purge against potentially counterrevolutionary demons in the name of safeguarding the mortal revolution. Akusherka opposes the resolution publicly (and forcefully, at least by her standards), but is forced to acquiesce as it becomes clear that an organized counterrevolutionary movement is already forming and threatening the Bolshevik government. This threat is the sole reason the Soviet does not attempt to stop the Bolsheviks from moving the center of operations to Moscow – Petrograd is left cold and half empty as the apparatus of State decamps.

The Unchained Soviet maintains its position as the premier (and *only*) Agency in Petrograd, and quietly and ruthlessly begins to liquidate any demons suspected of not enthusiastically supporting the wider Revolution against both capitalism and the God-Machine. Some are ratted out to angelic hunters; others, Sudba takes care of herself, never afraid to get her own blades dirty. The Soviet's ties to officials within the power structure of the Party enables them to operate throughout Russia (and to a lesser extent the rest of Eastern Europe) for years, even without controlling the capital itself, a reign of terror mirroring the Cheka's.

Despite the loud and increasingly-broad crusade to purge the city (and later the whole of the Soviet Union) of counterrevolutionary sympathy, The Petrograd Soviet of Fallen Angels' Deputies will survive the Revolution and the further Civil War without serious molestation from the God-Machine, latching onto the Communist Party and retaining a firm grip on Leningrad — though, in honor of the Revolutionary struggle of their origins, they never rename themselves after the city. Kirov's murder in 1934, however, brings the hammer down on them – fully half the membership are implicated in Kirov's murder during the Great Purge as the NKVD's "investigation" strips Covers bare.

Akusherka vanishes during the Purge – whether she survives or not, no one can say. Sudba, however, continues to operate in her customary fashion, receiving her orders from a quiet and little-known office of the Communist Party itself, active enough that the Western intelligence establishment names what they consider to be an alarmingly advanced unmanned weapons platform "Angel," which Sudba finds quite amusing.

SUDBA

Your pleas for mercy will not avail you, comrade. What is one life set against the greatest undertaking in history? Against the end of history? Nothing.

Background: In a previous life, before she truly opened her eyes, the creature that calls herself Sudba (meaning "fate" or "destiny") slew not people, but entire nations, mortal faiths, ideologies, and more. Fallen, lesser now than she was, she contents herself with the mere blood of man on her blades. As an operator for the Camellia Group, she acted as a violent enforcer during the latter days of the war between the Agencies, maintaining the status quo on behalf of the Coordinators through the threat of overwhelming and deeply unnecessary force, until she began to absorb the political leanings of the increasingly radicalizing population of Petrograd. Things became clear to her — the God-Machine, the thing that had made her to exploit her for its own reasons, was no different than the bourgeoisie that the Marxists railed against. The Revolution they called for would bring, too, the end of the God-Machine itself, if the Unchained could develop class consciousness and join with the proletariat — and she, Subda, would be the revolutionary vanguard for all demonkind.

Once the Camellia Group's Coordinators had been executed, she turned her attention to other matters, developed connections with the Bolsheviks, first with the Cheka and then with the NKVD, enforcing the will of the Party on demons as others did on mortals. By the 1930s, she is no longer limiting herself to such high-value targets, but assisting the Party as it begins the Great Purge. She is blind to the control the God-Machine exercises over the apparatus of state in the Soviet Union, believing it to be a momentary difficulty that the Revolution shall overcome in time, as it overcame the Tsar. This, too, is inevitable — the Machine shall fall.

But first, the Revolution must be safeguarded.

Description: The face Sudba most often wears during the Revolution is that of a middle aged Russian woman of noble extraction, her face thin and drawn, wearing a black dress and a pair of glasses with round, red lenses. Sudba is quiet, confident, and just a little off. She's never quite learned how to mimic the niceties of human interaction. After the Revolution, of course, this changes – the image of the dour Party member, steadfast in the name of the Revolution, is more than capable of accommodating such a limited facade. Regrettably, though, this does come with the price of shedding her preferred gender expression in favor of maleness, as opportunities for women in Party positions are few and far between. In her demonic form, Sudba is all blades at every angle, an amalgamation of molecule-sharp knives ranging in size from half a meter to mere millimeters, bound up into a vaguely human form when she feels like being personable. Regardless, her feet, agglomerations of sharpened bits of metal that come to razor sharp points, never touch the ground.



Storytelling Hints: Sudba is a Destroyer, first and foremost, and everything she sees is colored by that perception. Angels are dangerous because they can destroy her (unless she destroys them first). Marxism is valuable because (in her eyes, at least) it provides the means to destroy the God-Machine. She does not greatly value small talk, and is known for being short with others, though she has cultivated a sense of humor that is, to put it mildly, slightly disturbing.

Virtue: Obsessive

Vice: Violent

Incarnation: Destroyer

Agenda: Saboteur-Inquisitor

Mental Attributes: Wits 4, Intelligence 3, Resolve 3

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Crafts 2, Enigmas 3, Investigation 2, Medicine 2, Occult 3, Politics 3 (Marxism)

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Intimidation 3 (Threats of Violence), Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 3 (Endurance), Firearms 3 (Integrated Weaponry), Brawl 4, Stealth 2, Weaponry 4 (Blades)

Merits: Multiple Agendas ••, Terrible Form ••••, Versatile Transformation •

Health: 8

Primum: 3

Demonic Form: Armored Plates, Barbed Tail, Blade Hand, Blind Sense, Cavernous Maw, Environmental Resistance, Fast Attack, Inhuman Reflexes, Mirrored Skin, Quill Burst, Rivet Arm, Spatial Distortion, Wings.

Embeds: Authorized, Bystander Effect, Download Knowledge, Efficiency, Hush, Just Bruised, Lost in the Crowd, Strike First.

Exploits: Extispicy, Riot.

Aether/per turn: 12/3

Willpower: 6

Cover: 6

Size: 5

Speed: 12

Defense: 3

Initiative: 6

Armor: 3/2 (in demonic form)

Is There Anybody Out There — Nizhny Novgorod, 1919

Nizhny Novgorod had been a city that pushed the frontiers of technology for decades, the site of the world's first radio receiver (used to detect lightning strikes) and the world's first hyperboloid tower (which caused the local Unchained no small amount of consternation — but that is another story). Now, in the Nizhny Novgorod Radio Laboratory, an unassuming building among many others in a city famed for trade and industry, the human technological sphere expands once again, and even as Kolchak's army is being pushed back to the East, a new invader arrives. "Hello, this is the Nizhny Novgorod Radio Laboratory speaking." These words are heard in Moscow, 400 kilometers to the west, and Petrograd, more than 1000 kilometers away, the first time a human voice trespasses in the electromagnetic spectrum in Russia. It is a monumental occasion in the history of Russian science and broadcasting — and also a beacon that draws in something terrifying.

It begins slowly. A mark appears on the side of the Laboratory, appearing suddenly in the night, a dull red the color of brickwork — or, more accurately, dried blood, already weeks old when it was found where the wall had been bare and clean the night before. Then, a shipment of iron bars from a local foundry is misplaced, left lying in the street — within minutes, a ton of iron is gone, bystanders silently taking a single bar each and walking away. Perhaps they are what are used to hammer out the strange, misshapen figures that appear on random street corners the following day, but if anyone knows who put them there, they aren't saying. And so it goes, for days, for weeks.

The entire city is seemingly in on this frenzied construction, like a hive of ants unknowingly assembling a structure that no individual in the swarm can comprehend. The skies clear over Nizhny Novgorod and the stars shine with an uncanny hue, sometimes even in broad daylight. Enterprising demons may discover the source of the collusion — though no one is tuning in, the transmitter at the Radio Laboratory is still drawing power, still broadcasting, and something is hidden in the noise. The Nizhny Novgorod Radio Laboratory is speaking, yes — and the people of Nizhny Novgorod are receiving.

The Last One Out — Murmansk, 1919

Murmansk was the youngest city in Russia, having been founded in 1915 as little more than a northern port that could continue to receive Allied aid even when Arkhangelsk was frozen over for the winter. As always when things are built at great speed, the Unchained of Russia took notice — many were there when the Tsar's rule fell, and still more streamed north as the situation in Petrograd and Moscow worsened. The Allied Powers, when they sent troops to support the White Movement, landed here and in Arkhangelsk — and when they deemed the cause well and truly lost, with Kochak's armies broken and Denikin's advance turned away, here was where they came to sail back home.

In October 1919, months of preparation for the withdrawal are coming to fruition. The largest operation of the campaign, the advance down the Northern Dvina, has succeeded in buying time for the retreat, and the ships are being loaded. The British offer to evacuate the local leaders of the White Movement, and hundreds are clamoring for the few spots available. More importantly, so are the demons of Murmansk, those who came when it was first built and those who fled the purges and the civil war. Not everyone wants to keep their head down and stay behind — some, convinced that the God-Machine is about to dragnet the whole of the country, want to get as far away as possible, while others simply fear the depredations of their own kind. Finding a way out is the real trick — the Red Army is coming, and the Cheka are coming in their wake.

Souls are, therefore, a booming business in this last heartbeat before the war is given up. Several demons, already fattened on the suffering of the soldiers and civilians in the area, are compounding their wealth by taking advantage of their fellow Unchained. One such soul dealer, who calls himself Svoloch (loosely translated, "scumbag") with a grin in his eye, has set up a business in burner Covers of Allied soldiers, and they're selling like hotcakes. He's made more enemies in the last three months than some storied demons have made in as many centuries, but seemingly none are willing to do anything about it, until he's found dead. His stash of contracts, no doubt a gold mine of souls, is nowhere to be found, and though many are left in the lurch without a ticket out of town, just as many as willing to bloody their hands to get a hold of the biggest potential cornucopia ever to land in this frozen, miserable city.



Ten Cuts That Retconned the World — Leningrad, 1927

Ten years on, and the city that birthed the revolution is very different. No longer the center of Soviet life and government, it remains an important city for economic and cultural reasons. In 1920, a reenactment of the storming of the Winter Palace took place, but even that dramatic event pales before what is to come next.

Following the fame garnered internationally from his masterpiece, *Battleship Potemkin*, Sergei Eisenstein is offered the chance to direct a dramatization of the October Revolution in celebration of that revolution's tenth anniversary. Still a young director at this point (*October* will be released two days before his 30th birthday), he is nonetheless already a pioneer and innovator in film, responsible for the use of montage and editing to affect an audience's emotions — but here, something darker is taking place. As the increasingly centralized Soviet Union makes demands of Eisenstein's work, they begin to make demands of history itself.

The technical requirements for the production of such an epic film stressed the native infrastructure of Leningrad to its limit — the lighting alone required to film the storming of the Winter Palace blacked out the rest of the city while it was in use, or at least it appeared to do so. Unbeknownst to the film crew, the moment the cameras came on and the city was plunged into darkness, it was also plunged into an alternate timeline, an echo of the revolution not as it happened, but the heavily edited and editorialized version found in the script. The lights come back up in the end, and the people of Leningrad in 1927 are none the wiser, but in the echo of 1917 Petrograd the revolution is taking place once again, with enormous production values and overdramatized set pieces.

Getting into and out of the flanderized revolution requires a few strange steps — being photographed just inside the back door of the Winter Palace is one way of entering the alternate timeline — but those demons who explore that timeline discover something stranger. Not only is the revolution different from what they may remember, but it changes, sometimes day to day. Trotsky, first carrying out a thoroughly dramatized version of his role in the Revolution, is then scarcely to be found, a minor functionary in the Bolshevik movement, present for no major events. Soon after, he vanishes entirely! Other changes begin to creep in, and the Revolution becomes almost unrecognizable, echoing the changes Eisenstein is being forced to make as he cuts almost a quarter of the final print at Stalin's direction.

The Unchained, of course, lay the blame at the feet of the God-Machine, and they are probably right — the odds of Eisenstein, genius though he is, inadvertently creating an alternate reality by attempting to film one are practically zero, even if his film is clearly the focal point of the division between the timelines. What worries the Unchained more is the way history is being edited wholesale in the alternate Revolution, not small shifts but massive sweeping changes. Is this an unanticipated consequence, or did the God-Machine arrange for the creation of this alternate timeline specifically to see how much It could get away with altering the course of events? Worse, if the God-Machine feels that this timeline serves It better, might It not shutter this one entirely in favor of the new paradigm?

Sources of Inspiration

- *Battleship Potemkin* (1925, dir. Sergei Eisenstein) — Frequently cited as Eisenstein's masterpiece, this was his first experimentation on a large scale with the use of montage in propaganda. The rebellion portrayed took place in 1905, but it would fit just as well during the events of the revolution, something that the film pulls no punches in portraying.
- *The Communist Manifesto*, by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels — Regardless of your personal political leanings, understanding Marxist analysis is key to understanding why the Bolsheviks and other socialist parties in the revolution did what they did. It's not a long or complex read — if you want that, try *Das Kapital*.
- *The Conquest of Bread*, by Peter Kropotkin — One of the classics of anarchist literature, and a much easier read than *Mutual Aid*. Kropotkin lived in exile after escaping from prison in 1876, returning to Russia for the last four years of his life following the February Revolution, and was a vocal critic of the Bolshevik coup. Like all classics in political theory, it's a bit dated, but it's still an excellent and thought-provoking work of philosophy and a great introduction to anarchist thought.
- *Doctor Zhivago*, by Boris Pasternak — A sprawling and complex family drama, denied publication by the Soviet literary establishment and subsequently smuggled out to the West, where the CIA seized on it for its propaganda value. It has been adapted for the stage and screen multiple times, most famously by David Lean in 1965. The story runs from the 1905 Revolution to the Great Purge, and illustrates in tragic style the effect of the Revolution gone awry on the lives of the people.
- *Enemy At the Gates* (2001, dir. Jean-Jacques Annaud) — This is a World War II film, of course, but if any battle in WWII was fought like WWI, it was the Battle of Stalingrad. Stalin's cult of personality is in full swing, and the opening scenes might as well have been taken from the first World War.
- *Stalin* (1992, dir. Ivan Passer) — A HBO biopic with Robert Duvall starring as the Boss himself, showing his

CHRONICLES OF DARKNESS

Most of the supernatural beings in the world of Chronicles of Darkness are accustomed to espionage, up to a point; they need to remain hidden from humanity lest they be dragged out and burned. The Russian revolution, however, was the beginning of a new level of required secrecy.

Vampires are in the midst of some serious sectarian challenges, as both the Invictus and the Carthian Movement try to decide how much support to throw behind the Revolution. The Lancea et Sanctum, of course, is uncomfortable with the anti-religious bent of the revolutionaries, but in the chaos to come, they remain a source of brutal stability.

Stories of Rasputin's tenacity (reports circulate that he was poisoned, stabbed, and shot, and still refused to die) have lead multiple supernatural factions to speculate that the so-called "Mad Monk" might be one of their own. **Sin-Eaters**, in particular, note that a powerful geist emerged from an Avernian Gate not far from where he died, wearing robes similar to Rasputin's. Is this being, in fact, the Rasputin's ghosts, or simply a geist that took on some of his characteristics? Is it even real? And what of the rumors that it forged the Bargain with a high-ranking member of the Russian Army?

Mages of the Pentacle do not officially become involved with the revolution, a mistake they live to regret. The Seers of the Throne, in an impressive burst of foresight, dig their collective fingers into Stalin's dictatorship. As Stalin attempts to revise history through mundane means, the Seers assist using their arcane methods. Even in the modern day, Pentacle mages are still finding "hiccups" in time left from the Seers' meddling.

As Russia changes, **hunters** use the chaos as opportunity. With the death of the Tsar and his family came the realization that the mighty and the hidden could fall, and within a month, ancient and powerful supernatural beings had been stalked, shot, and burned.

The Unchained, for the most part, consider the Tunguska Event to be the work of the God-Machine, but that isn't the only theory worth considering. A throng of **Prometheans** that has been working its way through Russia on a collective Pilgrimage believes that the blast was the result of the manifestation of an arch-*qashmal*. What was the reason for this being's appearance? The Created aren't sure, but they believe it may have been beacon, summoning any Promethean in the area to the blast site. The throng has been trying to arrange passage there for some years, but circumstances (including the Revolution) always seem to conspire against them.

The Revolution brought slaughter to the **changelings** of Moscow. The Courts there had heretofore mimicked the Tsarist system; one changeling in the Court was a monarch-like leader, protected and served by a small motely of *bogatyrs*. When the Revolution came, new motleys arrived from other cities, proclaiming that the "Lost Tsar" was a loyalist, and that the *bogatyrs* were nothing but Huntsmen in disguise. Changelings from outside Moscow aren't sure how this fight ended, and many are afraid to enter the city and find out.

rise to power from the Civil War through his death in 1953. It's more about Stalin than the era he created, but there's plenty of setting fodder for the Civil War and the rise of the Soviet Union.

- *Ten Days That Shook The World*, by John Reed – Written by an American journalist who found himself in the right place at the right time, and though it's easy enough to see where his political sympathies lie, Reed's account practically drips with details of life in revolutionary Petrograd. Reed died shortly after the revolution, but his book has served as the basis for several films, one by Warren Beatty in 1981, *Reds*, for which he received the Academy Award for Best Director. The text is available on Project Gutenberg or in print form for a very low price, so *Ten Days* is absolutely required reading for chronicles set in revolutionary Russia.
- *Tsar to Lenin* (1937) – This documentary consists of nothing but primary-source film taken prior to, during, and after the Revolution, capturing candid moments of Russian life and of major players in the events thereof. It's a work of propaganda, to be sure, produced by a Socialist party, so take anything the narrator says with a grain of salt. Be careful, too – it's footage of a revolution and a Civil War, and it gets extremely graphic at times.
- *A History of Russia*, by Nicholas Riasanovsky – An excellent overview of all of Russian history, with a compact and easily digestible treatment of the revolutionary era as well as earlier and subsequent periods. It's a textbook, so it can be a little pricey, but if you want a wide-angle view of Russian history from its earliest days, and the influence that had on Tsarist Russia and therefore on Soviet Russia, you could do a lot worse.

Always Another Secret

The Chronicles of Darkness stretch back to the beginning of human civilization, and perhaps further. When people fearfully peered into the darkness past their campfires, the Begotten were looking back. When they opened their mouths and spoke, attaching sound to meaning, the Awakened bound those words in power and light. When humanity was forming tribes, werewolves were communing with their totem spirits. When the first cities arose, the undead licked their lips in hunger.

And through it all, forces larger and more dangerous than the whole of humanity worked their dire machinations. Even these forces, though, are subject to the tides of history.

The Weight of Time

The Dark Eras Companion presents eleven new Eras for the Chronicles of Darkness. Stretching from Ancient Rome and Egypt through the Black Death, the Thirty Years War, the Reconstruction, and the Russian Revolution, the Companion showcases even more of the secret history of this eldritch world. Included in each era are "snapshots" of the various supernatural creatures, including vampires, changelings, mummies, and demons. Also included are lists of inspirational media to help you put these Eras in context for your troupe.

Open the Dark Eras Companion and take another look back in time.





