

Witchburner

LUKAREJEC

HALLOWEEN EDITION



I'm coming to find you
I'm coming to get you
I'm coming to take you away
You witches are evil
You worship the devil
So listen to what I say
Come peacefully from out of your huts
Or I'll have you witches pray
I must destroy you
Must play and toy you
And watch you wither away

Witchfinder General
"Witchfinder General" - Death Penalty (1982)

Witchburner is a tabletop RPG adventure that takes an intimate, claustrophobic delve into a small town beset by witchcraft. It deals with the topics you would expect with a title like Witchburner: magic, suspicion, fear, torture, fire, people burning.

It casts the heroes in the role of witchfinders—whether witting or unwitting—whom the town of Bridge expects to find the witch threatening their town and burn her.

If this is not your cup of cake, then walk awake.
Or away.

It is effectively system neutral.

This is the published Halloween version of Witchburner. If you are not yet a supporter of WizardThiefFighter, you are welcome to join at <https://www.patreon.com/wizardthieffighter>.

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Witchburner

This one is for the first players in Tolmin,
Peter Leban, Marko Lampret, and Matic Leban.

THE DARK

THE DARK
THE DARK
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The Town

LIMESTONE GRAVEL CRUNCHED under the iron-bound wheels with a hollow sound, like bones snapping. The Rightmaker had come.

"Who summoned justice?" asked the clerk.

The Mayor walked forward. Her fur stole quivered as she lowered herself for the regal official.

"The council of the Bridge of Saint Cleareyes begged me, the Mayor, to summon justice," she said.

The clerk regarded her for a long minute, before walking back to the black carriage with the red triangle.

He bent to the latticework window and murmured, "Lord Rightmaker, the Mayor and her council are here to bend their necks and summon justice."

The carriage rocked and was still. The clerk nodded and returned to the front of the entourage.

"The lord accepts your summons. Lead the way to your square of three truths."

Edna scrambled up, beads of sweat sparkling in the fox fur, as she stumbled across the ancient bridge that gave her town life. Her flock of terrified councilors flapped after.

The carriage rolled after them, clerk and beetling soldiers flanking it. It stopped again besides three stones supporting a fourth. Two soldiers ran forward with a portable stair as the clerk opened the side door.

A hush fell on the square; even the birds in the lindens lost their song.

"The Lord Rightmaker takes the stones of the Bridge of Saint Cleareyes and brings the truths of sky, earth, and underworld to the sinful flock!" intoned the clerk.

Supple leather shoes and silken robes swirled as the lord descended onto the stones. She surveyed the small crowd with her empty sockets and the red stone of her third eye.

"My friends, good citizens, I have listened to your list of calamities, and I understand your plight," her voice was warm, "you have a witch."

She looked around and smiled, "You have a witch and we're going to burn the bitch."

The folk call it Bridge.

The clerks call it Saint Cleareyes.

Built, burnt, and rebuilt. There has always been a town at this opalescent bridge. Its metal struts resist the weight of years though the river below shifts from swift flow to murky mire and back again carving its way to the sea.

The town has always been small. Important but limited by geography to always be the pawn, at best the rook, of either the Western City or the Eastern City.

When the burners come the natives fly to the thick-wooded hills like carrion crows from their carcass at the coming of a catamount.

Always the burners leave and the natives return.

Always some stain of the old days remains in the brooding woods, in the buckled mountains, in the banshee caves.

Always the witches remain.

Remain, and sometimes return. Like this October.

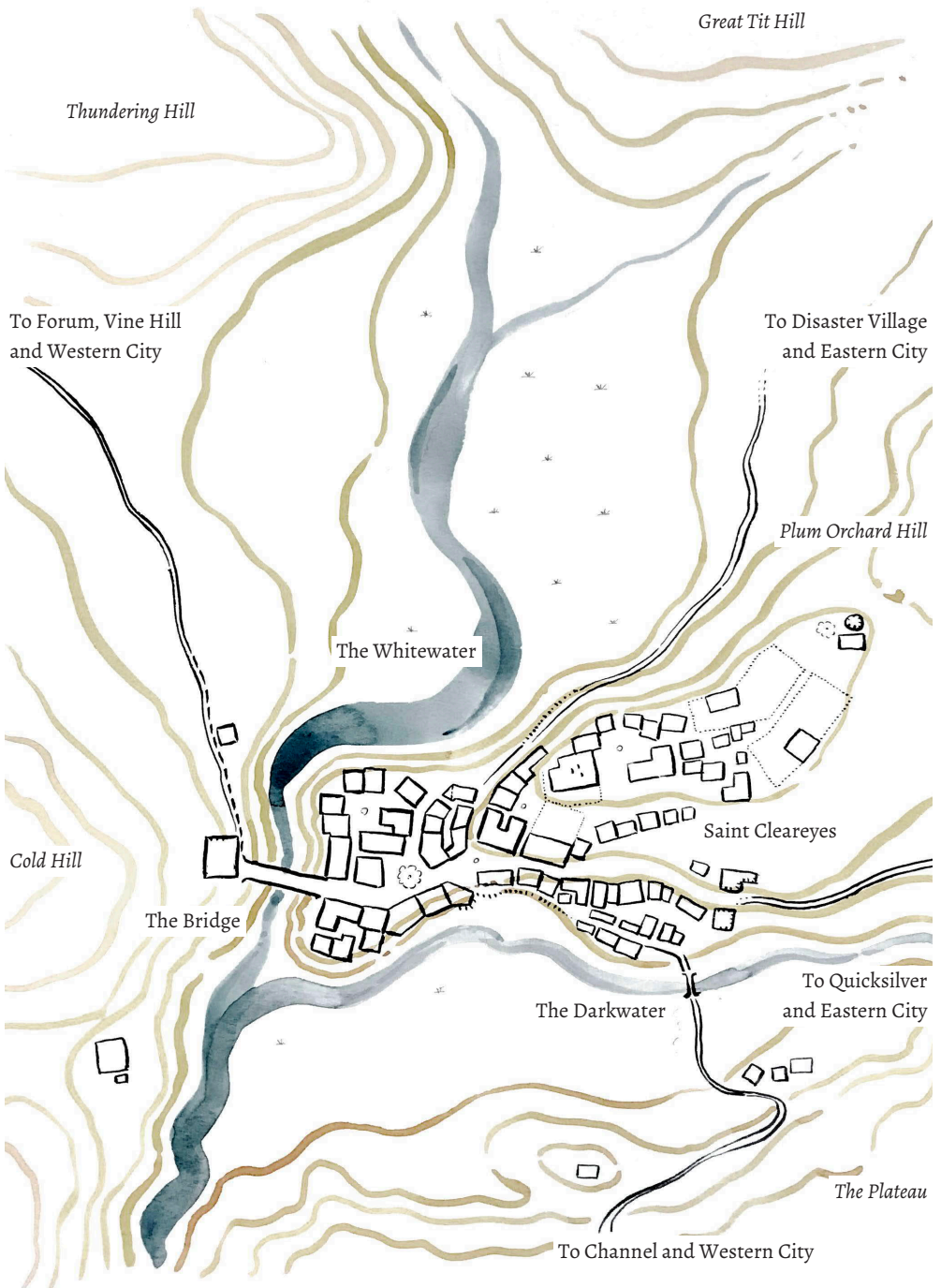
The fish of the river floated upturned upon the water, handprints burned into their putrefying flesh.

A black cat was found, gutted and nailed upon the doors of the Schoolhouse.

A child was born with a third eye, and when he cried, he cried, "Amimam!" —Eater of Virility. The council put the monster spawn to death, as is proper.

The buckwheat wilted black in the fields and the pumpkins bled red under Plum Orchard Hill. It was going to be a hungry winter.

Winterwhite is a dangerous god, and a wise mayor does not play games with the granaries. It is time to call the witchburner.



The Offer

THE MAYOR PATS down her forehead with a napkin and looks left, then right. The councilors arranged around her in their finery nod assent. She looks down at the motley witchfinders, spoken for by the Lord Rightmaker.

“Our request is simple. Find the witch before All Saints’ Night, before the month ends, and we shall

pay you 3,000 cash.”

The shadow-skinned councilor smiles, “And the council will cover your stay at my inn.”

The bushy-haired priest looks uncomfortable, “Now go, find that witch, before she brings Winterwhite’s hunger on us all!”

How to Run Witchburner

Referee!

This section is for you alone and contains spoilers for the adventure. Sure, players reading the previous part might have learned about the treasures and such, but that’s no big deal.

When you run *Witchburner* the first critical resource you have to manage is the passage of **time**. Within a month things will come to a fever pitch and whatever happens, happens.

30 Days To Burn is here to help you track the passing of time. Time is divided into **watches**, each roughly six hours long. For simplicity’s sake, the party of heroes can visit and thoroughly investigate one location or person per watch.

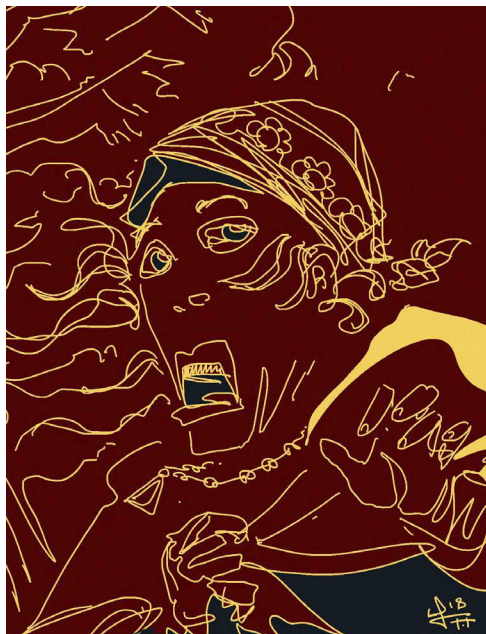
To paint impressions of the weather and natural environment think of October in the Alps.

The second resource you track is the **attitude** of key non-player characters—how much individual townspeople love or fear the witchfinders (the heroes). Keep track of their interactions with the NPCs and note it in *30 Citizens*.

The townspeople, their stories, fears, and loves are the heart of *Witchburner*. Each of them, along with dependants, houses, treasures, and secret lore, is detailed further in *The People of Bridge*. This is the

true heart of *Witchburner*.

There are also three tools to help you create a suitable ambience: *Alcohol* and *Love, Fear, and the Mob* cover how social interactions work in *Bridge*. *30 Calamities* lists random events attributed to witchcraft by the townspeople—feel free to add more of your own, as the passage of time requires. Finally, *Stats and Strength* provides a series of stats you can use for the creatures and people which populate the town and the mountains and the woods.



How to Win

Spoiler alert.

Witchburner is a social adventure where the heroes are hired or chosen or appointed to find the witch bringing calamities to the Bridge of Saint Clearwater. How they wound up in this situation is up to the referee.

The important thing is they are here and, for good or ill, the mayor is glad they are.

Pumpkins have been cut open only for teeth to spill out instead of seeds; while the barn swallows are flying south too early, portending a harsh winter.

People are scared, and in a world of forces too powerful for mere mortals to control or comprehend, they are looking for a simple solution.

Something must be causing these ill omens.

That something must be a witch.

Therefore, the witch must be found.

And purified by fire.

There is one catch: **there is no witch**. All the calamities are coincidences. Every last one.

But the townspeople are convinced there must be a witch—after all, they live in a fantasy world with real magic and witchcraft. They will not be satisfied unless one is found. Man or woman, it matters not; either will burn quite nicely.

The heroes have a very simple solution available: frame an innocent townspeople. Whether your game uses alignments or not this is evil. However, if the councilors are convinced everything is ok, the heroes will be paid their bloody 3,000 cash.

As referee use the heroes' actions: persuasion, bribery, trickery, torture, and threats to decide if the

council agrees with the heroes.

To add to the moral tension keep the calamities happening even after the 'witch' has been found and burned except the townspeople ascribe them all to happenstance.

If no witch is found or the heroes refuse to frame an innocent the townspeople eventually decide that the witchfinders must be witches. A mob forms and comes after them, determined to torture confessions out of the foreigners and burn them (p. 14).

As referee make it clear to the players before the mob forms that unless the heroes hurry up and find something to appease the townspeople they will be in grave danger.

The mob is convinced that if they do not capture the witch(es) and destroy them Winterwhite will starve the whole town to death and bring an end to them. They are desperate and numerous and the only options seriously open to the heroes are capture, flight or an exceptional bloodbath that forces the townspeople to retreat.

Whether your game uses alignments or not fireballing desperate civilians—even if they're trying to burn you as a witch—is kind of evil.

There is also the murderhobo solution: after scoping out a few houses and important people in the town, rob them blind, set their houses on fire, and flee. This is probably the least evil option.

How the game world and the heroes change after the events of this adventure I leave up to the individual game group to decide.

Bringing A Witch To Trial

There are four major social groups in the town:

The Lodge Members represent the artificial trades and are organized around rituals and magic to appease and supplicate the Firebringer. The Inn-keeper is the current mistress of the lodge, and the lodge meets in a back room at the inn. The lodge supports the Three Avatars wholeheartedly, but is more progressive and will openly 'assent' to other religions from the cities. The lodge will only resort to violence if absolutely necessary.

The Cult Members represent the natural professions and are focused on the Waterdrinker. The Priest is the leader of the cult which meets in the holy caves of Black Goat Pool. The cult fanatically supports the Three Avatars but is traditionally hospitable, though it becomes markedly colder in the face of proselytation. The cult will resort to violent assassination in the backwoods if pushed.

The Councilors are the town's leaders including representatives from both the lodge and the cult. They represent diverse views and often bicker but are united in their desire to preserve the town and local customs. The councilors abhor violence unless overwhelming public opinion demands it.

The Outsiders are 'strangers,' 'foreigners,' and any people outside the town's informal moral network. Even people who have lived in the town for twenty or thirty years may be considered outsiders. The outsiders are a diverse group, united by dependence on the goodwill of the lodge and cult. Their position is precarious and they will quickly side with the group that looks likelier to protect them. However, if they are accused, few people will move to protect them.

How to convince the town that the heroes have, indeed, found the true witch?

The key is (usually) to convince the councilors but they are not fools and will not just accept a simple accusation. **The councilors need proof.** Convincing the councilors in a closed audience takes one watch and the proof may involve:

- Occult items found in the witch's possession.
- Trustworthy witnesses attesting to the witch's deeds.
- Marks found on the witch's body.
- Confessions, even those produced by torture.
- Planted evidence of witchcraft.

If a majority of the councilors are convinced they will approve a burning. If exactly half of the councilors are convinced there is a 4 in 6 chance the council may approve torture for outsiders and a 2 in 6 chance they may approve torture for other townspeople.

As a rule the councilors demand at least two pieces of proof before moving to a trial. However:

- If the Mayor is accused they demand six pieces of evidence.
- If a fellow councilor is accused the others demand five pieces of evidence.
- If a lodge member is accused other members will demand four pieces of evidence while cult members will demand three and vice versa.
- If a family member or a friend of a lodge member is accused lodge members will demand three pieces of evidence. Cult members will demand the same for the friends and family of cult members.
- If the fool, a child, or somebody obviously simple-minded is accused the councilors will demand one piece of evidence more.

Additionally:

- Councilors who love the heroes will demand one piece of evidence less.
- Councilors who fear the heroes will demand one piece of evidence more.
- If a councilor is blackmailed there is a 5 in 6 chance they will demand two pieces of evidence less. However, if the attempt fails, they denounce the heroes and refuse to accept any evidence in future while all other councilors will demand one piece of evidence more.
- Surreptitiously killing a councilor makes convicting a witch easier.

The weight of public opinion will also sway the council. If eight non-councilors love the heroes they push the council to accept one less piece of evidence. If sixteen non-councilors love the heroes they push the council to accept two pieces of evidence less.

Remember: if many townspeople fear the heroes this may trigger a mob calling for their heads (p. 14).

If more characters become important enough through play add them to this tracking list.

Councilors:

- | | love / fear |
|--------------------------|-------------|
| 1. The Mayor (leader) | ♥ / ☠ |
| 2. The Notary | ♥ / ☠ |
| 3. The Priest (cult) | ♥ / ☠ |
| 4. The Tinker's Wife | ♥ / ☠ |
| 5. The Doctor | ♥ / ☠ |
| 6. The Innkeeper (lodge) | ♥ / ☠ |

Lodge:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------|
| (6.) The Innkeeper (lodge mistress) | ♥ / ☠ |
| 7. The Blacksmith | ♥ / ☠ |
| 8. The Tinker | ♥ / ☠ |
| 9. The Carpenter (master emeritus) | ♥ / ☠ |
| 10. The Watch Captain | ♥ / ☠ |
| 11. The Tailor | ♥ / ☠ |
| 12. The Miller | ♥ / ☠ |
| 13. The Storemaster | ♥ / ☠ |
| 14. The Schoolmaster | ♥ / ☠ |

Cult:

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------|
| (3.) The Priest (leader) | ♥ / ☠ |
| 15. The Priest's Daughter | ♥ / ☠ |
| 16. The Butcher | ♥ / ☠ |
| 17. The Cheesemaker | ♥ / ☠ |
| 18. The Littlewater Cook | ♥ / ☠ |
| 19. The Beekeeper | ♥ / ☠ |
| 20. The Midwife | ♥ / ☠ |
| 21. The Baker | ♥ / ☠ |
| 22. The Milkmaid | ♥ / ☠ |

Ordinary Townspeople:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------|
| 23. The Woodcutter | ♥ / ☠ |
| 24. The Old Mayor | ♥ / ☠ |
| 25. The Blacksmith's Boy | ♥ / ☠ |

Outsiders:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| 26. The Doctor's Husband | ♥ / ☠ |
| 27. The Town's Uncle (fool) | ♥ / ☠ |
| 28. The Wild Child | ♥ / ☠ |
| 29. The Woodcutter's Wife | ♥ / ☠ |
| 30. The Town Stranger | ♥ / ☠ |

- | | |
|-------|-------|
| _____ | ♥ / ☠ |
| _____ | ♥ / ☠ |
| _____ | ♥ / ☠ |
| _____ | ♥ / ☠ |
| _____ | ♥ / ☠ |
| _____ | ♥ / ☠ |
| _____ | ♥ / ☠ |
| _____ | ♥ / ☠ |
| _____ | ♥ / ☠ |
| _____ | ♥ / ☠ |

Citizens Who Love the Heroes:

- | |
|-------|
| _____ |
|-------|

Fearful Citizens (start at 3):

- | |
|-------|
| _____ |
|-------|

Optional Victory

Perhaps you do not want to run a moral quandary that casts the heroes as horrible monsters?

Fine. If you really insist: choose three townspeople, male or female. One of them is the real witch. The other two are the witch's patsies, one charmed by the witch's words and deeds, the other charmed by the witch's magic. The witch will try to frame and burn them to save their own skin if possible.

Give the witch a 7 HD holy monster protector they can summon from a fetish of bones and blood if threatened (see p. 16).

If the witch is a lodge or cult member, their goal is to take it over and bring greater prosperity to Bridge under their guidance, no matter what it takes.

If the witch is a councilor their goal is to become the mayor and assert Bridge's importance firmly to the Eastern and Western Cities bringing more money home.

If the witch is the Mayor their goal is to divine a path between the Eastern and Western Cities as the ghosts of war stir again.

These witches will not flee—Bridge is too important to them and they are too patriotic—and convinced they can get out of this quandary with just a bit of subterfuge.

If the witch is an outsider they are simply a lonely fool, meddling with forces too powerful for them to comprehend in hopes of a better life. If the outsider is the witch they will flee at the first opportunity, implicating a patsy or an innocent to cover their tracks.

There. Things are a bit simpler, though the witch isn't really that evil, is it? The simple fact is consorting with the Devil's Grandfather or Miss Netmaker always brings risks and collateral damage.

Watches

Witchburner is a timed investigation adventure. As a referee you are aiming to create a sense of time passing, dropping like leaves as autumn advances and Winterwhite closes her beautiful, icy fingers over the land.

Space, distance, and accuracy are secondary to mood so time is abstracted to the basic unit of the **watch**. A watch is about six hours long and there are four watches: morning, afternoon, evening, and night.

During a watch the heroes can do one thing thoroughly: make a social call, investigate a house, travel to a nearby wilderness location, visit the shops, go carousing, and so on.

Option: As referee you may allow the heroes to do two things shoddily in a single watch. Apply penalties to any checks they make as you see fit. Disadvantage

is a good rule to apply in such situations.

Sleep

Heroes should sleep at least one watch per day. Every watch missed applies penalties to activities.

Days without sleep

1 day:	Disadvantage on social activities.
2 days:	Disadvantage on all activities.
3 days:	Disadvantage on all activities and all saving throws, every watch save or fall asleep.
4 days:	Disadvantage on all activities and all saving throws, halved hit point maximums, every watch save or fall asleep.

Alcohol

FOUR SMART BORDERERS marched up to the white-washed farmhouse and carefully took the heavy stone stairs up to the main entrance above the root cellar. The first one, with the lieutenant's green piping on her collar, stepped forward and rapped the door with her horn-tipped rod.

The door opened and the master of the house peered out, flustered and a little nervous.

"Siro Goodwater, we are here on official Western City dispatch to assess winter stocks in the border marches."

"Oh, yes, the stocks. The winter. Yes," the red-faced man waddled back and gestured that his house was all theirs.

The three footsoldiers marched in, doffing their felt hats courteously and setting their rifles by the kitchen door before they spread around the house.

The master shifted from one foot to another, put his hands together on his flower-embroidered vest and said, "Ahem, sir, will you and your men accept a small something in welcome?"

The lieutenant smiled, "Don't fret, siro, we're your folk. Of course we'll have a drink."

Alcohol is the glue that binds the folk together, it is drunk to welcome guests, to celebrate good fortune and bury misfortune—and often, just for fun.

Every time the heroes pay a social call on a townspeople they will be offered alcohol. Every watch the heroes drink they get more drunk. If they

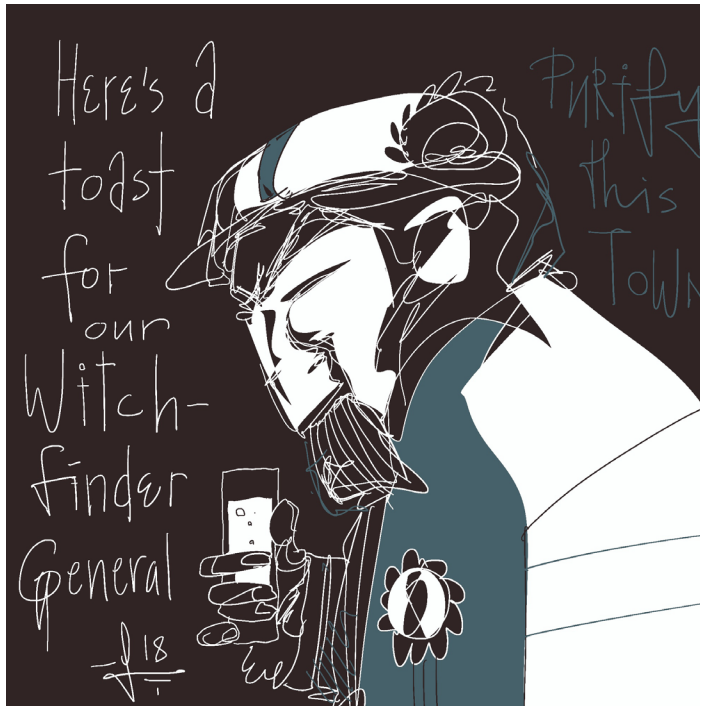
refuse, they must make a Charisma save or their host is offended (and fears them).

Every watch they do not drink the heroes sober up one step.

Option: the referee can require Constitution saves for getting drunk and/or sobering up but it really doesn't make much difference and with so much drinking it might get annoying.

Jolly Drunk Track

0 drinks:	No effect.
1 watch of drinks:	Advantage on social checks, disadvantage on physical checks.
2 watches:	Disadvantage on all checks.
3 watches:	Disadvantage on all checks, disadvantage on saves, movement halved.
4 watches:	Incapacitated.



Love, Fear, and the Mob

In Witchburner, the heroes are to investigate the evil happenings afflicting Bridge and to find the witch. The townsfolk will either love what they are doing or fear them.

Initially most townspeople will be coldly curious towards the heroes, uncertain what to think of these interlopers. They will sneak glances when they think the heroes aren't looking but generally stay polite and formal.

Being polite to townspeople, drinking their wine, sharing their meals, complimenting their morals, giving bribes, and promising to protect them will make the NPCs love the heroes. Note this in the tracking list.

Townspeople who love the heroes will generally support them, offer tips and advice, and more readily believe them when they, for example, offer evidence that they have found the witch.

Threatening townspeople, refusing to drink their schnapps, ransacking their homes, belittling them, torturing their friends, or demanding bribes will make the NPCs fear the heroes. Note this too.

Townspeople who fear the heroes will sullenly comply but spread rumours about them behind their backs, distrust them and readily hide or obscure evidence when they can. At the start of the adventure randomly choose and note three citizens who fear the heroes.

Fear of a Cold Winter Night Drives the Mob

Once more than half the townspeople fear the heroes roll 1d100 each evening. If the result is lower than the number of townspeople who fear the heroes (e.g. if 16 citizens fear the heroes and the result is 1–15) they organize into a mob clamoring for the Mayor to burn the foreign witches (the heroes).

The Mayor Talks To The Mob (d6)

1:	The mob grumbles and disperses for 3 days.
2–4:	The mob grumbles and disperses for the night.
5:	The mob's clamor moves the Mayor who orders the heroes imprisoned.
6:	The Mayor claims to be indisposed and the angry mob goes on a rampage, seizing the heroes to burn them that night.



The Mob

The frightened townspeople stand there, torches, pitchforks, rifles, sabres, and pikes raised, shouting and yelling. Their total number is double or triple the number of people who openly fear the heroes—opportunists and thrill seekers swell their numbers.

HD: number of citizens who fear the heroes (ex.: 20)

Attack: HD+2 (+22) divided into up to five attacks

Saves: half HD rounded down

Damage: HD+2 (22) divided into up to five attacks

Hit Points: HDx3 (60)

If the mob loses more than half of its hit points it disperses, leaving a third of its number on the ground bleeding or dead. All the remaining townspeople who loved the heroes are now indifferent to them. All the indifferent townspeople now fear them.

If the mob reforms after having been dispersed it attempts to seize and attack the heroes by surprise. It is now also equipped with old grenades and stunners, so things are certain to get messy.

Torture Magic Eightball

Referee! It is likely that heroes will decide to use torture to extract a confession from a suspected witch (male or female). Depending on your game group you may role-play the encounter or not.

Suffice to say, torture is evil and abominable and particularly pointless when there is actually no witch.

If you feel uncomfortable with it—which is perfectly fine—feel free to drape the details with a black screen and proceed to the results of the Torture Magic Eightball table.

Extract¹ from the *Malleus Maleficarum* (1486), translated by Montague Summers (1928). A mad-ass book about witches and devils and nonsense.

But if neither threats nor such promises will induce her to confess the truth, then the officers must proceed with the sentence, and she must be examined, not in any new or exquisite manner, but in the usual way, lightly or heavily according as the nature of her crimes demands. And while she is being questioned about each several point, let her be often and frequently exposed to torture, beginning with the more gentle of them; for the Judge should not be too hasty to proceed to the graver kind. And while this is being done, let the Notary write all down, how she is tortured and what questions are asked and how she answers.

And note that, if she confesses under torture, she should then be taken to another place and questioned anew, so that she does not confess only under the stress of torture.

The next step of the Judge should be that, if after being fittingly tortured she refuses to confess the truth, he should have other engines of torture brought before her, and tell her that she will have to endure these if she does not confess. If then she is not induced by terror to confess, the torture must be continued on the second or third day, but not repeated at that present time unless there should be some fresh indication of its probable success.

Torture Magic Eightball (d20)

After a watch of examination and enhanced interrogation techniques the accused confesses:

- 1: "It is certain! I am the witch! And two more are also in my coven!" <pick two townspeople>
- 2: "It is decidedly so. I am the witch! And with me also was <pick a townsman>."
- 3: "Without a doubt. I am the witch! But so is <pick a townsman>!"
- 4: "Yes," the witch spits a tooth, "definitely. I ... it was I all along! The witch. Me. Me and <pick a townsman>."
- 5: "Yes, truly," the witch sobs, "but <pick a townsman> led me here."
- 6: "As I see it, yes," mumbles the dazed witch.
- 7: "Most likely," says the confused witch.
- 8: "The outlook is good! The sun is shining! It's good! Good!" cackles the now-toothless witch.
- 9: "Yes," sighs the witch.
- 10: The witch mumbles and groans in assent, though missing a tongue which requires some interpretation.
- 11: Reply hazy, try again in 2 watches. The witch groans and moans, unconscious from the pain.
- 12: Ask again later. This witch is delirious.
- 13: "Better not tell you now," chuckles the mad-looking witch.
- 14: "Cannot predict now," the witch sighs, eyes glassy.
- 15: "Concentrate," the witch murmurs through the pain, "and ask again if you have no mercy."
- 16: "Don't count on it," rasps the witch, still angry despite the missing fingernails.
- 17: "My reply is no," the witch grits through torn lips.
- 18: "My gods," the witch weeps, "no, I say no!"
- 19: "I'll have you killed! Your souls fed to the Eater of Virility! Fiends!" rants the accused. A bit more work might deliver a positive result.
- 20: Very doubtful. Whether this person was an imbecile before, they have regressed to a childlike state, capable of nothing but singing songs about roses and tea cozies.

¹ (Source: *Malleus Maleficarum*, Part 3, Question XIV, http://www.sacred-texts.com/pag/mm/mm03_14a.htm)

Stats

This entire adventure is essentially free of game statistics. This is on purpose as it is first and foremost a social game.

However, the role-playing game you are using likely has combat abilities and stats and your players are likely to have their heroes draw swords and shotguns, ready to kill.

I assume approximately 3rd level characters of some variant of the oldest TTRPG. Use the following tables, if you wish to randomize the stats of the opponents your players will face.

Civilian Non-combatants (d6)

- 1-3: AC 9, HD 1, clueless
- 4-5: AC 10, HD 1, very average
- 6: AC 11, HD 2, lucky

Civilians With Combat Experience (d6)

- 1-3: AC 10, HD 1, skilled
- 4-5: AC 12, HD 2, strong
- 6: AC 13, HD 3, tough, canny

Soldiers (d6)

- 1-3: AC 12, HD 1, tough, organized
- 4-5: AC 14, HD 2, armored, veteran
- 6: AC 16, HD 4, deadly, patient

Wild Animals (d6)

- 1-3: AC 13, HD 2, pack, hunting
- 4-5: AC 12, HD 3, charging, tough
- 6: AC 11, HD 5, mauling, large

Holy Monsters (d6)

- 1-3: AC 10, HD 3, eerie, unearthly
- 4-5: AC 13, HD 7, nightmarish, horrible
- 6: AC 11, HD 11, lethal, alien

Also use these for undead, forest spirits, witch familiars, and other messed up things.

Strengths

HD (or hit dice) maps more-or-less directly to hit points and combat ability. Adjust them to taste and use descriptive adjectives to determine abilities.

HD to Combat Ability Converter

HD	Good / Poor Bonus	Damage	Hit Points
1	+3/+1	1d6	5
2	+4/+1	1d8	9
3	+5/+2	1d10	14
4	+6/+2	1d12	18
5	+7/+3	1d8+5	23
7	+8/+4	1d12+7	32
11	+11/+5	1d20+11	49



24 Random Encounters

When the heroes wander in the forests and hills around Bridge check for encounters once per watch.

Day Encounters (d12):

- 1: Green Sunbird - awesome and terrible, do not draw its attention.
- 2: Forest spirit - minding its own business.
- 3: Bears - snuffling for honey.
- 4: Wild boars - snuffling for acorns.
- 5: Deer and rabbits - looking guilty.
- 6: Squirrels and birds - busily preparing for winter.
- 7: Woodland gnomes - collecting berries and nuts for the winter.
- 8: Shepherds - bringing in flocks.
- 9: Local hunters - looking guilty.
- 10: Mushroom collectors - smug.
- 11: Peasants collecting wood - weatherbeaten.
- 12: Borderers - prowling for smugglers.

Encounter Check (d6)

- 1: Encounter, roll below for Day or Night.
- 2-3: Traces of encounter, roll below.
- 4-5: Random resource depleted.
- 6: All clear.

Night Encounters (d12):

- 1: Moon dragon - distant and terrifying, do not draw its gaze.
- 2: Forest spirit - riding wild and looking to possess some fools.
- 3: Night wisp - flickering with the red light of fast decaying times.
- 4: Wolves - seeking easy prey.
- 5: Foxes - laughing and bewitching.
- 6: Owls - flying like a ghost.
- 7: Woodland gnomes - bloodily sacrificing forest creatures to Miss Netmaker.
- 8: Dormice and mice - foraging with bulging eyes and fear-struck hearts.
- 9: Fairies - enticing with their mirror eyes.
- 10: Smoke ghosts - the feeble remains of those burned long ago.
- 11: Cultists - communing with nature.
- 12: Smugglers - prowling for borderers.



30 Citizens

This player handout lists the 30 key townspeople of this module and basic public information about them. They are all further detailed on p.27

#	Citizen	Love	Fear
1:	The Notary—Petra Inksblood (councilor)	♥	👹
2:	The Blacksmith—Irvig Staffsend (lodge)	♥	👹
3:	The Blacksmith's Boy—Leo Dukesget (apprentice, bastard)	♥	👹
4:	The Tinker—Ivan Clockmaker (lodge)	♥	👹
5:	The Tinker's Wife—Lana Staffsend (councilor, merchant matriarch)	♥	👹
6:	The Doctor—Ivana Cleanlined (councilor)	♥	👹
7:	The Doctor's Husband—Jonah Prizepeace (outsider)	♥	👹
8:	The Carpenter—Reheboam Wolfson (lodge master, emeritus)	♥	👹
9:	The Butcher—Ursula Bearbreaker (cult)	♥	👹
10:	The Mayor—Edna Kingsname (council leader)	♥	👹
11:	The Town's Uncle—Blaise Knockwood (fool)	♥	👹
12:	The Cheesemaker—Bernarda Warsmaid (cult)	♥	👹
13:	The Littlewater Cook—Pepi Oldson (cult)	♥	👹
14:	The Wild Child—Carl Foundling (outsider)	♥	👹
15:	The Beekeeper—Olga Princebrewer (cult)	♥	👹

#	Citizen	Love	Fear
16:	The Priest—David Slingstringer (cult leader, councilor)	♥	👹
17:	The Priest's Daughter—Stella Slingstringer (cult)	♥	👹
18:	The Midwife—Nina Dukesget (cult)	♥	👹
19:	The Watch Captain—Kristina Changemaker (lodge)	♥	👹
20:	The Baker—Ivan Redbasket (cult)	♥	👹
21:	The Innkeeper—Ursula Cinderdaughter (lodge mistress, councilor)	♥	👹
22:	The Tailor—Leo Foundling (lodge)	♥	👹
23:	The Woodcutter—Jesus Hammerbreaker (lone wolf)	♥	👹
24:	The Woodcutter's Wife—Anya Breakwater (outsider)	♥	👹
25:	The Old Mayor—Edward Kingsname (council leader, emeritus)	♥	👹
26:	The Milkmaid—Lea Takewood (cult)	♥	👹
27:	The Miller—Karla Knockwood (lodge)	♥	👹
28:	The Town Stranger—Oleg Waterwatcher (outsider)	♥	👹
29:	The Storemaster—Victoria Townsman (lodge)	♥	👹
30:	The Schoolmaster—Zackary Warsmaid (lodge)	♥	👹

30 Calamities

These are all the calamities from *30 Days To Burn* in a single table. With each calamity the townsfolk grow more worried about the power of the witch.

1. A brown and white calf is born with two tails at the Golden Goat ranch.
2. Purple salamanders blotched red and yellow fall from the sky like rain.
3. Red snails that reek of brimstone appear in the gardens of the little folk.
4. The Notary is afflicted with pustulent boils that leave her bedridden.
5. The Blacksmith's Boy falls asleep at the bellows and falls onto a hot poker.
6. The Tinker's Wife was attacked by a pig-faced demon on her way back from the market.
7. The Doctor's Husband fell asleep by the old lich tomb and disappeared for three days. He has no memory of what happened.
8. The Carpenter's dog began to vomit worms in the middle of the Square of Three Truths.
9. The Butcher was afflicted by stabbing pains in her feet and knees, as though iron needles were being driven into her joints.
10. A sudden hailstorm struck out of the blue, damaging the plum trees and devastating the fig harvest.
11. The Mayor woke up to find two of her teeth had fallen out.
12. The Town's Uncle was found drowned in the duck pond, long golden hair wrapped around his neck.
13. The Cheesemaker discovered that all her milk had suddenly curdled and turned green.
14. A plague of hairy caterpillars devoured the town's prize rose hips.
15. There was a fire in the distillery and the Littlewater Cook barely escaped with his life. Most of the new littlewater was lost.
16. A dirty, naked child—the Wild Child—walked out of the woods, speaking in strange tongues.
17. The full moon appeared to drip blood and the Trucker's goat gave birth to a hedgehog.
18. A bear was found among the beehives, her body intact but her head a skull. The bees had made honey inside it.
19. The Priest found his holy triangle broken and smeared with excrement.
20. The Midwife discovered a rotting placenta stuffed with dead kittens nailed to a scarecrow.
21. The Watch Captain and the Baker were found unconscious and covered in inexplicable scars.
22. A carrot grew in the Innkeeper's garden shaped like a male appendage with a screaming cherub's face.
23. The Tailor woke up to find a livid red handprint across his chest.
24. Cloven sooty footprints appeared crossing Cleareyes bridge, giving off a whiff of smoke.
25. The river was covered in a foul-smelling yellow scum, thick with obviously poisonous cherries.
26. Frogs swarmed the main road, devouring one another and dying in their hundreds in some kind of mad batrachian battle.
27. The Old Mayor rushed into the inn, singing in a high-pitched voice and wheeling with unholy gusto, before falling over stone dead.
28. The Milkmaid found three old dolls, with red, golden, and brown hair, in the stables. Some had their eyes torn out, one was pierced with sticks.
29. The Miller's duck hatched an egg with a stone lizard inside.
30. An earthquake hit the town, breaking crockery and cracking the glass sundial on the town hall.

30 Days To Burn

THE LAST DAYS of an Indian summer kept mellow as the birches and the beeches began to yellow. As the moon turned the folk grew nervous. The Lord Rightmaker confidently strode from one pillar of the community to another asking questions. Swallowing up words with those dark sockets, the comfortable miss never wavering from her lips.

Strange events continued. More people saw the rack and the chair and the cactus cushion. Whispers flew, crowds gathered, torches were lit.

The **30 Days** section is the Referee's core tool for managing the adventure. It breaks down Witchburner by watch along with events and calamities marked with bullet points. Calamities are repeated in *30 Calamities* (p. 19). Some events will require random townspeople—mark those Citizens 'W,' 'X,' 'Y,' and 'Z' on your trial tracker (p. 11).

The townspeople are labelled as belonging to the cult, the lodge, the council, or some other smaller groups. None of these groups are secret; they are merely those citizen's social affiliations.

As the heroes get in over their heads, or once they've made more than half the townspeople fear them events may spiral out of control. If the whole town ends up burning by day 7 that's perfectly fine. If an event makes no sense, ignore it or replace it with your own.

Referee! One of the best solutions (morally) for the heroes is to steal some loot and book it. You can use moral pressure from the townsfolk to sway them but don't railroad them into staying.

Unless, of course, you really want to make it a trap. Then put the town in a more remote mountain location with a single good road and have the heavy rains on the sixth day wash out the road and awaken some ancient forest horrors that will fade away in a few weeks.

1st Day - Friday - Yulia (saint's day name)

Morning: fog curls in the valley, cool.

- Greet councilors, meeting with Mayor.

Afternoon: the sun blazes yellow, swallows gather in the great linden tree, hot.

- Visit mortuary to see hand-marked fish.
- **CALAMITY:** Red snails that reek of brimstone appear in the gardens of the little folk.

Evening: lazy crickets and some final mosquitoes bother the town, pleasant.

- The Notary offers to take the heroes on a boozy tour of the town.

Night: the moon blazes, cool.

2nd Day - Saturday - Bogomil

Morning: fog lies thick, cool.

Afternoon: a few scudding clouds, a great flock of swallows heads south, hot, humid.

- A townspeople comes forward with the gift of a baked gander and a tip-off that Citizen Z dabbled in witchcraft mere years ago to make their garden grow better.

Evening: thunder rumbles, cool, damp.

- **CALAMITY:** A plague of hairy caterpillars devours the town's prize rose hips.

Night: lightning cracks, shy moon, gusts of wind, showers, cool.

1st Week

3rd Day - Sunday - Theresa

3rd quarter 🕒

Morning: fog, cool.

- A townspeople suggests that Citizen Y dabbled in witchcraft when they were young.

Afternoon: cloudy, humid, oppressive.

Evening: slight wind, cool, humid.

Night: still and cloudy, cold.

- **CALAMITY:** The Notary is afflicted with pustulent boils that leave her bedridden.

4th Day - Monday - Franz

Morning: fog as thick as a brick, cold, damp.

- The wisewives whisper that Citizen X has gone missing unexpectedly.

Afternoon: blazing sun, last swallows fly south, hot.

- **CALAMITY:** A sudden hailstorm strikes out of the blue, damaging the plum trees and devastating the fig harvest.

Evening: wind from the west, some moonlight, chilly, humid.

Night: clear, harsh stars, cold.

5th Day - Tuesday - Marcel

Morning: clear, windy, cold, humid.

- **CALAMITY:** The Mayor wakes up to find two of her teeth had fallen out.

Afternoon: strong wind, clouds gather above the Western Ridge, warm.

Evening: clear sky, ice chip stars, cold

- A group of six concerned citizens builds a bonfire in the townsquare, praying and wailing all night that the light of the Firebringer may bring purification. They are all tired and grumpy the next day.

Night: cruel stars, wan moon, cold.

6th Day - Wednesday - Vera

Morning: clear, gusty wind, scent of ozone, cool, humid.

Afternoon: thunderstorm, hot.

- **CALAMITY:** Purple salamanders blotched red and yellow fall from the sky like rain.

Evening: clouds and rain, torrents swelling, cold.

- Citizen X returns from an ordinary trade trip to Forum, they say. Citizen Z approaches the heroes with proof that they are no witch.

Night: heavy rain, rivers rising, cold.

7th Day - Thursday - Mark

Morning: light rain, cool, damp, rivers rising.

Afternoon: cloudy, humid, rivers full.

- Citizen Y approaches the heroes with a pie and suggests that Citizen Z is the actual witch.

Evening: cloudy, cold, damp, rivers falling.

- **CALAMITY:** The Butcher was afflicted by stabbing pains in her feet and knees as though iron needles were being driven into her joints.

Night: pitch dark, dank, cold.

8th Day - Friday - Brigitte

Morning: grey skies, cold, humid.

- The Doctor's Husband disappears on his walk.
- All the citizens who fear the heroes meet at the temple and petition the Priest to quickly find the witch.

Afternoon: broken clouds, cool, damp.

Evening: light rain, frogs, cold.

Night: pitch dark, thick fog, slick, cold.

- **CALAMITY:** A dirty, naked child (the Wild Child) walked out of the woods, speaking in strange tongues.

9th Day - Saturday - Abram**new moon** ●

Morning: tendrils of fog crawl through the valley-bottom, cool, wet.

- **CALAMITY:** The Priest found his holy triangle broken and smeared with excrement.

Afternoon: rays of sun break the fog, warm, humid.

- A citizen who loves the heroes discovers dolls dressed like the heroes sacrificed to the Eater of Virility in the town midden.

Evening: fog crawls back, thick, many frogs, cool

Night: black as darkest sin, fog, clammy, cold.

2nd Week**10th Day - Sunday - Daniel**

Morning: soup-thick fog, cold, damp.

- **CALAMITY:** A bear was found among the beehives, her body intact but her head a skull. The bees had made honey inside it.

Afternoon: light fog, cool, sticky.

Evening: thick with fog, frogs spawning, cold, slimy.

- A Cult Member comes to the heroes to assure them that the cult of Fourface is a state-sanctioned, orthodox religion and offers to accompany them to visit all the holy places.

Night: black, dark, fog, very cold.

11th Day - Monday - Milan

Morning: thick, oily fog, very cold, damp.

- A townspeople who loves the heroes comes to them with a love potion (barely works) and claims Citizen X sold it to them.

Afternoon: grey fog and drizzle, cool, sticky.

Evening: walls of fog, mud-slick, cold.

- **CALAMITY:** The Doctor's Husband returns after three days, missing all memory of three days after he fell asleep by the old lich tomb.

Night: dark fog, grasping mud, very cold.

12th Day - Tuesday - Max

Morning: the valley chokes in fog, very cold, damp

- A Lodge Member approaches the heroes and assures them that the lodge will support them in their efforts and offer them wares and services at a discount.

Afternoon: gusts of north wind, clear sky, cold.

Evening: windy, clear, very cold, dry.

- **CALAMITY:** The Midwife found a rotting placenta stuffed with kittens nailed to a scarecrow.

Night: clear stars, very cold.

13th Day - Wednesday - Edward

Morning: winds dropping off, clouds building over the Western Ridge, very cold.

Afternoon: still, high cloud cover, cool, pleasant.

- **CALAMITY:** Frogs swarmed the main road, devouring one another and dying in their hundreds in some kind of mad batrachian battle.

Evening: still, cloudy, cool, pleasant.

- The citizens who love the heroes approach them as a group and denounce Citizen W, who fears the heroes, as the likely witch.

Night: still, dark, cool.

14th Day - Thursday - Felix

Morning: still, steel-grey clouds, cold, quiet.

Afternoon: lowering clouds, ominous, cold.

Evening: windy night, howling gusts, very cold.

- A Councilor approaches the heroes and demands to know why progress is so slow. They offer a bonus of 300 cash if the witch is found by the 17th.

Night: stars shimmer in the gusting north wind, wan moonlight, very cold.

- **CALAMITY:** There is a fire in the distillery and the Littlewater Cook barely escapes with his life. Most of the new littlewater was lost.

15th Day - Friday - Ivana

Morning: icy north wind blows, clear as sparkling glass, very cold.

Afternoon: north wind dies down, clear, cold, dry.

- **CALAMITY:** The Carpenter's dog vomits worms in the middle of the Square of Three Truths.

Evening: north wind runs through the valleys, like a wolf pack on the run, the stars sparkle, very cold.

- A group of ten concerned citizens builds a bonfire and arrives with schnapps and pitchforks, calling for the witch to be found soon. They are tired the next day.

Night: still, the moon blooms, very cold.

16th Day - Saturday - Hedwig

Morning: thick fog, still, damp, cold.

- The citizens who love the heroes approach them to demand they thoroughly interrogate Citizen W.

Afternoon: fog burns away and the sun blazes down, warm and pleasant.

- **CALAMITY:** A carrot grew in the Innkeeper's garden shaped like a male appendage with a screaming cherub's face.

Evening: the fog creeps back, clammy as the hands of dead lovers, cold, damp.

Night: thick fog glimmers with moonlight, cold, damp crawls into every crevice.

3rd Week**17th Day - Sunday - Daisy -****1st quarter ☾**

Morning: fog you could cut with a knife, silence, cool.

- **CALAMITY:** The Cheesemaker discovers that all her milk has curdled and turned green.

Afternoon: thunder rumbles between flashes of sunlight, cool, static electricity.

Evening: yellowish fog, light drizzle, cold, wet.

Night: light fog, blurry moon, cold, wet.

- Citizen Z disappears in the foggy night and rumours swirl. Concerned citizens approach the heroes to ask if they know what happened.

18th Day - Monday - Luke

Morning: warm south-western wind, golden and brazen leaves fly high above, humid, oppressive.

- All ten concerned citizens who built the bonfire come down with runny noses and bad coughs. They attribute it to the witch's curse. A citizen denounces Citizens Y and X to the heroes.

Afternoon: sun blazes down, like a red weeping giant, giving one final blow of its great glowing fist, hot, hazy.

Evening: thunderstorm, rumbling thunder, gusts of hot wind, heavy curtains of rain, cool.

- **CALAMITY:** The Miller's duck hatches an egg with a stone lizard inside.

Night: cloud-thick sky, light wind, dark, cold.

19th Day - Tuesday - Edna

Morning: leaden sky, drizzle, cool.

- A Councilor approaches the heroes and emphasizes that this has been going on too long, and demands results before the 25th.

Afternoon: leaden sky, heavy rain, cool.

Evening: dark, drizzle, rivers rising cool.

- **CALAMITY:** The Tinker's Wife is attacked by a pig-faced demon on her way from the market.

Night: very dark, thunder rumbles, drizzle, rivers rising, cold.

20th Day - Wednesday - Irena

Morning: leaden sky, heavy rain, cool.

Afternoon: slate sky, drizzle, rivers swollen cool.

- An epidemic of coughing and wheezing spreads through town making everybody tired. The citizens who love the heroes come forward emphasizing that two citizens who fear the heroes are obviously suspicious.

Evening: dark, heavy rain, cool.

Night: dark and oppressive, still with showers, cold.

- **CALAMITY:** A brown and white calf is born with two tails at the Golden Goat ranch of Citizen Q.

21st Day - Thursday - Ursula

Morning: slate sky, drizzle, rivers burst banks, cold.

- Fourteen concerned citizens gather on the bridge and throw salt and ash into the White-water to spare them from the witch's flood. They are tired the next day.

Afternoon: white sky, drizzle, marshes flood, cool.

Evening: dark, drizzle, floodplains flood, cold.

- **CALAMITY:** The Town's Uncle is found drowned in the duck pond, long golden hair wrapped around his neck.

Night: dark, drizzle, flooding, very cold.

22nd Day - Friday - Wendel

Morning: leaden sky, heavy rain, flood, cold.

Afternoon: sky like bruised peaches, thunderstorm, flood, cold.

- **CALAMITY:** The Watch Captain and the Baker are found unconscious and covered in inexplicable scars.

Evening: warm south-western wind, drizzle, cool.

- The citizens who fear the heroes gather to petition the mayor that two citizens who love the heroes must be arrested and interrogated.

Night: damp wind, showers, cold.

23rd Day - Saturday - Severus

Morning: cloudy sky, wet, boggy, rivers dropping, cold reaches with bony fingers.

- **CALAMITY:** The river was covered in a foul-smelling yellow scum, thick with obviously poisonous cherries.

Afternoon: dull grey sky, wet, floods receding, cold.

- A citizen who loves the heroes comes to warn them that the witch, a random citizen who fears them, is planning to move against them.

Evening: overcast sky, damp, mud and mulch left over from the flood, very cold.

Night: glistening high clouds, obscured moonlight, muddy, very cold.

4th Week**24th Day - Sunday - Raphael**

Morning: glistening white sky, humid, muddy, cold.

- Citizen Z is found in the woodshed of another citizen, unconscious and bleeding.

Afternoon: patches of clear sky, cool, humid.

Evening: rolling banks of fog, very cold, clammy.

Night: thickening fog, scattered moonlight, very cold, damp.

- **CALAMITY:** The Tailor awakens with a livid red handprint on his chest.

25th Day - Monday - Daria

full moon ○

Morning: thick fog, drizzle, very cold.

Afternoon: thick fog with cold rain, thick clouds, uncomfortably cold.

Evening: heavy rain, mud like glue, very cold.

- **CALAMITY:** The full moon appeared to drip blood and the trucker's goat gave birth to a hedgehog.

Night: very heavy rain, dark, bogs and ponds overflowing, mud, very cold.

- Two crowds of citizens gather, those who love the heroes and those who fear them. They shout and scream at each other. 1d6 people are hurt.

26th Day - Tuesday - Lucien

Morning: very heavy rain, torrents swell, mud runs through streets, very cold.

- **CALAMITY:** The Milkmaid finds three old dolls, with red, golden, and brown hair, in the stables. Some had their eyes torn out, one was pierced with sticks.

Afternoon: high clouds, scattered showers, cold.

- The Priest visits the Mayor to petition for a rapid solution to the crisis. The citizens who love the heroes come to them with a major tip off about a citizen who fears them.

Evening: clouds flock like sheep, carving the sky into a patchwork, very cold.

Night: scattered cloud, strong moonlight, very cold.

27th Day - Wednesday - Sabina

Morning: high, patchy clouds, gusting winds, dead leaves whirl in circles, very cold.

Afternoon: thick banks of clouds, thunder rumbles, very cold.

- The Innkeeper comes to the Mayor with a quick solution to bring the town together: burning the heroes. The citizens who fear the heroes capture and tie up a citizen who loves the heroes, presenting them to the Mayor as the abominable witch.

Evening: north wind blows, clear skies, icy stars and moonlight, first frosts.

- **CALAMITY:** The Old Mayor rushes into the inn, singing in a high-pitched voice and wheeling with unholy gusto before falling over stone dead.

Night: gusts of wind, clear skies, strong moonlight, troughs and buckets freeze over.

28th Day - Thursday - Simon

Morning: clear and bright, icy cold.

- **CALAMITY:** The Blacksmith's Boy falls asleep at the bellows and tumbles onto a hot poker.

Afternoon: sparkling day, a whiff of winter on the air, cold.

- The Mayor and the councilors ask the heroes if they have the true witch in custody. If they don't they warn them to stay in the inn tomorrow, on Saint Ida's day, because Winterwhite's demons will be about.

Evening: gentle curtains of fog rise from the rivers, the stars sparkle and the moon shines, very cold.

Night: thick fog glows with moonlight, freezing.

29th Day - Friday - Ida

Morning: creamy white fog, embracing, very cold.

Afternoon: cloudless skies, cool white sun, bracing.

- **CALAMITY:** Cloven sooty footprints appear on Cleareyes bridge, giving off a whiff of smoke.

Evening: treetops wave and whistle, dead leaves swirl and sigh, very cold.

- The good people burn a 'witch.' If nobody is currently in the Mayor's custody, a mob moves to burn the heroes as witches.

Night: light breeze, gentle moonlight, freezing.

30th Day - Saturday - The End of Days

Morning: clear, sunny, icy cold, the frost decorates the valley with a gentle hoar.

- The town is at peace again but scarred by the events of the last mad month. The dead leave gaps in the collective memory and Miss Netmaker smiles with Winterwhite, chuckling at this merry dance.

Afternoon: clear, sunny, pleasant.

Evening: clear, moon and stars, cold.

Night: clear, moonlight and gentle stars, very cold.

- **UNFORTUNATE COINCIDENCE** (formerly calamity): An earthquake hits the town, breaking crockery and cracking the glass sundial on the town hall.



The People of Bridge

This chapter of Witchburner details the 30 key NPCs of Bridge, their houses, secret lore, treasures, and dependents. This is the real heart of Witchburner—thirty ordinary townspeople in a small, insecure but important town. Their hopes and dreams and nightmares in the face of an oncoming winter and implacable witchcraft.

THE RIGHTMAKER LOOKED comfortable as she surveyed the nervous townspeople in their Sunday blacks.

“The witch could be anybody and anybody could be their familiar. They might be riding the person next to you like a jockey rides a prize thoroughbred,” she said, “But don’t worry. The fire of truth will burn

them out. We’ll purify them right down to their fucking shit.”

The crowd gulped, aghast at the language and the threat alike. The Notary snuck a sidelong glance at the fox-wearing Mayor. The Doctor peered at the Notary’s gleaming crowstone ring. The Priest glared at the Beekeeper.

The Rightmaker chuckled, “Oh, please! Don’t go getting paranoid. Finding the dark lord’s arselickers is a science. If you’ve nothing to hide we’ll keep you safe.”

The beetling soldiers smiled amiably.

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The Notary—Petra Inksblood

Councilor

Scarred, rich, noble, haughty, afraid.

TALL AND GRACEFUL, Petra dreamt of becoming a royal concubine but her mother had other ideas.

“No daughter of mine, as smart as you are, will be taken to the Beloved City, the Eastern City, to pander to that usurper’s wanton heresies,” she said as she carved the marks of the Firebringer and the Water-drinker into Petra’s teenage cheeks and forehead.

Her blood mixed with tears as her mother closed her future off.

“There’s ink in her veins,” says an old flame, “no passion at all.”

Her library is thick with crusty legal tomes. Their noble blue leather bindings hide steamy romance novels and poems.

Her locked diary is full of torrid and graceful poetry, much of it about the town’s handsome Stranger, Oleg Waterwatcher.

House

Inksblood House is a graceful Imperial with delicately decorated double-sash windows and glazed yellow and green tiled roof. Petra recently installed a very modern floor heating system in the mustard velvet drawing room.

Treasures

In a **hidden safe** a small fortune in Republican and early Imperial jewelry (10,000 cash). In the **study** a small horde of coin and promissory notes (500 cash). Decorative Imperial statuary (5 sacks, 2,000 cash). A poignant tapestry of the resurrection of the Firebringer (3 sacks, 1,000 cash). Fine furnitures accumulated over several generations (20 sacks, 5,000 cash).

Household

Brother: Michael Inksblood, a half-wit.

Lackey: David Bentsabre, a kind and devious fellow with a foxy air.

Cook: Clarice Ironbutler, a rake-thin connoisseur of clams and seafood.

Gardener: Victor Blacktemple, a jolly mustachioed know-nothing.

The Blacksmith—Irvig Staffsend

Lodge Member

Gruff, iron-haired, frustrated, sad.

IRVIG'S FISTS CLENCHED and released, clenched and released. His jaw champed at his scrimshaw-and-oak pipe, gnawing another lip to the bit. His ice-chip eyes glared. He didn't say a word.

With one hand like a vise he gripped the tongs, holding the swordbar in place, with his other hand he lifted the smithing hammer. The boy pounded the bellows and looked on in awe.

Irving nodded. Some spirits aligned, some stars shone favorably.

The hammer struck. Again. Again. Sparks flew like damned souls exploding into nothingness in the dark lake of the Waterdrinker.

Again.

The hairline crack. Doctor Love's crack.

With a wordless cry of anguish, Irving flung the hammer, knocking another hole in the north wall's plaster.

"Go to bed boy, go to bed," he sobbed, "We're done for the night."

The boy snuck away quietly, leaving the weeping smith to put the swordbar back into the ore pile.

"He hasn't been right since the Tax Prince came through two years ago and took away his daughter," nod the wisebeards by the linden tree.

(Referee! The wisewives and the wisebeards function like a Greek chorus. Scatter them on a couple of benches under the Elder linden tree, spying and commenting on everyone.)

On a mantel place Irving keeps seven paintings of his wife in her younger years with an urn of her ashes.

In a locket around his neck he keeps a humble prophecy that the perfect sword will bring his daughter Linda back to the Bridge.

Under the anvil he has buried four charms to help him make the perfect sword. A glass blade for the Firebringer, a porcelain sherd for the Earthbeater,

an aquamarine wrapped in a virgin's hair for the Waterdrinker, and the skull of a black hawk for the Devil's Grandfather.

House

The Robber's House where the blacksmith lives with his family is an old thing of heavy beams, river stones, and plaster with an even older chimney of summoned stone. It was old when the Republicans were still a twinkling in the eye of the Rebellion and nobody had yet thought of the Empire.

Treasures

Hidden behind a false stone in the **chimney** Irving keeps 1,000 cash baked into three clay bricks. In a small chest **under his bed** he keeps coins and jewelry worth 200 cash.

Secret Lore

The Metal Whispers in the Dark (Metal Wizard)

Ability: Irving can tell with a touch what weaknesses there are in a metal and where. He acquired this ability after winning a wrestling match with a fairy one night by the Iron Duke's Mound.

Effect: Advantage on smithing checks and checks to break chains or bars.

Household

Sister: Irma Staffsend is a grim spinster, a shield-maiden of the Republic in her youth.

Son: Vili Staffsend is serious beyond his years, haunted by the loss of his mother to the Silent Plague, and his grand-mother's loss of speech.

Mother: Isis Bearbreaker smiles gladly, but cannot speak anymore.

The Blacksmith's Boy—Leo Dukesget

Apprentice, Bastard

One-eyed, surly, wary, kind.

"WHO WROTE THIS ... embarrassment ... on the black-board?" asked the schoolmaster.

Silence. Thick as the oak floor boards.

A small golden-haired cherub of a boy raised his hand.

"Yes, Prentice Oldson?"

"It was the bastard, siro," piped up the boy.

"Again?"

"Yes! Yes," a chorus from the gaggle of boys in the classroom, soon joined by a few of the girls.

"Was it you, Leo Dukesget?"

Leo said nothing, looking down at his dirt-stained hands.

"Silence is assent. Come up here, Leo Dukesget."

Leo got up heavily and trudged forward to the iron-bound lectern. The Schoolmaster's spectacles flashed as he look down at the boy, then down at the rest of the schoolchildren.

Leo held out his hands, thin scars white on his dark skin.

The schoolmaster raised his ruler of office and the children began to chant, "Three truths and four directions."

Whack.

"Gaze clear, do not lie, nobly justice bear."

Whack.

"Past and future, man and wife, death and life."

Whack. Whack. Whack.

Leo fiercely loves the Blacksmith, Irving, who took him under his wing three years ago, but he never says this, afraid of losing Irving. He was always jealous of the smith's daughter, Linda.

He has the makings of a great smith but is afraid of seeming too competent, fearing that his apprenticeship would end too soon.

Leo is terrified of the fairy mounds and always carries a chunk of star metal in his pocket, to keep the fairies away. When he was five a blind-eyed girl told him in a voice that was not her own, "your father was a fairy spawn, I smell it on you, flower meat, that's what fairies call you. Tasty, tender, trembling."

House

Leo has no house. His mother was cast out when she showed signs of her embarrassment and her name was struck through in the Ledger of Families.

Treasures

Leo has saved ten cash in a **tree** in the town graveyard.

Family

Mother: Vera Namelost makes her living in the Western City. "Whoring herself," mutter the wisewives.

Sister: Irena Dukesget, Leo's twin sister, is buried under the Bastard Tree in the graveyard.

Bird: Sakan is a shockingly intelligent green and red parakeet. It found Leo half a year ago.

The Tinker—Ivan Clockmaker

Lodge Member

Short, walrus-mustached, sniffy, cunning.

"It's ALRIGHT, IT'S alright," she cooed, stroking his trembling shoulders.

"It happens," she said.

With a spasm he whirled round, slapping her face. Blood gushed from one nostril. Eyes trembled shocked, wide.

"How would you know it fucking happens? How would you know? This is your fucking fault! Happens? Whore! How would you know?"

His eyes bulged and foam flecked his mustache as he scrambled with his hands, trying to reach her throat.

"How the fuck would you know? You've cuckolded me! You put the Eater's horns on me, you bitch!"

He twitched, veins throbbing as she held his wrists with firm hands. He tried to twist and crawl, to kick her, bite her, gouge out her eyes.

It was her fault, he knew it.

She'd done this to him, somehow.

His wife had cursed him with a limp dick.

"Who was it? Who was the bastard? Who's been porking Ivan Clockmaker's wife?"

Her eyes narrowed, then she head-butted him full in the face.

Dark.

Ivan Clockmaker keeps a cot in his workshop.

"Because he works so hard," say the wisebeards.

"Because his wife has had enough of him," say the wisewives.

"He's not welcome here," says Ursula the Innkeeper.

Ivan carries two watches: one works and one is dead, a memento of his father who never returned from the Imperial wars.

"Ah, his father, now old Jan Clockmaker was something else. Handsome, smart, talented. Taken too soon," they say.

House

The Westerner's House is stout and stolid. Heavy larch beams, workmanlike pine sashes, old-fashioned decorations, a sturdy slate roof. Ivan's workshop is a recent annex, small and slightly shabby next to the big building.

Treasures

Ivan's wife keeps their jewelry **with her** (2,000 cash) but the **workshop** strongbox has 300 cash. Ivan's tools, clockworks, and machines are worth another 3,000 cash (10 sacks).

Household

Wife: Lana Staffsend, a powerful matriarch now runs the family shop and accounts.

Oldest daughter: Elisabeth Clockmaker, a dull but beautiful young woman.

Second daughter: Jennifer Clockmaker, a spirited, strong girl, training to join the town watch.

Third daughter: Sissy Clockmaker, a pretty and flirtatious girl, Ivan's favorite.

Fourth daughter: Zenobia Clockmaker, a studious child with wise eyes and an unusual birthmark on her neck.

The Tinker's Wife—Lana Staffsend

Councilor, Merchant Matriarch
Fiery, sinewy, outspoken, brutal.

THE MAN RAISED his gilt porcelain teacup and admired the neo-modernist decorations. His long fingers caressed the overworked crockery while his nostrils flared as he inhaled the zesty aroma.

The woman opposite him carefully folded down the sea island cotton napkin in front of her then pushed it to the middle of the polished stone table to catch an errant drop of tea as she pored herself a cup.

Holding it in her large hand, it seemed like a dainty rose and green seashell. Translucent. Fragile.

The man took a small sip, grimaced slightly, then pulled the napkin to him to dry the bottom of his cup before he set it down.

His eyes flickered down to his hand before he put it in his pocket.

"This could all be so unnecessary," he said.

On the promenade a hay cart pulled by a pair of dusty oxen trundled by. Once it passed the woman nodded.

"Sira Staffsend, I ask one last time. Just to make sure. Our friends do not want to misinterpret your wishes," he spoke again.

"Linda is the only one worth anything," she said, "Some of my daughters are nice enough, but disappointing."

"We will keep her safe, I swear."

"You can't keep her safe if you want her to learn how the world works where Cleareyes can't see, my Prince."

The man swallowed another gulp of the bitter tea.

"She's runs both her husband's and her brother's businesses," chuckles the Innkeeper.

Her family mausoleum is large, imposing, and impeccably maintained. Lana sometimes stores shipments there, for the spirits to maintain.

House

Staff House burned down with her father a decade ago. She goes there weekly, giving flowers and stones to his memory. Now she holds court in the Westerner's House.

Secret Lore

Thunder Hare Coffee

Ability: Lana knows a magical recipe for thunder hare coffee, a relaxing drink. It blends the fur of a hare, the fruit of a thunder-struck tree, and fine Empire coffee.

Effect: A cup of thunder hare coffee gives advantage to saves against charm and fear effects for a day.

Treasures

Besides Ivan Clockmaker's treasure in Westerner's House, Lana has a ruby **ring** of Fourface (1,000 cash) and a **dragonskin wallet** of promissory and cult notes (2,000 cash).

Household

Husband: Ivan Clockmaker, a twitchy, weaselly man, but intensely skillful.

Oldest daughter: Elisabeth Clockmaker, dull but beautiful.

Second daughter: Jennifer Clockmaker, a spirited, unimaginative girl, training to join the town watch.

Third daughter: Sissy Clockmaker, a pretty, shallow girl, Ivan's favorite.

Fourth daughter: Zenobia Clockmaker, a born academic with an unusual birthmark on her neck.

Niece: Linda Staffsend, a smart, feisty girl taken by the Tax Prince two years ago.

Brother: Irving Staffsend, the blacksmith, a tough, tragic figure broken by the loss of his daughter to the Tax Prince.

The Doctor's Husband—Jonah Prizepeace

Outsider

Slender, raven-haired, melancholy, flustered.

JONAH'S INK-STAINED HANDS trembled as he held the notes. His masterpiece. The essence of his beautiful, plump muse distilled into four soaring songs. The Quartet of the Springtime of Amusement.

Tomorrow he would take them to the Master of Saint Gelda's Court just as he had promised. His music would raise the hearts of everyone in the Western City.

There was a knock on the door. Timid.

"Yes?"

The door cracked open and a grey-faced school clerk stood there.

"Yes, what is it, man?"

"Siro Prizepeace, you are invited to a college wake at Saint Gelda's Court this Saturday. The Master has died."

Jonah's hands went still.

In a leather satchel with silver lion head clasps Jonah has kept his quartet neatly packaged, ready for delivery to his dead master.

Every night he composes new songs, every midnight he crumples them up and throws them away, more terrified than ever that they might kill somebody. Every morning his wife quietly retrieves them and stores them in a heavy ghost-bound chest.

He wears a glass amulet with a tiny gold scroll, wherein he melodramatically promised his soul to the Devil's Grandfather in exchange for an immortal song.

Jonah is convinced the Devil's Grandfather has tried to steal his soul many times so he visits the priest and the temple Fourface and the Three Avatars religiously.

House

Southcomer's massive house is his home in Bridge, but in the Western City he claims a fine Postimperial apartment on the Utz' Imperial.

Treasures

Most of his songs are absolute rubbish, but thirty-six of them are sublime operatic meditations on the tragic glory of a man's strivings in the face of a reckless universe (5,000 cash to a connoisseur). Indeed, they are so transcendent they might well have been written by a different person than the melancholy rake the townspeople know and grudgingly accept.

Friends

Dog: Lionheart is a good dog, surprisingly intelligent, and absolutely devoted to Jonah.

Rogue: Vladimir Oathborn misses their days of carousing after the opera in the Western City. When the greensmoke dreams grow melancholy he sends money and pleading letters to Jonah, begging him to return and paint the town red.

The Doctor—Ivana Cleanlined

Councilor

Fat, jolly, laughing, cruel.

"SHE WAS A good woman."

"My condolences."

"I'm so sorry, Ivana."

"You will be there for your father now, won't you?"

"The poor man. The poor man."

"I'm so sorry for your loss."

"She left us too soon."

Their words meant nothing to Ivana as she stood by the pine casket decorated with folk scenes. The dead flesh in there was not her mother.

Her mother had been loud and sharp-tongued. Her mother had baked the sweetest cakes and followed them up with the bitterest observations.

"My little Ivana, back from the school, and so round. Was it the boys or the cakes this time?"

She remembered Doctor Franz Woodstone's classes, dissecting the Western city's criminals and the Eastern city's spies, learning about how the body worked, where the bodily spirits pulled and pushed to animate the muscles, how the spirits precipitated into the bodily effluvia, how the person came out of the interactions of organic and inorganic essences in the meat and spirit of the brain.

She remembered the day they dissected the dogman, noting the milk ducts, the shifted organs. She had been eating a sandwich. Provincial blue cheese and wind dried ham. As she took her third-to-last bite, two slices of ham and a pickle had fallen into the ventral cavity.

They had winked at her.

"Should I still eat them or not?" She had thought, "I should probably at least cover them up."

She had quickly shifted a coil of intestine with a convenient caliper. The winking ham and pickle had disappeared before Doctor Woodstone turned back from discussing the dogman's nasal structure to instruct her to sew up the corpse's stomach.

"She was a witch," the rattling voice jerked Ivana back into the wake.

"Sorry, sir Oldson?"

"I'm sorry for your loss, but I'm not sad to see that vicious woman in the ground."

"My mother was the sweetest woman there ever was, she taught me more than anyone else," replied Ivana.

The withered sir Oldson looked at Ivana with her one good, green eye, "yes, I suppose she did."

"She studied in the Western city, but some of her cures reek more of the burner years and the banshee caves than modern science," said the Tinker's Wife.

In her stores she keeps medicines to relieve aches of the body and soul. Her loyal customers come back, week after week, so that she may minister to them.

Every night Ivana wakes and says it is her indigestion. She eats cake to soothe her conscience.

In her cellar are the chains where she once kept a couple of pigboys, but they are gone now—too expensive to maintain. Ivana is convinced their gruesome spirits have afflicted the place but hasn't yet convinced herself to brick it up.

House

Southcomer's House is a massive thing of arches and barrel vaults, plaster gleaming alabaster, with heavy shutters of red and white. Nobody ever complains of screams from the surgery which is a testament to its long dead architect.

Secret Lore

The Flesh Sings (Biomancer)

Ability: When Ivana touches flesh it sings to her and tells her what it has experienced.

Effect: She can discern the medical history and condition of a living creature, for example whether it has parasites, if it has broken any bones, when it was last sick, or what kind of injury it last suffered.

Treasures

The furniture is utilitarian and dull but the cutlery and **crockery** are the finest White City porcelains and a Redland gilt brass and silver set (2,000 cash). Her **kitchens** are stocked with fine and rare herbs and ingredients (2 sacks, 500 cash). Her **surgery** is equipped with a surprising amount of electromagnetic and vivistatic equipment as well as a very modern adjustable surgical bed (10 sacks, 3,000 cash). The house **vault** holds only 100 cash and mouldering deeds to some remote woods and pastures in the highlands above the Bridge.

Household

Father: Ronald Cleanlined is a bear of a mean with slate grey walrus mustache, the town apothecary is now declining in health and at a loss for what to do without his wife.

Husband: Jonah Prizepeace calls himself a composer but has shown nothing since their return from the Western City three years ago. Every day he walks the high hills in a black mood, every night his wife's concoctions soothe his soul.

Son: Ilya Cleanlined is a golden-haired boy who likes to play with dolls.

Cook: Victor Blacktemple is a thin, supercilious man with a flair for cupcakes.

Nurse: Adam Snapdragon is a bulky chap who looks like a butcher.

Visitor: Vera Foxdaughter is a friend from medical school who visits once a month in her red lacquered carriage; all furs and pale, soft hands.



The Carpenter—Reheboam Wolfson

Lodge Master (emeritus)

Old, gnarled, pot-bellied, slow-spoken

THE CARPENTER SETTLED back in his massive wooden throne carved and whittled with unsettling Southlandish designs of crawling centipedes and horse-headed humans. He took up a cedar splint and lit it in the wrought iron lamp and studied it with cloudy blue eyes.

“Will you support my candidacy, siro?” asked the younger man with the green lodge apprentice cap.

The carpenter brought the splint up to his unlit cigar stub and puffed once, twice, thrice. The fermented tobacco ends caught the flame and guttered into a yellow glow as smoke wreathed his canyon-lined, clean-shaven face.

“Siro, I have the backing of ten men in the lower town and of the whole of Disaster Village.”

The carpenter swiveled his eyes to look closely at the young man with chubby stubble-specked cheeks and thinning hair.

“Baltezar Knockwood, have you seen the slugs this summer? They’re everywhere. They come out in the dark and destroy my garden. Eat my wife’s lettuce and despoil the vines I planted twenty years ago. Look! There’s one now.”

A bright red slug, long as a hand, was making its slimy progress across the veranda.

The carpenter got up slowly and reached over to a tool stand withdrawing a long pair of scissors. Baltezar looked on, confused. The carpenter lifted up the slug with one scissor blade. The startled invertebrate curled around, its foot gripping the cold steel.

“There seems to be no end to them.”

The carpenter clenched his hand and the scissor blades around the pivot neatly snipping the slug in half. The bisected slug plopped to the ground and writhed feebly, white foam and intestines bubbling from its open ends.

“Look, there’s another one.”

The carpenter snipped the second slug. His rangy yellow dog padded up from under his wooden throne

to sniff at the dying mollusc. The carpenter sat down once more.

“Now, Baltezar, you said you wanted to join the Waterdrinker Society?”

Reheboam’s father died in the Western City’s army far to the east when Reheboam was a child. He always meant to go visit the Giving Fields where his bones lie but now he knows he will never manage.

He loves his dog, but his wife hates it. Says it’s the devil’s own spawn.

“He changed when he turned thirty-three,” says the Mayor, “Before, he preached revolution then he settled down and built the Waterdrinkers into what they are.”

House

Whitewasher’s House is a large, rambling building, with a massive barn converted into a workshop. Old chestnuts grow about it and wooden gangways ramble around the sides of the house.

Treasures

In his wine **cellar** Reheboam keeps a clay urn baked shut with all his father’s jewelry and gold, he does not know how much it is worth (500 cash). In a massive **bedside** table carved with a Southland version of the Waterdrinker he keeps his coins (200 cash) and title deeds to woods and a sawmill up the valley. Seventeen dogs carved from precious woods line his **mantelshelf** (170 cash).

Secret Lore

Giving Away The Sin (Purifier)

Ability: Reheboam can suck the memory and karmic repercussions of a deed from a person and transfer it into a trusting animal such as a dog.

Effect: The memory, guilt, and spiritual effects of an act are wiped away.

Household

Wife: Maria Princebrewer is thin and bent with a sense of humour and a love of bad news.

Eldest Son: Kaspar Wolfson left to join the Western City army. He sends letters.

Second Son: Mikel Wolfson left to join the Eastern City army. He sends money.

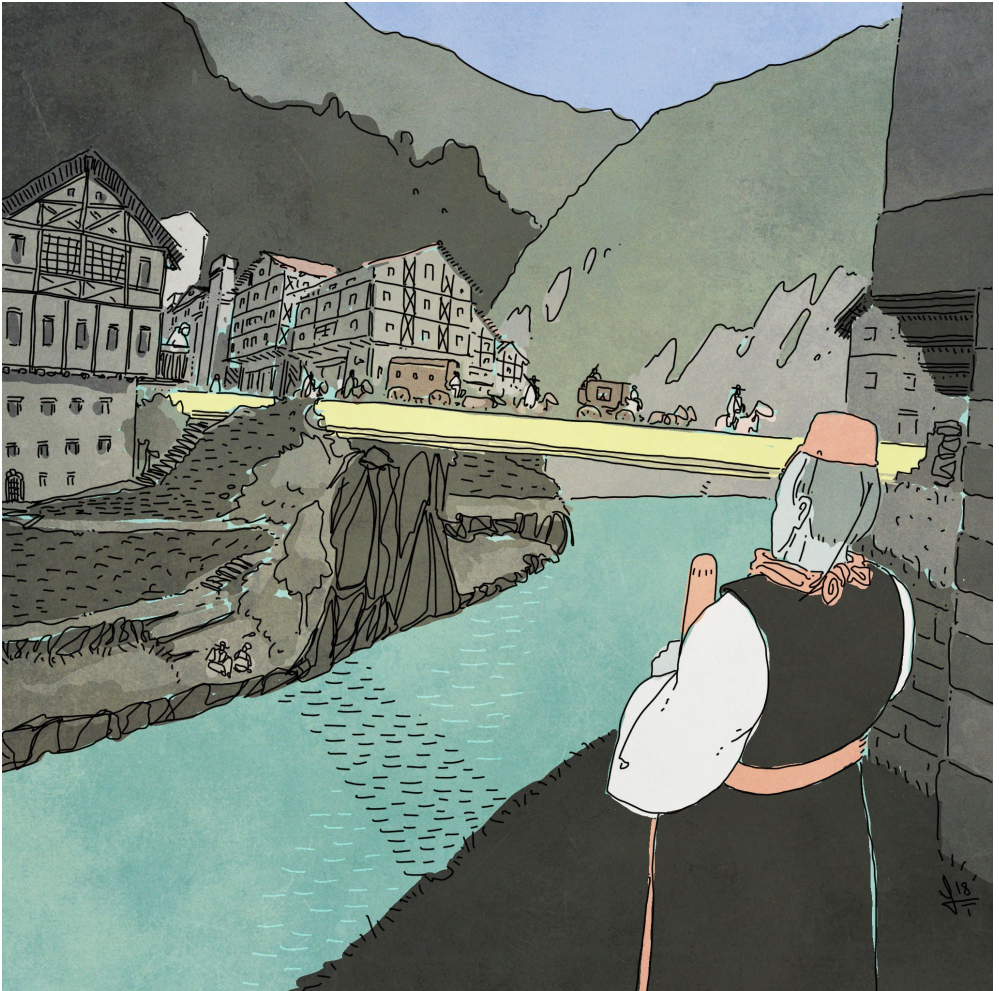
Third Son: Irving Wolfson is looking forward to inheriting the carpentry workshop. He is a poor carpenter and loves drink.

Fourth Son: Viktor Wolfson is an excellent carpenter, currently working as an assistant to a rival of Reheboam's in Channel Town.

Assistant: Yuri Bentbirch is a quiet fellow who lost his tongue in the war and follows Reheboam like a loyal dog.

Foster Child: Ines Warsget is a slim, shallow girl on the cusp of adulthood.

Dog: Jaqa is a good dog, lean, tough, and always hungry. So hungry.



The Butcher—Ursula Bearbreaker

Cult Member

Sinewy, sharp-toothed, dark-haired, shy

THE MEMORY SHONE like a dewdrop in the crystal morning. It had been her eighth Springtime.

“Is it for me?”

“Yes, just for you.”

“I’ll call him Snuffles because of his pretty pink nose!”

Her had mother smiled approvingly and the girl went to play with her pet piglet.

Late that same autumn the young Ursula had learned how to use the long, sharp slaughtering knife to sever the carotid artery and jugular vein of Snuffles and prepare him for the Wintersun pies.

That memory shone darker, rainbow sparkles hiding a pool of dark, sticky oil in Ursula’s mind. Still, Winterwhite had stayed away that year.

Ursula sighed and opened the bone box where the slaughtering knife lay. It was time to sharpen it again.

This spring she had given Veronika a pretty little dappled piglet. Bumble she called him.

“She’s stronger than she thinks,” says a wisebeard, “lived through that first husband and has a decent second. Stronger than she thinks.”

Every week she visits the priest with fine-cut meat, every week he takes away her nightmares.

Sometimes she visits the carpenter with a chicken or a goat, returning without it.

House

Bear House is an old thing of massive larch and oak beams holding together daubed-wicker walls and black shutters. Beneath it are cold cellars of grey brick from before Republic or Rebellion.

Treasures

In a scrimshawed **box** made from the teeth of sea monsters Ursula keeps her jewelry (400 cash). In an ochre-stained leather **pouch** around her neck she keeps five golden dragons (125 cash) and 50 cash.

Secret Lore

The Quieting Cave

Ability: Ursula paints the walls of a cave of the Earth-beater red with ochre and blood, feeding the uterus of the Earth and keeping away earthquakes. The priest helps her with her designs. She repaints them once a year before the Wintersun.

Effect: Earthquakes are less likely to happen in the area and any magic that would provoke earthquakes or manipulate the earth is twice as difficult without first breaking the wards.

Household

Daughter: Veronika Bearbreaker née Clockmaker is a precocious, dark-eyed girl, with a hand-shaped birthmark on her left thigh.

Dead Husband: Miha Clockmaker was a jealous hunter who died after pursuing an ivory-horned chamois too deep into the Seven Valleys.

Living Husband: Gregor Inksblood is a kind man, a farmer, and very worried that it has been five years and still he and Ursula have no child. Perhaps they have been cursed her husband’s jealous ghost?

Mother: Morana Bearbreaker is a crone, her voice gone, resting in her rocking chair, mind already flown to the next world.

Aunt: Mira Bearbreaker, a rotund old woman who likes to bake biscuits for the children.

The Mayor—Edna Kingsname

Council Leader

Nervous, greasy, red-haired, calculating

"WE CANNOT MAKE a deal with that devil!" groaned Petra slumping back in her leather chair.

"We don't really have a choice," grinned Ivana, the Doctor.

"It's just a five-year contract," nodded the Schoolmaster.

"Those are imperial watchtowers! You're suggesting we sign them over to that foreign gold-digger."

Edna crunched down on the sugar glass candy she was rolling around her mouth and looked from one side to the other. Was the Empire really that weak now? Was there any other way to maintain those towers and avoid the Commissar's censure?

"We've been talking about this for three years," grumbled the Priest.

Edna brightened and looked at the wild-haired man in his tight flower-embroidered surcoat.

"Siro Slingstringer, we are fallible townspeople, our fears of the burner years and worries for the future are natural. It has been too long. This is the time to invoke the oracles."

The Priest's mouth tightened and fear spidered the skin around his eyes.

"I know it is risky and costly," Edna looked at the Doctor, "but I am certain all of us councilors will gladly contribute to ensure a safe divination."

Ivana's mouth puckered but she nodded, "yes, of course, we must all sacrifice for the good of our community."

"The woman sweats like a pig and shivers like a wet dog but she'd wield the headsman's axe herself if it won her another crown," chuckle the wisewives.

Under her bed is an old Royalist sword, given to her grandfather by the last queen.

"She has no imagination," says the Innkeeper, shaking her head.

House

Kingshall is the largest house in town, a massive three-story plastered thing with small windows and thick walls expanded with new wings embracing its own garden and well. Heavy doors and a portcullis add to the grim air of the old Republican building.

Secret Lore

Charming Compromise

Ability: Edna has an incredible talent at convincing people to accept compromises.

Effect: When Edna suggests something halfway unsatisfying to feuding sides they likely acquiesce.

Treasures

In the **drawing room** Edna displays a complete set of Old Renaissance crockery and cutlery (2,000 cash). Under her **bed** she has a stash of gold rings and rubies (3,000 cash). The **furniture** in her house is massive oak inlaid with mother of pearl, ivory, and ebony (10 sacks, 4,000 cash). Her **furs** and dresses are stupendous (5 sacks, 5,000 cash). She always keeps some town coin about her (500 cash). In a **vault** guarded by Pold the autonomous clockwork man is a strongbox with 10,000 cash—the town's treasury.

Household

Father: Edward Kingsname is an old leonine figure who broods in his apartments.

Husband: Ivan Sugarman is a smart, posh-looking merchant, always on business in the Western city.

Son: Walter Kingsname is a small, terrified boy.

Daughter: Edna Kingsname II is a charming but haunted girl.

Butler: Roman Takewood is a roguish bald fellow with a thousand-watt grin.

Housekeeper: Esmeralda Takewood is a no-nonsense lady with a large emerald nose stud.

Guard: Ishi is a red-maned doghead with a queer sense of humour and sharp eyes.

Clockwork Man: Pold is a fine White City product with decorated porcelain and enamel inlays.

The Town's Uncle—Blaise Knockwood

Fool

Athletic, sour-faced, blinking, fatuous

"THE MOUNTAINS ARE harsh and full of spirits. Walking in them, you have to read the earth and the sky or they'll come and snatch your soul away," a younger Blaise puffed up, "but I'll show you how."

The young stranger nodded eagerly.

Blaise, the proud young mountain soldier, explained how moss and mushrooms call the north wind that gusts from Winterwhite's hollow eyes. How the west wind is the Firebringer's scout. How to avoid the wire-threaded ruts where the brass boars slumber.

The young stranger nodded eagerly.

They ascended Splinterberg the next morning, before the first rooster crowed. Blaise returned alone, his eyes empty, his mouth twisted like he'd eaten failure.

"Oh, you'd think he sounds right enough but he's broken in the head," nodded the wisewife by the pissing dog fountain.

Blaise wears a home-made uniform of greys and blues with a dormouse fur cap. He's happy to announce that he's a soldier in the Army of Glory and that he knows the true history of the Great War that birthed the Bridgespirit.

His worn knife "ghost friend" hangs on a thong around his neck. It sticks in its age-blackened sheath, clotted with dried blood.

House

Apple Shack was, literally, a shack. Once every few years the townsfolk, out of sympathy for the fool, come by and fix it up a bit, clear out the midden, and build it out a bit more. Building the fool's shack has become a rite of passage among the young men. By now it's a comfortable log cabin with three rooms and a porch, an outhouse, and a double-rack to dry the hay for Blaise's three cows.

Secret Lore

The Second Spirit Gives Visions of the Possible

Ability: Blaise harbors a second spirit which whispers and conjures visions of a possible world for him. He was too weak to control it and wanders halfway in a ghostly fantasy land nobody else will ever see, pronouncing the occasional misbegotten truth.

Effect: Once a day the spirit shows Blaise several possible outcomes to an event that day but Blaise always chooses to do nothing.

Treasures

Blaise is the town fool; everyone knows he has no treasures. Buried in the dirt beneath his **fireplace** is the skull of a stranger filled with pearls (300 cash). He doesn't know it's there.

Family

Sister: Karla Knockwood is a solid and sound member of the community; she is not proud of her brother.

Cat: Mihail is a black cat. Totally ordinary.

Lover: Blaise claims he has a lover, Lilian, who lives across Cutback mountain in the next valley.

The Cheesemaker—Bernarda Warsmaid

Cult Member

Pallid, poxy, golden-haired, gentle

“**THANK HEAVENS, YOU’VE** come back in time!”
Bernarda said.

The tall, serious young man twitched slightly in his borrowed blue suit, and the short, round girl reached up to adjust his white rose. She pricked her finger and a bit of blood welled up.

“Oh,” she murmured.

“I couldn’t abandon you in your time,” he said.

“Oh, I love you Albert,” she let her blood color the heart of the white rose, “and today we will be wed. Father is so happy you have come. He was worried, what with the war and all. Come.”

Bernarda grabbed his sun-bronzed hand in her skin, the color of the rose petal, and led him to the four-fold portals that had been set up on the Bridge for the wedding. Father stood there, grimly proud, arms crossed, a smile his broad, pink face.

As they walked through the portals towards the priest and priestess, she whispered, “We shall go to the Western City for our honey moon, shan’t we? I’ve always dreamt of seeing it.”

“Yes, yes we shall.”

“Good. After the war, when you are back, we will go.”

She never visited the Western City.

“She’s a strong one, that. Runs the town dairy all by herself, you won’t pull a fast one past her,” nod the wisebeards.

“Best cheese you’ll get, runny or hard,” smiles the Innkeeper.

“Every day she comes to the bridge, gives a rose to the Waterdrinker,” sighs the Priest.

House

Highbarn House is an old Republican recently refreshed with the money from Bernarda’s dairy. Next to it is a white-washed barn built of solid brick with beams of fine larch to keep it strong. Still, there is an air of sad devotion around the place.

Treasures

Bernarda keeps a **strongbox** with 1,000 cash, but her biggest treasure is her cows and flocks of sheep, spread out over six pastures during the summer but returning to the valley in late autumn. Her son’s copious **notes** and research on cheese are bearing fruit and are already very valuable (4,000 cash).

Household

Son: Albert Warsmaid is a somber, studious man who went to the Eastern City to learn more about cheesemaking.

Dead Husband: Albert Sunkeeper died of a plague after the war.

Head Shepherd: Megan Woodhoof is a rangy woman, tough as boot leather.

Cousin: Zackary Warsmaid is the town Schoolmaster.

The Littlewater Cook—Pepi Oldson

Cult Member

Bluff-faced, strong-calved, jovial, neat brown beard

PEPI YAWNED AND rubbed the sleep from his eyes. With practiced speed he turned the condenser aside as the fruity aroma started to lose its sweetness, separating the tails from the heart. The last of the littlewater dripped from the copper funnel into the last round bottle. Plink. Plink. Plink.

Done.

The smell of pear was thick in Pepi's distillery but none of it burned his eyes. With each breath he took, with each move he made, his father and his uncle's spirits were with him here. He banked the fire under the pot still, leaving it to cool, stood up and stretched. His joints popped with a rippling crackle.

A staccato knock at the little black door.

The latch fell open and in stepped darkness.

"Hello, my old friend."

Pepi smiled, "Elvir, it's been many years since Mother let you through the chaos door."

"He's a gay 'un. But that's okay," chuckles the wisewife, "so long as he keeps cooking that brandy."

Pepi is older than his body; his spirit remembers other bodies and other times.

Pepi is missing a toe, a tooth, and a testicle. He offered them to the Three Avatars on a stone altar in a weeping cave. They accepted them and granted him a stone, a skull, and a spider. He keeps them wrapped in the skin of a lynx beneath his distillery.

Once, during the Great Hunger, he disappeared for three years and returned grey-haired.

House

Mother's house is a rambling Royalist building extended and rebuilt so many times that it looks more like a natural outgrowth of the Whitemarked oak than anything else. It creaks and sighs like a friendly grandmother.

Secret Lore

The Angel's and the Devil's Share

Ability: Pepi knows ancient secrets that let him distill drinks that are stronger than should naturally be possible. Indeed, some of his littlewaters are so powerful even a whiff can make a man drunk.

Effect: Pepi's drinks can have incredible socially lubricative or physically debilitating effects.

Treasures

Secreted about Mother's house, behind odd pictures, under loose floorboards, behind cranky cupboards, Pepi has **secreted** 1,500 cash like some demented human squirrel. His **still** and his distilled notes on distillation are worth 1,000 cash (2 sacks). His **casks** of aged brandy are valuable (10 sacks, 4,000 cash).

Household

Assistant: Lev Easterborn has been Pepi's doting and loyal servant since Pepi returned ten years ago. He is so devoted he even sleeps in Pepi's bedroom!

Adopted Daughter: Izolda Oldson née Warsget is an orphan of adventurers who disappeared hunting the Wry Wyrms. She is a laughing, witty child.

Father: Gavril Oldson is dead but his skull remains on the drawing room mantelshelf to keep Pepi company.

Oldest Uncle: Imre Oldson died of a septic wound in the war.

Youngest Uncle: Harald Oldson runs a popular inn in the Eastern City. He visits once a year to buy Pepi's aged brandy.

The Wild Child—Carl Foundling

Outsider

Silent, bites, watchful, hairy

THE WINTERBIRD SCREAMED in the tree. Its eyes rolled like red pebbles. Pink froth dripped from its raptor beak.

“Human,” the meaning bubbled up in the boy’s head.

It screamed again.

“Human,” words bubbled again.

A flap of white wings and it was down, its red claws biting through the dry mud, rotted leather, and moldered twine that clad his stick thin limb. It chucked.

“Warm. Blood. Run.”

The boy convulsed and twitched. His mouth opened, dry lips cracking, exhaling dust. He gawped, fluid rushing into shriveled eyes, flakes of dust and earth and rust flying off his skin as it suddenly swelled with moisture again. A popping, crackling sound burbled out of his throat as his lungs regained their shape. He breathed. The cold, humid air ran up his nose and down throat like flying razor blades.

He screamed and the red-eyed bird screamed with him, froth flying.

“Human.”

The boy woke from his nightmare, shivering, the bear fat he had smeared on himself to stay warm rancid, caked with leaves and twigs. He crawled out of the cave where he had made his home and looked out at the morning fogs descending through the firs and spruces.

“Human,” he croaked. His throat hurt; it was a long time since he had spoken.

“Human,” he repeated as stumbled down the silent hillside, the pine needles soft under his toughened soles. The boy looked around but did not see any white bird. He felt a glint of pleasure.

“He’s surprisingly healthy, no worms, no scabs. Just very hairy for his age,” says the Doctor, looking bored.

“I named him Carl,” says the Captain, “It just means ‘Man.’ Hopefully it’s what we grow him into.”

The boy is not a werewolf and he knows this.

“I thought the Town’s Uncle might understand him but nothing like that. It’s all probably gibberish but we’ll have to teach him our common tongue before we can know for sure,” says the Priest.

Cave

The Grandmother Cave is real, a place of narrow shimmies and yellowed almost-human bones entombed in eerie long-ago round and square passages thick with calthemites. The boy knows where it is but he does not know where the pink froth leads.

Treasures

Carl’s only treasure is a glass and stainless steel compass incised with an old, geometric script.

Substitute Family

Caretaker: Watchman Lazlo Takewood is an unimaginative but gentle man prone to nightmares. Cat: A tortoiseshell cat named Shiba has adopted Carl.

Winterbird: it’s not real. Seriously. Don’t worry about the Winterbird.

The Beekeeper—Olga Princebrewer

Cult Member

Young, mousy-haired, overeager, strong

OLGA SMILED AS Niko wheezed behind her. She was faster than him and she knew it as she loped up the rocky trail to the summit of Great Tit. Olga thought about teasing him with a little flash of her skirt but decided not to. The poor boy might keel over, considering how he was exerting himself.

As she approached the top she trailed her fingers against the four corner stones, whispering a few words to the mountain spirit for good luck. She still kept eight of her father's hives on this hill and it wouldn't do for the spirit to give them mites or a fungal infection.

She settled herself comfortably on the bench overlooking the river and waited for Niko. He stumbled up, presently. He'd stopped to cut himself a hazel-wood stick to help with the ascent.

"So, you made it!" Olga said, "But you look too tired to do anything else now."

Niko just wheezed, red-faced.

"She's a loose woman," say the wisebeards, grouchily.

"They're just jealous because they like her calves and she knows it and doesn't share," say the wisewives, "She is a free spirit, though."

Olga keeps a guitar in her house but never plays it. It belonged to a young man who stole her heart but was then taken by the Firebringer. She hopes he will return some day but doubts it.

House

Greatvine House is a simple house of neatly-dressed stone and glazed tiles, smallish but sufficient for a spinster such as Olga. Its cellar is surprisingly large, tunneling into the hillside behind. Olga keeps her honey, mead, syrups, pollens, and jellies there.

Treasures

Olga only recently took over from the previous beekeeper, Mira Bearbreaker, and she is still paying off her debts, so she has only 200 cash on hand. And a lot of honey. And bees. And work. And she really doesn't have time for any nonsense.

Household

First Assistant: Niko Blacktemple is a florid young man prone to wearing fashion crimes.

Second Assistant: Tamas Namelost is a beanpole of a fellow who likes long walks and manicuring his thin mustache.

Uncle: Ronald Princebrewer is a pot-bellied slob with a surprisingly keen mind who likes to help his niece. Twin Brother: Dani Princebrewer is dead. Olga did not push him out of the carriage.

Cats: Fuffles and Pettypaw are fluffy and disarming. Sponsor: Harald Oldson has loaned Olga 1,000 cash in exchange for regular supplies of mead for his inn in the Eastern City.

The Priest—David Slingstringer

Cult Leader, Councilor

Petite, bushy white beard, deep-eyed, athletic

DAVID BREATHED DEEP. Dark brown soil and crumbled leaves beneath his bare feet. A hint of mist from the waterfall. The smell of burning beechwood with a hint of rosemary smoke. He waited, breathing slowly, until he heard a robin pipe up. He opened his eyes as the equinox dawn sun hit the Skybrother.

He walked down to the pool where the thrum of the waterfall grew to a roar as it tumbled into the bowl of Black Goat pool. He stripped off his flower-embroidered white robe and unbound his flowing black hair streaked with iron grey. His skin tightened as the icy waters embraced him and with a final exhalation he embraced Waterdrinker's gift.

David stayed there, visions swirling through his suffocating brain, before Olga and Ursula dragged his twitching body back to the shore. They pounded his heart back to life and by the beechwood fire he vomited the holy water of the Black Goat into the bronze cauldron Pepi held for him. Everybody looked at the swirls of blood in the water, seeking to discern what they said.

"Not today," gasped David, "Not this year. The Three Avatars do not claim payment yet."

"The priest castrated himself after his wife died," cackle the wisebeards, "Then he planted a walnut tree over his parts and her ashes. Now he eats his nuts over and over."

David refused to teach his daughter the ways for Fourface and the Three Avatars for ten years until she threatened to join the school of Doctor Love in the Western City.

David has a secret library where he has the *Sevenfold Volumes of Doctor Love*. To know the enemy.

House

Holyman's house is a wing abutting the ruins of Threedomes Temple built in an eclectic style mixing old Royalist and modern Imperial with whimsical stone-carvings by the fairy-watcher Zlatimir Storm-rider. If a national heritage organization existed it would list it.

Secret Lore

Dream With Dead Eyes

Ability: David can approach the final dissolution of the spirit freeing his personality to approach the Three Avatars and petition them for knowledge. He knows that each time he asks he might die the final death.

Effect: David can learn what one of the Three Avatars thinks and knows about events in the world.

Treasures

David is the custodian of the humble treasures of the Three Avatars: winterbird feathers, thunder stones, lightning rods, waterdrinker bowls, and more. All are humble objects of no great value. However, thankful townspeople have supplied Holyman house with lavishly carved **reliquaries, chests, caskets, paintings, and lamps** (10 sacks, 20,000 cash). The small public **library** is quite nice (2 sacks, 500 cash) but the **secret library** of the true rituals hidden at the end of a chthonic passage beneath the black birthing pool under Holyman House is a true treasure (3 sacks, 30,000 cash).

(continues overleaf)

Household

Daughter: Stella Slingstringer is a wild-haired woman, taller than a man and wiser than a raven.

Dead Wife: Ismaela Inksblood died on a cleanup mission to the old front lines under Holy Mountain, killed by a magical mine that terminally translated her body through time and space.

Adopted Son: Izidor Slingstringer is a one-armed young man whose silence conceals no wisdom.

Servant: Lika Waderbird gave her tongue to the Firebringer in exchange for long life. She is old.

Holy Slave: Aldus Blackwater is covered in sacred scars and three-colored tattoos. He only answers questions.

Dog: Burger is a fluffy mutt who'll do anything for a bone and likes to play with cats.

Sculptor: Sigismund Longstocking is a bas relief sculptor the town hired from the Eastern City. For the last year he has been working on a grand carving of the birth, death, and rebirth on the ruined temples New Wall. Sigismund is tall, sinewy, and temperamental.

The Priest's Daughter—Stella Slingstringer

Cult Acolyte

Tall, wild-haired, wise, smiling

THE SOLDIER WAS trying hard to grow a moustache and trying just as hard to pull his head back into his uniform like a turtle. Sweat pricks stood out on every fine downy hair on his tanned cheeks.

He had just brought the news that Stella's mother had died at the Holy Mountain front with half of her volunteer crew.

She looked at her father, standing still as the stones in front of the ruined temple.

Seconds passed. Minutes. The soldier in the heavy brown military coat sweated nervously in the hot afternoon sun of autumn.

A pale yellow birch leaf tumbled playfully in a sudden gust and stuck the the soldier's cheek. He twitched spasmodically and her father nodded.

"Alright, you've done your duty and you're right by the Waterdrinker. You could have done no more," he reached out and held the soldier's shoulder, "you did your best. You will do better. You will be alright."

The soldier wilted and saluted, a slack, sickly relieved look washing over his face. "Thank you, siro. Thank you."

Father nodded again. The soldier turned to go, turned back, bowed, turned again. He got as far as grey stone flags of the street before he turned to bow a second time and was gone, hooves clattering as he continued with his sad duty.

Her father turned to her.

"It's alright Father, I saw her last night, singing in the moon. She is still with us."

His nut brown face crumpled. Silently he went to the pantry, took out two bottles of Pepi's blackroot and in the dying light he climbed slowly to Black Goat pool. When he returned the next afternoon, carrying two empty bottles and taciturn with a hangover, his beard had turned completely white.

“She has her mother’s eyes,” complain the wise-beards. “Can see right through your soul.”

Stella secretly copied the skull and heart key to the library of true rituals and has been studying them without her father’s knowledge. They whisper to her, comforting her, telling her that her mother still watches over her. This is true.

Stella is an amazing flute player and wants to start a band but she’s worried people would think that was inappropriate for a priestess in training.

House

She has her own room in the attic of Holyman’s house covered in cheap prints of great musicians from the Eastern and Western Cities.

Secret Lore

Guardian Ghost

Ability: The gently dissipating ghost of her mother, Ismaela Inksblood, protects her, looking out for her and warning Stella when danger threatens.

Effect: The gentle ghost makes it hard to catch Stella unawares or break her concentration. Could it manifest more potently?

Treasures

Stella’s greatest treasure is a pearl and coral prayer **necklace** she inherited from her mother (400 cash). She also has a solid collection of workmanlike **flutes** (100 cash) and her **notes** on the true rituals, hidden under her bed, are not without value (300 cash).

Family

Father: David Slingstringer loves her and wants to protect her from the cosmic dangers of priestly life.

Guardian Ghost: Ismaela Inksblood, her mother’s ghost, is fading, but her piercing tawny eyes are still clear. She is rarely seen.

First Lover: Arpad Summerborn is a geologist and prospector from the Western City, scion of a powerful bourgeoisie family, who has been spending more and more time in Bridge, nominally to explore tales of an ancient quicksilver mine from before Royalist times.

Second Lover: Zenobia Clockmaker, the tinker’s youngest, scholarly daughter, has also been pursuing a secret relationship with Stella.

Dog: Darling is a massive black bitch, the size of a small pony. She slobbers.

The Midwife—Nina Dukesget

Cult Member

Ready smile, hard eyes, auburn braid, false teeth, rasping voice, fierce.

"INVADER'S BASTARD, INVADER'S bastard, in the hanging tree!" chanted the little girls, dancing around the tree, throwing stones and sticks at little Nina.

Tears washed pale streaks into her dust-caked cheeks and mixed with the blood from scrapes and scratches to stain her dress pink. She held onto the high branch grimly, fingers white with effort.

One of the girls tried to climb up and pull her down again but she was too high and her well-aimed kicks frightened the chubby baker's daughter. The little blonde girl picked up a dried dog turd and flung it up instead, spraying Nina with grey-white flakes.

Nina spotted the Blacksmith walking across the fields. He would help her.

She opened her mouth to shout but only a raw whistling came out, her voice blown from wailing as she ran through the wood while the other girls pursued her after Sunday sacrifices.

The well-fed girls from well-bred families kept dancing and chanting and throwing until dusk and tales of the Waterman chased them back up to town.

After the baker's daughter died of an intestinal pox Nina buried five rusted needles and the rotten remains of a round-faced blonde doll under the hanging tree. Nobody saw her.

"She knows how to quicken or end a baby, sure, but she would never do it," say the wisewives.

"Unless a woman asks her on the night of the new moon," they add to a woman they trust.

House

Whitehead house is a typical mountain peasant house with a sturdy whitewashed brick base and a half-timbered second storey. On the north wall is an

old milk pail to chase away the Rotter, on the south is a looped horseshoe to keep the Solar Saint sweet.

Secret Lore

Soothe the Begotten Spirit

Ability: With rituals, whispered prayers, tinctures and tonics, Nina can restore a begotten spirit to the Dissolution of the Divine.

Effect: It's an abortion.

Summon the Spirit from Dissolution

Ability: On the dark of the new moon, with prayer, placenta, and bitter pill, Nina can summon an unborn or a dead spirit to come to its conception.

Effect: A woman who can conceive will conceive a babe animated by the spirit Nina summons.

Treasures

Hers is a peasant house, humble and rough, but Nina keeps 100 cash in a painted **biscuit tin** on top of the rustic kitchen cabinet. She also does not trust the townspeople so she keeps 500 cash, a length of rope, and a rabbit amulet hidden in a **hollow log** on the balcony of her bedroom and another 500 cash bundled in a waxy wool cloak under the roof of the **doghouse** in the back yard.

Household

Husband: Simon Whitehead is a kind simpleton. He is a farmer and loves turnips.

Son: Gabor Whitehead is a strapping lad with massive fists.

First Daughter: Olga Whitehead is a quiet, homely girl, good with animals.

Second Daughter: Ines Whitehead is a ferocious child, smart but with a mean streak.

Dog: Osel is a shaggy beast, slow to stir.

Brother-in-law: Otmar Whitehead lost his leg in the war and spends his days weaving baskets. He laughs to hide his pain.

The Watch Captain—Kristina Changemaker

Lodge Member

One-eyed, stern, stick-thin, diplomatic.

KRISTINA TUMBLED HEADFIRST into the trench, her heart pounding as loud as the echoes of the earth-breakers. Her steel helmet twisted her head as the back of it struck something solid. She reflexively recoiled to the side, into the crumbly wall, and a heavy blade wavered through the space where she had landed. It would have missed her anyway, but it was close.

She pressed back and blinked, clearing smoke and dirt from her eyes, gripping her mace tight in her right hand.

There.

Wobbling towards her, the enemy. Western City broad-brimmed helmet and that bulky grey-green coat. She could see nothing of the face except the white teeth glimmering in the ruddy sun filtering through the clouds of dust and smoke and gas.

The enemy swung its sabre again. Too long, too heavy, too clumsy for this trench.

Kristina dodged, pretending to hobble slightly. The heavy grey-green coat fluttered as the sabre swung in another probing arc.

She feinted to the left, along the wall. The figure's legs tightened, its body coiled, it became more eager and lunged, sensing a kill.

Kristina ducked, easily slipping the black-flanged mace to her left hand before turning in a swift compact arc, catching the enemy in its arm. She felt the flanges rip through the padded coat, the plucking as tendons snapped, the solid crunch as the elbow joint crumpled under the well-aimed steel.

She heard thin screaming over the thudding echoes of the earthbrakers. She lifted the mace and the screaming stopped after the steel smashed into the surprised 'o' of the mouth. Now she could see the enemy's eyes. Bloodshot from the stinking clouds. Glazing fast, becoming pink marbles for the crows to play with.

A thud behind her.

She whirled, but it was just Gilbert, their squad's mortarist. Gilbert smiled, showing gold teeth.

"She's barren," sighs the wisewife, "it's those stinking clouds the Western City used. Against the gods, those are!"

Kristina practices with sword and rifle every day, drilling her sullen deputies as though the war had never ended. Perhaps for her it hadn't. She wakes up each night assailed by the unquiet dead.

Kristina always wears her gold amulet—a pocket watch fused into a gnarled lump by a dark rod strike.

House

Captain's House is a small, nondescript row house in Army Row besides the old Eastern City barracks. Kristina keeps it fastidiously neat, the drawing room utterly bare except for thirteen expensive portraits of her dead squad members.

Treasures

Kristina lives humbly, until recently spending money only to honor the memory of her dead squad. She keeps 900 cash hidden in a **strong box** behind her bed with a terrifying flanged mace that smells of burning bone.

Household

Deputy: Zora Dawnbringer is a dark woman who returned to the town with Kristina after the war.

Gardener: Gilbert lives in Kristina's attic and spends his days tending a massive vegetable garden in what used to be the old Changemaker mansion's ornamental gardens. He never talks about the war.

Brother: Walter Changemaker has been writing an epic novel for the last three years. The novel is not good.

Sister: Ivalda Changemaker runs the estate; she is a decent landlord but not a great farmer.

Lover: The Baker, Ivan Redbasket, has started to remind Kristina that there is more to life.

The Baker—Ivan Redbasket

Cult Member

Fleshy, affable, balding, bear-like

IVAN HAD STOOD up for old sira Bearbraker when the Western City burners came to town, hungry for fire and smoke and ash to avenge a dead quarter-mayor. He had stood with his halberd, stout as an oak tree, for six days until they gave up and left.

Ivan had stood up for the town Uncle when he returned from Splinterberg, eyes ghost-burned and that bloody knife in his sheath. He had kept him on a leash for three months as he snapped and howled until the spirit rider burned itself out and the town relented and kept him.

Ivan had stood up for the dead girl's parents when the Disaster Villagers had wanted to decapitate and stake them just like their revenant child. He'd kept them in a cage for two weeks and stood outside, resting on his halberd to stay awake, and proved the revenant's bite hadn't infected them.

When the Eastern City burners came to town looking for skinchangers they tore him from his bed, tarred and furred him, and paraded him around town. The Bridge stood for him and the Priest took him to the White Goat meadow and hid him there for a month until the burners gave up.

Then came the time for questions.

Three weeks later Ivan and two other truth-keepers found the snitch in Channel Town. A jealous miller that Ivan remembered. The slope-shouldered beanpole had tried to steal Ivan's sister a year ago.

Three days later they informed the priest of Channel Town that the miller had died on a hunt. Terrible accident. Fell in the Devil's Own Gorge. The one with the biting things.

"Oh, he's the kindest soul in town," say the wisewives.

"He's a damned pacifist, never hurt a fly," agree the wisebeards.

Ivan keeps a gingerbread man preserved in a jar of

honey. He warms the honey thrice a year to keep it clear. It is the last gingerbread man his father baked for Ivan's twenty-fourth birthday. His father died that afternoon, killed by a log falling off a forester's truck. Ivan swore by the Devil's Grandfather's moon that he would never let Miss Netmaker slip another fast one past him like that again. He never has.

House

Redbasket house is one of the oldest in the village and by now it is a mishmash of styles held together with a lot of brick and plaster. At its heart still stands a circle of larch posts carved with the runes of Fourface and the Three Avatars. In the crypt beneath the circle generations of Redbaskets have given their offerings to the Earthbeater and the Waterdrinker.

Treasures

Ivan keeps 300 cash in the circle **crypt** protected by old curses and family ghosts. The greatest treasure are the ivory ghost-remembering amulets which keep the link alive to seventeen generations of Redbaskets.

Household

Mother: Griselda Staffsend is a cherubic, fleshy old lady with arms like hams and a penchant for pastries.

Sister: Iva Redbasket is mute, her voice taken by the Firebringer to fight Winterwhite.

Brother: Otto Redbasket always looked up to his older brother. He is on a pilgrimage to visit the seven sacred temples of the faithful.

Monkey: Fingers is a red-haired monkey the Redbaskets adopted after she was abandoned by a circus.

Lover: Kristina the Watch Captain is rejoining the living thanks to Ivan's affection and care.

The Innkeeper—Ursula Cinderdaughter

Lodge Mistress, Councilor

Shadow-skinned, ash-haired, ruby-lipped, black-eyed

"PRAISE THE LITTLE Dragon!" called out the ash-faced priest with the antler helm.

"Praise the Little Dragon!" thundered the soldiers in their white winter coats, the bones of wild animals stitched onto their lapels and epaulettes.

"Praise! Praise! Praise!" the townsfolk chanted, eyes dragged with delight.

On the rammed earth altar, under the wicker man, the priest spurred them on with fist and shout. Torches were lifted and in the pre-dawn light joy flowed through the crowd like nectar.

Little Dragon on his throne-coach raised his hand and an expectant hush fell. The skull-helmed executors marched forward. Two held the first of the roped heathens, the third carried a greased pine pole, its tip sharpened a nearly reflective white. A fourth waited with a mallet.

The heathen's gurgling roar as the red tip of the pole burst into the air between his clavicle and trapezius sent a shudder of bliss rippling through the crowd.

Ursula swayed and cheered the sacrifices to the Green Sun together with the rest of the townsfolk. After the sun's sixth son was added to the wailing henge she slipped into the evening gloom.

"The Little Dragon gave six heathens to the Green Sun," she reported to her father.

He stopped polishing the copper gravy cauldron and got a faraway look in his eyes.

"Father?"

He shook his head. The flecks of white in his beard glittered in the lamplight.

"Get the horses ready, child, then fetch Franz. We're leaving tonight."

"She came from beyond the Eastern City with her father," nod the wisewives, "fleeing the burners. Good people."

Ursula has a fabulous memory and every morning, after the postman visits, she uses all her mail as kindling. There are no books in her house or in her inn.

The inn's common and uncommon rooms are the heart of the town where processions are planned and hijinks are hatched.

House

Cinderhouse Inn is a stone-footed house with two wooden upper stories built flush against the middle ridge. The wood is carved, decorated, and painted in exotic geometric patterns suggestive of forests and rivers. Behind and beneath the inn are three levels of Imperial, Royalist, and Oldfolk cellars carved into the grey stone.

Secret Lore

The Riddle of Ale

Ability: Ursula knows how to whisper to the little creatures and spirits of ale, keeping them sweet and healthy.

Effect: The secret of good ale.

Treasures

Ursula keeps 200 cash in two **strong boxes** and another 1,200 cash in old coins and odd jewelry hidden in her father's clay urn in the Royalist **cellars**. The hunting trophies that line the **common rooms** are impressive (3 sacks, 300 cash).

Household

Father: Leopold Cinderweeper looms large across the uncommon room from his oil portrait.

Brother: Sigismund Cinderson is a mute, good with horses.

Husband: Alan Kingsname is a younger, quiet man, with wispy blonde hair.

Lover: Anya Baronsget is a straw-haired young woman who works in the inn.

Son: Viktor Cinderson is a good-looking shadow-skinned toddler.

The Tailor—Leo Foundling

Lodge Member

Long-haired, sad-eyed, pipe smoker, yellow fingers.

“FOUR FACES ON the triple cross, one for the dying man, one for the dead wife, one for the loving youth, one for the blooming mother.”

Leo closed his eyes and breathed in, the smoke from the anise-scented beeswax candles transporting him to his earliest memories.

“Bless the child and bring him in, bless the child and make him human,” the Priest intoned while tattooing the violet-eyed toddler across his chest and back and arms and legs.

Leo breathed out and felt the twenty-year-old amulet scars along his forearms as he prayed under his breath.

“Worldwatcher, keep your human safe from fairies.”

“He was found under a curse,” say the wisebeards, “violet-eyed with the deepwood stain. We only kept him because the Priest bound his demons and drowned them in the white waters.”

Leo is terrified of fairies and makes offerings to the Avatars and especially the Waterdrinker every holy day to keep himself safe.

In his bedchamber he keeps a nightgown stitched with iron bullets and dog’s teeth to keep the stealers of souls away.

“The tailor was a bachelor, adopted that eerie child,” say the wisewives.

House

Greensun house is a solid Republican with neat gables and mighty larch beams giving it a reliable, trustworthy air. Many years ago a traveler was secretly murdered and buried under the pantry floor—nobody knows.

Treasures

A young bachelor, Leo saves his money for two things: his stepmother and the Priest. There is 200 cash in a wooden strongbox in Alexeya’s **bedroom**.

Household

Stepmother: Alexeya Plantwool is an arthritic old woman, full of bad puns.

Apprentice: Boris Lifesearch is a determined youth with no sense of humor.

Cat: Cali is a beautiful orange cat with deep green eyes and a rumbling purr.

The Woodcutter—Jesus Hammerbreaker

Lone Wolf

Brawny, bushy-haired, humble, quiet

THE SCHOOLYARD RUSHED with a lightning storm of color and sound as it always did when the other children whirled around Big Jesus. Big slow Jesus.

Their voices darted like knives, too fast for him to keep up, as they taunted and pelted with words he couldn't understand.

He gritted his teeth and stomped towards the gate.

They didn't try to kick him any more or throw things either. Sometimes Jesus caught them and there was hell to pay. The old schoolmaster used to beat him with his cane last year but even he'd stopped with that.

Still, they shouted, jabbing, "Slow Jesus! Wooden Jesus!"

When he got away, away from them all, the world slowed down. The crickets and the ants and the squirrels didn't say anything. The leaves didn't whirl. Peace reigned.

It was best under the dark pines and spruces, each breathing soundlessly and dreaming of sun and rain and winter's sleep.

"No idea," mutter the wisebeards, "how that dullard found such a wife. No idea."

Jesus writes his journals every day in a sinuous script that coils across the pages like ash-black vines and brambles. He makes the paper himself from birch bark and hemp.

With his rippling muscles and stunning precision there is no better woodcutter in the town and he regularly brings down trees for other villagers and landowners.

House

Hammer house is a rambling thing, part half-timbered, part rammed earth, with massive rough-trimmed frames, sashes, and shutters. The shingle roof is new and bedevils the eye with complex patterns and layers. A couple of years ago Jesus also added a small sawmill powered by the nearby Drizzlestream.

Secret Lore

Taming the Tree Spirit

Ability: Jesus can feel the life of a tree. Properly appeased, a tree spirit will allow its tree to be felled without harm.

Effect: Jesus won't be killed by a falling tree.

Treasures

Jesus is a poor, simple man. In a leather **sack** he has 70 cash. He does has a magnificent silvery **saw** (200 cash) that can cut through the toughest wood without a snag. Jesus says he won it in a whistling contest with a forest giant which might be true.

Household

Mother: Maria Oldson is a petite, nervous lady, known for her roast coffee.

Wife: Anya Breakwater is a honey-haired woman of astonishing beauty from a distant town. Many of the town's wives are jealous of her.

Son: Marius Hammerbreaker is a loud, demanding baby.

Dog: Vook is an incredibly thick-coated wolf hound.

Brother: Jeremiah Hammerbreaker trained as a woodworker but discovered the bottle.

The Woodcutter's Wife—Anya Breakwater

Outsider

Honey-haired, almond eyes, dazzling smile

THE OIL LAMP was running low as the girl finished copying the *Histories of the Mountain War* by Franziska Longmarch. She spent a few more minutes adding her commentaries.

The outer door scraped and closed, then the inner door creaked. It was Nana, she could tell by her tread.

"Ooh, it's a devil's own winter, this one," grumbled the old lady as she closed the green-painted wooden door behind her.

"Nana, I've finished my lessons for the week," piped up Anya.

"You've transcribed and annotated the whole book?"

"Yes, Nana."

"Ah, good," Nana sighed as she settled down near the brick oven, "good girl. And what did you learn?"

"It was a silly argument between proud men that everybody lost in the end."

"A fair reading," nodded Nana.

Anya traced a circle on the table, then quartered it, then crossed the quarters.

"Nana..."

"Don't worry, child, though good men are rare, and though the mountains are high, you will find a good man."

Anya looked at Nana. Hope and doubt mingled in that look.

"A little blue and yellow bird told me."

"She's a witch, she is, wont to steal good men," curse the wisewives.

"Ahh, does an old soul good to see such a lass," pine the wisebeards.

Anya borrows any book she can find and takes it home to read. Her secret dream is to start a public library in the town.

Anya and Jesus write poetry to one another in the evenings in their humble home.

House

Anya lives in the woodcutter's house, an old place, but warmed by both wood and love.

Secret Lore

Birdreader

Ability: Anya can read the song and behavior of birds to divine what the woodland spirits intend.

Effect: Anya can tell if birds have seen something dangerous, where food or water is, or if somebody is approaching.

Treasures

Anya has a gold and silver **necklace** that her Nana gave her (150 cash), 20 cash in coins, and a beautiful set of pens (50 cash).

Family

Husband: Jesus Hammerbreaker is a good man who cannot handle large groups of people and most townsfolk consider him a simpleton.

Son: Marius Hammerbreaker is a strong, smart baby.

Grandmother: Esmeralda "Nana" Breakwater is an old geologist who lives in her remote cottage in Quicksilver valley.

Bird: Tristan is a very friendly raven with one red foot and one yellow foot.

The Old Mayor—Edward Kingsname

Councilor (emeritus)

Leonine, paralyzed, frustrated, fiercely intelligent

THERE WAS NO doubt about it. They had their traitor. Edward's finger traced the scribe's ropey notes, the statements from the witnesses, the character references, the evidence listed and enumerated.

Edward nodded, satisfied, and leaned back in the mayoral throne. The sun painted the sky salmon as it sank behind Wheelneck.

He opened the silver lid on his cavalier pipe and added three pinches of tobacco. He tested the springy mass of southern leaf and nodded to himself before charring and tamping it down. Edward put the horn button between his teeth and lit it with meditative puffs as the town set about bedding down.

The lightman started with the Firebringer's light, across the bridge from the three-and-fourth stones.

Edward took the final report from the public inquisitor. He might as well sign off on it tonight, spare himself worrying about the traitor tomorrow. He was halfway through the inquisitor's list of Imperialist regalia found in Jakob's chambers when a sharp pain lanced through his head. He shook his head and it cleared but the words blurred, their meaning mashed like the potatoes he had had for lunch.

He put his reading spectacles down and sighed. Long day, dirty business. Tiring. Better bed down.

The next morning he felt stiff and sluggish. He drank his coffee, dribbling a bit on his formal shirt. Annoying, but the suit and furs would cover that.

On his way to the town hall he sat down at the barber, thoughts on the day ahead. The barber didn't say a word, he didn't need to. Edward had come in for his shave every morning before work for twenty years. Not a nick, as usual.

Edward opened his mouth to say thank you.

He paused, half-risen, mouth open.

The barber noticed the silence and turned.

Edward tried again.

Thank you. He knew the phrase. He knew what he meant. But how to say it? The words were missing.

"Always had a word for everyone," say the wise-beards, "but he can barely speak now."

"It was the traitor's curse that took his words and his left arm away," say the wisewives.

Every day he reads his old books and journals and tries to recapture the words he knew. He can write them but talking, talking is a struggle against his curse-burned brain.

Edward keeps Jakob the traitor's skull mounted on a bloodwood shield in his private library.

House

The heart of Kingshall house is a massive three-storey plastered Republican with small windows and thick walls. New wings embrace its own garden and well. One new wing, behind heavy doors, is where Edward broods after his stroke.

Treasures

He still keeps his Imperial coin and medal **collection** (1,000 cash), his **books** (10 sacks, 8,000 cash), his grandfather's **sword** Demoneater (1,000 cash), and his **rifle** Waterdrinker's Butler (2,000 cash).

Family

Daughter: Edna Kingsname is nervous and twitchy but as sharp as her father ever was.

Son-in-law: Ivan Sugarman is a smart, posh-looking merchant, always on business in the Western city.

Grandson: Walter Kingsname is a small, terrified boy.

Grand-daughter: Edna Kingsname II is a charming but haunted girl.

Butler: Roman Takewood is a roguish bald fellow with a thousand-watt grin.

Housekeeper: Esmeralda Takewood is a no-nonsense lady with a large emerald nose stud.

Nurse: Orleana Priestsgest is a charming, ageing woman.

The Milkmaid—Lea Takewood

Cult Supplicant

Red-lipped, zany, sky-eyed, superstitious.

LEA SAT IN her rocking chair. Outside Northwind raged and howled, whipping the beeches and the birches, pelting the shutters with sticks and pebbles.

As she knitted the white, red, and blue muffler she prayed to the avatars with each click of her needles. She prayed they would keep the Netmaker and the Northwind and the other malarics at bay.

Her memory slipped and drew back, a skittish thing.

The more the wind blew the harder she prayed.

Unthinking the bloody moon, unthinking the ill-thought blasphemy after the hammer missed the nail, unthinking the squashed spider, unthinking the casual dismissal of the sabbath.

If she did enough unthinking she would forget the day her father fell in the swift waters to inhale the Waterdrinker and leave her mother alone to care for five children and a dying farm.

She would forget for another night the curses that thoughtless man had brought on her and her family.

“She’s a kind woman,” sighs the Priest, “but she’s never gotten over her father’s death.”

“She’d be beautiful,” tut-tut the wisewives, “if she didn’t daily give blood and take ash for the Avatars.”

Her chambers are thick with amulets and charms to keep curses, heresies, ill-thoughts, and misfortune at bay.

She is certain that she saw a demon riding Northwind’s gusts the night before her father died and now never looks to the sky after sunset.

House

Maidshall is a shared house in the Imperial style built for working spinsters. It would be a dreary building but a riot of plant hangers and ivy covers it in a living tapestry. Lea’s chambers are scrubbed clean of dirt and sin.

Treasures

Lea works hard at the Kingsname dairy and has saved 50 cash over the last few years. She also owns a half-share in one cow there. She dreams of buying a small house and garden of her own someday. Some of her amulets are actual Waterdrinker stones, effective against curses (worth 50 cash each).

Family

Father: Leonid Takewood died after a bloody moon.

Mother: Zofia Whitewater is a smallholder, bent but not bitter by hard labor.

Oldest brother: Mikoyan Takewood is a competent sargeant in the Western City borderers.

Second brother: Viktor Takewood is an arrogant mercenary in the Eastern City borderers.

Older sister: Lidia Takewood is married to a boorish Disaster Village farmer.

Younger brother: Stane Takewood is a keen but naive boy apprenticed to the Miller, Karla Knockwood.

Cat: Whitepaw has one green eye and one blue, one to sport curses, the other to spot demons.

The Miller—Karla Knockwood

Lodge Member

Doughty, spade-faced, dour, greedy.

THE FIRST AUTUMN after the shell of her brother returned from the Splinterberg the harvest was good and the new watermill worked wonders.

Her Father sighed, “Ah, it’s a sad thing. Such a lovely mill, such a fine inheritance but no one to own it after me.”

The third autumn she worked hard, the veins standing proudly on her young limbs.

Her Father sighed, “Ah, if only you were another son. Then I would know I had done well.”

The fifth autumn she borrowed heavily to buy up all the grain and drive the old mill out of business.

Her Father sighed, “Ah, no woman should dirty her hands with such subterfuge. This is a man’s work.”

The seventh autumn she bought the old mill and gave it to her Father as a gift.

Her Father sighed, “Ah, truly I am cursed. So blessed by fortune yet bereft of a son.”

“That’s one that’ll never wed, broken by the ghost of her clod of a father,” snicker the wisewives.

“Such a shame, if only she were a man, her poor father’s heart would not have broken,” mumble the wisebeards.

When she was younger Karla dreamt of becoming a man to please her father. Now her dreams have narrowed and she measures her worth in the Waterdrinker’s tears: gold.

House

Miller’s house is a slightly shabby Imperial that impresses more with its size than its grace, quality, or style. The windows are heavily barred, the shutters studded.

Treasures

The furnishings are surprisingly sparse and bare. In her study Karla keeps a **lockbox** with 200 cash. She keeps promissory notes and title deeds (20,000 cash worth) in a **safe** hidden behind the back panel of the stolid drinks cabinet in her study. Her hoard is hidden in a secret vault behind a great cask in the **cellar** (3 sacks, 5,000 in cash and 3,000 in opulent jewelry).

Household

Father: Old Rihard Knockwood has a massive memorial stone besides the Whitewater and Karla comes to look at it every day, business ledger in hand.

Brother: Blaise Knockwood returned from Splinterberg broken in the head and now lives in Apple Shack.

Servant: Henrik Foundling is a silent crow of a man, quick with numbers and gun.

Foreman: Rikard Bearsblood is a jolly fellow, with forearms like logs and the imagination of one too.

Dog: Ozzie is a grey-muzzled terrier so old he seems half ghost.

Duck: Elvir is an old gander and good friends with Ozzie the terrier.

The Town Stranger—Oleg Waterwatcher

Outsider

Tall, dark, handsome, high-pitched voice, turban

OLEG BOWED BEFORE the idol of Fourface as the tattoo was applied, marking him forever as a citizen of First Emperor's Forum. With every stab of the ivory needle he prayed with the priest and midwife to the Three Avatars to accept him as the avatar of his town.

When the inksman finished his task the midwife washed his naked body with a fresh linen cloth, scrubbing the blood and ash and ochre away. The cloth was then spread to dry in the rising sun, for the townspeople to see that Oleg had accepted the words of their town.

Once the cloth was dry the priest bound it around Oleg's head and pinned it with the ivory needle and a coral brooch. The turban and tattoo now marked him: exile justice of First Emperor's Forum.

The silent townspeople came, one by one, to offer gifts, coins, and prayer stones. As Oleg accepted each gift the citizen went to stand by the town's boundary stone and wait.

Oleg quietly accepted the last gift, finished loading up his red cart, and led cart and donkey to the tall many-runed stone. There he bowed one last time to the town spirit and accepted his ostracism.

"He's a good exile justice. Shame he moves on next year," admit the wisewives.

"The Stranger and the Mayor and the Representative, together they make three," admits the Mayor, annoyed at the traditional limit on her legal power.

Oleg polishes his ivory needle of office every day and wonders when it will break. On that day his pact with the town spirit of Forum is done and he may return.

House

Stranger's House is an ancient Royal, all narrow clinker buttresses and slate roof. The shutters are painted red and white, the mark of the exile justice. There is a small jail in its cellar to hold townspeople accused in contentious cases.

Secret Lore

Needle of Truth Exiled

Ability: Oleg can use his exile justice needle to find out if somebody is in compact with lying demons.

Effect: If a tattoo inscribed with the ivory needle fades away there is probably a demonic pact in play.

Treasures

By tradition Oleg owns nothing. All his payment and gifts are kept for the town spirit of Forum. More practically he has accumulated 1,500 cash in small **donations** and a fine collection of adventure novels (1 sack, 200 cash). Stranger's House also has a series of lovely friendship **medallions** in silver and gold brought by different strangers over the years (1 sack, 2,000 cash).

Household

Housemaid: Matilda Breakspace is a chatty, round lady with a heart of gold.

Bird: Rex is a gilded parrot with a foul mouth.

The Storemaster—Victoria Townsman

Lodge Applicant

Supple, smooth, vivacious, evil-eyed

FEAR RODE HER like an angry savage, spurring her on with needle jabs. She screamed a howl that turned the moon to glass and though her eyes rolled all she saw was red.

Needles burst into flame underfoot and flaming spurts of flying sap splattered her fur, her flesh, like a mock rainstorm conjured by the Firebringer.

The crack and snap of tree trunks seemed to track the pounding of her heart while the inferno engulfing the forest roared like the dull roar of blood and exhaustion and loss of breath pounding in her ears and her skull.

Faster, she had to go faster. The river was right there, the water milky with stone spirits, cold as the ice on the north flanks of Threeskull and among the fangs of Canine.

Whump.

The air was sucked out of her lungs, the sound was sucked out of her ears. She pushed herself forward, loping on desperation and fear.

One last leap.

The inferno jumped.

It pulled her into the air in a shower of pine needles curling to ash in sparkling spirals. Curling just like the bitch wolf's kindling red fur.

Whoosh.

Victoria woke from her nightmare, covered in sweat.

"She's hungry as a wolf, that one," snarl the wisebeards, "Victoria'll take you for every penny. Not like her kindly mother at all."

"She's alright, just won't give them free beer anymore," smiles Lana, the Tinker's Wife.

Victoria loves nothing better than a good jog through the forests, either alone or sometimes with

the Watch Captain and her militia. There's something about the trembling shadow of violence that excites her.

House

Westershouse is a well-restored Republican, its storefront lined with modern full-length windows with fretted sashes and brass grilles in the up-and-coming Balance of Powers style. The rest of the house abuts on a long barn that has been converted into a warehouse.

Secret Lore

Ride the Skull of Kindred Spirits

Ability: When Victoria sleeps the lucid sleep her spirit rides along in the skull of her kindred spirits.

Effect: Instead of resting Victoria rides the world on the paws of a wolf or the wings of a wren. She usually drinks a dram or two before bedtime so she can at least get some rest.

Treasures

The Westerhouse apartments are full of rather lovely antique Republican **furniture** (6 sacks, 2,400 cash) while in the store itself Victoria keeps 1,000 in cash and 4,000 in financial instruments in a massive Neodwarven **safe**. Most of the goods in the store itself are bulky but an audit would show a wide selection of **portable wares** (10 sacks, 5,000 cash).

Household

Mother: Leonida Townsman is an ailing, bedridden presence.

Fiancé: Yuri Easterborn is an eloquent lawyer.

Sister: Vida Townsman is an attractive bookworm.

Cousin: Gregor Townsman is a one-legged veteran.

Clerk: Goran Warglory is a wild-haired highlander fond of over-tailored suits.

Assistant: Mila Oakswail wears her leather apron like armor.

Dog: Bravo is a russet wolf-hound as large as a small cow. Usually slumbering, there is an air of pent-up savagery about him.

The Schoolmaster—Zackary Warsmaid

Lodge Member

Grey-faced, bald, spectacled, disciplinarian

LITTLE ZACKARY SNUCK off every day, before milking the cows, to sketch the sky and clouds greeting the rising Firebringer in a swirling rainbow. He loved nothing more than the vast play of stars and hues that colored every dawn, grey or azure, he loved them all.

Mother approved and doted on little Zackary, her golden-haired child.

Then father returned from the war.

He had left a poet and returned a bronze-nosed gargoyle.

“Mathematics. Order. Law. Science,” he intoned in his oddly resonating voice, “those will stop us from losing the next war.”

A few administrations of belt and cane in the root cellar later Little Zackary had well learned that beauty was not something he loved after all.

“He’s a sad man, a sad man,” mutter the wisewives, “but smart. Could’ve lectured at Court University if he wasn’t so dour and grim.”

Every morning, before dawn, Zackary wakes up and feels the urge to walk out into the sleeping town and watch the Firebringer rise. Instead, he pricks his thumbs until they bleed, then goes to work on his magnum opus: *A History of Mountain Warfare or the Roles of Terrain, Geology, Botany, and Weather on the Military Potential of the Bridge of Saint Cleareyes and the Surrounding Vertically Enhanced Regions*. It is as dry as it sounds.

His eyes are going and a part of him can’t wait. At least he won’t be able to see the painful dawn any longer.

House

Warsmaid House is a prim and proper Imperial, with solid shutters, dependable doors, and a classical tessellated roof in red and blue. It is full of family portraits, reconstructions of past family members, and the framed sayings of old Rikard Warsmaid.

Treasures

Zackary keeps 500 cash in a locked **strongbox** under his bed, but the largest treasure is his haul of **artifacts** and remains from the last war (5 sacks, 2,500 cash). There is a 5% chance that an individual earthbreaker or fredder grenade still works.

Household

Father: Rikard Warsmaid is buried under a pleasant cherry tree but his shadow still looms over Zackary.

Cousin: Bernarda Warsmaid is the town Cheesemaker

Second nephew: Albert Warsmaid is a somber, studious man who went to the Eastern City.

Servant: Leh Newcomer is a prim young man with a good memory but poor imagination.

Assistant: Slava Springherald is a young blonde woman carrying an old spinster’s soul.

Appendix I: Gods and Faith

Firebringer—the avatar of sun and sky. A dangerous and loving, virile deity.

Waterdrinker—the avatar of underworld and river. A loving and deadly, fertile deity.

Earthbeater—the avatar of the crops and earth. A nurturing, destroying deity.

The Eater of Virility, ‘Amimami’—the messenger of age and impotence, the castrated god.

The Devil’s Grandfather, The Dark Beggar—the thief of light and bringer of confusion, the giver of forbidden knowledge, the permissive one.

Miss Netmaker—a trickster spirit, lady luck.

Doctor Love—the avatar of temptation, the city god of the Eastern and Western Cities, the denier of the old truths of the town.

Saint Cleareyes—the prophet who received enlightenment in the Cave of the Wanton Mother and brought buckwheat and plum to the People of the Fields.

Winterwhite, ‘Lady Deadfingers’—the avatar of ice and death and visions, a dangerous god and bringer of hunger.

Northwind—a hungry wind, who chases away the Eater’s rots but brings pains, aches, and windlung in its wake.

Bridgespirit—the avatar of perseverance, long life, and stability. The spirit of the Bridge is a good god to ask for blessings, as she asks little in return.

Fourface, ‘Worldwatcher’—the god of the turning seasons, the directions of the sky, the cycles of the birthing and dying couples. A remote, cruel, yet tender god.

Temple of Fourface and the Three Avatars—an old and stolid double henge with plaster walls enclosing the Twelve-faced Stela of Saint Cleareyes. Heart of the Bridges faith.

Green Sun—the child of the Firebringer and the Earthbeater, the Green Sun is an ambiguous deity, the creator and destroyer of humanity.

Appendix II: Cities and Places

Eastern City—a former Imperial provincial capital, it sits where the sea road crosses the wide, slow Drowned River at the Bridge of Glass Gargoyles.

Western City—a former Imperial provincial capital, it sits where the three roads meet at the fabulous natural harbor of Market Bay.

Disaster Village—a smaller town, some ways up the Whitewater.

Forum—a slightly larger town, built on the ruins of an old fortress straddling a gorge, about a day's journey away to the north-west, past Disaster Village.

Channel—a smaller town, some ways down the Whitewater.

Quicksilver—a mining town, about a day's journey away to the east.

Vine Hill—a slightly larger town built entirely under the curling, thorny boughs of a massive bioengineered rose bush colony, about a day's journey south-west.

The Whitewater—the large, violent river that flows under the bridge, from north to south.

The Darkwater—the smaller, limpid river that flows into the Whitewater from the east, just after the bridge.

Poet's Cave—a grotesquely cork-screwing series of galleries thick with speleothems and ancient runes half submerged in the dark.

Bear's Head—the skull of a bus-sized bear petrified in place between two sheer, moss-thick cliffs.

Goat's Castle—a pre-Royal ruin glowering atop a hill, home to ghosts and goats.

Mother's Cave—a holy site of Fourface and the Earthbeater, thick with suggestive stones.

Black Goat Pool—a holy site of the Waterdrinker, in a stone womb hidden in the mountain-side, with barely any sky above.

Firewatch Mountain—a white mountain thick with the black ruins of burnt trees, holy to the Firebringer.

Woodbridge—a man-made bridge several hours up the valley, often damaged by the Whitewater, it is held by either the Eastern or the Western borderers.

Appendix III: Names

I do not believe fanciful names are useful in a tabletop RPG. Your goal is to conjure ideas and trigger the players' imaginations, not spell weird names for them. That said, if you are still tempted, here is a list of possible names for the NPCs.

Pronunciation Guide: 'z' like 'tz' in Tzar; 'ž' like 'ch' in Chimpunk; keep vowel sounds short, open, and simple (no diphthongs!).

I've added eight more to round it out.

1. Bearbreaker "Medvedelomez"
2. Bentbirch "Krivobereski"
3. Bentsabre "Krivosabyez"
4. Blacktemple "Žernihram"
5. Blackwater "Žernovodnik"
6. Breakspace "Kazimir"
7. Breakwater "Vodolomaz"
8. Changemaker "Izmenotvarik"
9. Cinderdaughter "Pepelka"
10. Cinderson "Pepelnik"
11. Cinderweeper "Pepelyok"
12. Cleanlined "Žistožerti"
13. Clockmaker "Urotvarik"
14. Dawnbringer "Zoronosnik"
15. Dukesget "Voyvodiž"
16. Easterborn "Vostožnik"
17. Flowerlord "Kvetovladik"
18. Foundling "Naydeniž"
19. Foxdaughter "Liskova"
20. Goldy "Zlatan/a"
21. Goodgift "Dobrodar"
22. Guardspeace "Branimir"
23. Hammerbreaker "Molotolomaz"
24. Houselover "Domorad"
25. Inksblood "Tushkrinik"
26. Ironbutler "Stalodvorezki"
27. Joyguest "Radogast"
28. Kingsname "Korolimen"
29. Knockwood "Terkoleski"
30. Lifeseath "Živozemnik"
31. Lionheart "Levoserzki"
32. Longstocking "Langžuloki"
33. Namelost "Poteraykimya"
34. Newcomer "Novak"
35. Oakswail "Hrastiyože"
36. Oathborn "Prisegorodni"
37. Oldson "Staroviž"
38. Peacemaker "Mirodel"
39. Plantwool "Bawmvolen"
40. Priestsget "Popoviž"
41. Princebrewer "Knezevar"
42. Prizepeace "Zenimir"
43. Redbasket "Krasnokoski"
44. Slingstringer "Vervoteznik"
45. Snapdragon "Treskozmayiski"
46. Springherald "Pomladiznik"
47. Staffsend "Kolkonzik"
48. Sugarman "Sladekiž"
49. Sunkeeper "Solzestražik"
50. Takewood "Lesoyemki"
51. Townsman "Mežzan"
52. Waderbird "Žaplya"
53. Warglory "Voyeslav"
54. Warsget "Voynoviž"
55. Warsmaid "Voynowka"
56. Waterwatcher "Vodoglednik"
57. Whitehead "Byeloglaw"
58. Wolfson "Vukoviž"
59. Woodhoof "Leskopitar"
60. Worldruler "Vladimir"

Appendix IV: Music

All Them Witches - album - Lightning At The Door (2013) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e-C6O4OlHE8Q>

Ancient Vvisdom - "We Are Damnation" - Sacrificial (2014) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ljmn-fApszsE>

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Appendix V: Credits

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