



# The Blight

Richard Pett's Crooked City

## Player's Guide



FROG GOD  
GAMES

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*This setting is dedicated to Geoff Tew, a damn fine thief whose spirit still graces our gaming table and whose favourite character still walks these streets.*

*"In order to know virtue, we must first acquaint ourselves with vice."*

Quotations except as noted otherwise are from the **Marquis de Sade (1740–1814)**

# THE BLIGHT: RICHARD PETT'S CROOKED CITY

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\* (forthcoming from Frog God Games)

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THE BLIGHT: RICHARD PETT'S CROOKED CITY

# The Blight Player's Guide



*“The Blight is a city; a vast corpulent, mad, ugly thing, but it is so much more than that. Its veins seep into other places, drawn across the Between, which rips at its fabric and tosses it about like a child throwing a ball. You might find a curiosity shop from the Blight crammed amongst the mighty tenements of some other city, a horrific character staggering along the streets of an otherwise normal town, or perhaps even a whole block perched within another city like a cuckoo in a nest.*

*Her polite name is Castorhage; named after the grotesque Royal Family that rules here, a family even worse than those who would depose them. It has been called lots of other names, other oaths have been flung at her and her constituent filthy, chymic poisoned parts. From Sister Lyme to the chaos of Toiltown, through the throttling alleyways of the Jumble to the airy madness of the Hollow and Broken Hills, every facet has a story, and every story a dark edge.*

*Yes, the Blight is a place, but it is a place that touches others, like a cancer, suddenly infesting a brighter place and poisoning it. There is no escaping its touch, and once it draws you in, you may never escape.*

*Welcome ...”*



# Introduction

*“The imagination is the spur of delights....”*

Welcome to the Blight, a city of many names but known as the **City-State of Castorhage** (KAST-or-awzh, or KAST-or-HAYJ to uncouth foreigners) in the **Lost Lands** campaign setting of **Frog God Games**. *The City*. What you have before you is the outline of a vast place, a city of many parts that may be used as you wish to add spice to your urban adventures.

The Blight is not just a place, it is *alive*, a place that may crawl suddenly upon you, a street, a name, a rumour. It may be little more than a story in your own campaign, a rumour of places nearby, or a street around the corner. It could be a whole district that sits in your own city, a bad neighbourhood that people avoid, burgeoning like a cuckoo in its soiled urban nest. It may, however, be bigger, perhaps even the basis for a whole campaign.

In itself it is a city, a singular place made up of many parts presented to you as one settlement, but to use as much or as little as you wish — a district, a series of places, a group of occupants or a whole. This guide takes you down its streets and alleyways, through its rotten parishes and

into its diseased parks. You'll meet many of her occupants; from the highest caste aristocratic families to the Lowest of the Low, undead who toil endlessly in the name of the Glory of the Empire of Castorhage.

In truth, it's as much a thing as a place, and the worst of it is that it can turn up anywhere. Despite being an official part of the **Frog God Games**' campaign setting, the Blight can be found bleeding into the slums of any city of your own campaign, cropping up in the bowels of any metropolis, or lurking in the edges of smoggy river cities.

In short the Blight is yours, to do with as you will.

Use it as nothing more than a single encounter, a street or NPC, or expand it to use the districts herein as whole regions of your campaign. If you wish, use the entire city as a base for your adventures, embellish them, stamp your character upon her gin houses and workrooms, her temples, and her opium and insectum dens.

The whole concept of the Blight is that it's fluid. Yet whenever your players enter a part of the Blight, they should know it by its smell, its characters and its tastes.

This is the wrong side of town.

## The Seven Prayers of Castorhage

The philosophy of the city-state is embodied in the so-called *Seven Prayers of Castorhage*: the seven prayers recited by priests, memorised by children, and part of the skin of the city. This is not to say that they are beloved; they are enshrined in tradition, as is the city. Where they are broken, the weight of the law falls harshly.

There are seven more prayers that remain unspoken but well-known, particularly amongst the aristocracy; these are the more truthful versions of the seven prayers. But of course the truth sometimes hurt, so in a place with such a veneer of civilisation as the Blight, they remain unsaid.

# The Seven Prayers

**I. Love, honour and obey your Queen.**

**II. Our destiny is to build an empire at the centre of the world.**

**III. Only the wise know how to use the dangerous curse of magic,  
and only a fool would tamper with it.**

**IV. To toil is to know joy.**

**V. To be strict is to love; to be weak is to wither.**

**VI. Obedience shows our love for our home and family;  
disobedience shows our disdain for them.**

**VII. Be content and joyful with your family, your history and your destiny.**



## The Seven Unspoken Prayers

I. Magic is power, and power in the wrong hands is folly. Only those of high caste know how to use it wisely; the lowborn who dabble with it must be taught a lesson and cleansed as an example to others.

II. Power is might, and might is right; our destiny is to rule.

III. Sinning in secret is not sin.

IV. Workers work. Rulers rule.

V. A peasant who learns to write is a peasant who has too much time on her hands.

VI. Obedience is the only word that matters to a dog.

VII. To know virtue, we must first intimately know vice.

## A Note from the Author: Using This Guide

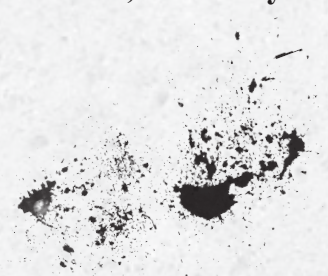
This campaign guide describes the Blight as a whole city, a place of different districts ruled in a particular way by a particular group of characters. It is a city-state of its own standing, with its own laws and rulers and peculiarities. There are thirteen districts detailed herein, and each is home to an eclectic, unwholesome mob of selfish, sometimes frightened individuals who walk or stagger the streets and parishes of their home district. Yet deep below this odious skin lurk a few decent souls; those who wish the city to rise as a benevolent power, a guiding hand, not a monstrous tyrant. They are few in number.

For the GM, there are several new rules, and options for darker-themed campaigns, while for the players there are new races and subtypes, prestige classes, equipment, and ways to spend hard-earned cash, as well as ways to allow more focus on putting the PC at the heart of a campaign. Like anything outside of the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook*, it is an option, not a demand. You know your players better than anyone can, use what will suit them to create a memorable adventure or encounter, a chilling meeting or an unforgettable moment. The guide is a canvas, it is complete — in a way — but like any good travel guide, it is only one aspect, one view. How you interact with it makes it special, makes it yours, and your adventures are always what your players will keep coming back for.

It is an adult, lower-level dark fantasy. Adult themes appear throughout the setting and the adventures that are set here, and these adventures, and many of the most-powerful NPCs, top out at about 13th level. Once you get to those dizzying heights, the chances are you've so many enemies and jealous admirers that, unless you're very careful, you'll wind up poisoned or murdered. That's not to say there aren't any opportunities for higher-level adventures; it's just that they are rarer. You'll encounter mature themes in the Blight but it will never be gratuitous. As with all such publications, use it as you wish, but above all have fun with it.

Let the tale begin ...

**Richard Pett, February 2013**



# Player's Introduction

*Sickened walls jut from the green waters like jagged teeth, their brickwork haemorrhaging from the strain of the towering load above. Centuries of rebuilding, repairing, shoring and praying teetering on the edge of ruin above a poison ink bay of arsenic-toxic waters. Brick walls rise from the dead waters of the Great Lyme River—Sister Lyme as they call her—lying in a bay seemingly bereft of natural life where slurry licks the footings of this failing domain. Timbers rise and jut across streets—joists shore up walls and iron bars lash whole avenues together—the endless sinking decay and toil making the city a giant endless building site. Bamboo scaffolding lashes around every structure, walls are propped against others by vast beams crossing rivers and the whole place is like a house of cards—waiting for the fall to commence. Nothing is still, and everything will one day collapse.*

*This city continues to rise from its vile depths—buildings lashed on other buildings, with a lace of piers and ladders, rope bridges and stone structures heaved between its various confusing levels. It is a cat's cradle of interwoven wood and stone and hemp where a trip of fifty feet can take an hour on foot. Older buildings are crushed under the foundations of their children and gaze up weakly, senile structures being trampled to death in the struggle for air.*

*Bright boats of all sizes ply the sluggish bays and streams between the houses offering a quick but costly way of getting from one street to the next avoiding the perilous crossings and drops below. These boats compete for garishness, whilst their owners compete for attention—shouting, crying and even singing the safety and pleasure of their wares. Above their heads, a treadmill ferry creaks by, lumbering on despite the abuse from the boatmen, hateful of yet another invention in this city of renaissance.*

*The city is also alive with birdsong—the singing of canaries, which seem to be as populace as the people, who throng the streets and bay and bridges in their tens of thousands. And outwards and upwards the city spreads, like a blighting mass of architecture—towers rise in distant BookTown, the garish lights dance over Festival, and the echo of sounds and life in a dozen districts drifts lazily towards you. And high, high above all towers the grey ramparts of the Capital—a schizophrenic mass of tastes and styles, decrees, orders and tyranny.*

*Welcome to the greatest city in the World: Castorhage—“the Blight” to many of its inhabitants, a metropolis dancing on its own grave...*

Welcome to Castorhage—the Blight. Few who visit it leave unscarred; many never leave at all, some even of their own volition. Castorhage is the official name for the city, although most of the Lowfolk call it the Blight (and a great many of the higher castes as well), a seemingly unending confusion that marches endlessly into the surrounding cloying countryside, a cancer that thrives in the sickness of the city streets—feasting and expanding with each day.

It has other names too, many other names. Some call it the Canker, the Rot, City of Secrets and Lies, others the City of Golems, some refer to it simply as The City, and still more names haunt the slums and streets... many more names.

So what is Castorhage? It is a homage to great writers of great cities; imagine the fog-shrouded streets of Conan Doyle, the dislocated horror of Clive Barker, the grime of Dickens, the corruption of Jeff Vandermeer and the misery and magic of China Miéville. It is Alice meets Frankenstein.

In her soul, the Blight is a dark urban horror fantasy setting dealing with mature themes, but in an adult way. You'll meet dubious characters and those who it is difficult to know whether to trust or not, nothing is clear in this dark place, particularly not the long nights.

Now, please join us in on the 8th hour Treadmill Ferry across Sister Lyme via Town Bridge; the Farnham Theatre in the Artists' Quarter is open and the night is young...



## City of Secrets and Lies

The Blight is vast; it is mad and random and teeming with life—and unlife. Each doorway conceals a secret, every window a longing, every roof a hope and fear. More than three million faces stare from its broken soul. Each face hides a story.

Orders seep down from the twisted rulers in the Capitol who use the **Royal Family** like puppets—giving credence and power to their empty promises and lies. Simple orders are carried out by the **City Watch**—the police of the Blight—but everyone knows the Watch earn little and many are open to bribes. Important orders are carried out by the **Knockers** (a.k.a. the Faceless, the Undertakers, the Midnight Men), the Secret Police of the Blight, brutal, single-minded thugs who carry out orders to the letter. It's said that if you hear a knock at your door in the night you should put on your best clothes and get ready for your funeral. The Knockers work for the **Illuminati**. Allegedly the true rulers of this city, the faceless Illuminati slither like a rotting sickness in body of Castorhage, unseen, but always there just below the surface. Three **Crown Justices** are in theory answerable only to Queen Alice herself, however, these three supposed “pillars of society”, are in fact rumoured to be the leading members of the Illuminati, their fingers seeping into every dark dealing in the city, their eyes open day and night and their ears hearing all whispers.

The Illuminati, they say, operates through hundreds of intermediaries and clubs, lodges, guilds, trading corporations and companies. They hold vast reserves of wealth, and with wealth comes power. However, the Illuminati is also rumoured to be a constantly festering mass of backstabbing and betrayal, murder, blackmail and ruin, and whilst it is rare for a Crown Justice to be removed, the **Justices** and **Under-Justices** and **Streetclerks** change constantly, playing an endless game of bluff and strength in the hope of rising to the top.

There are those who perceive this and look upon the Illuminati with hate. These so called **Anarchists** and **Revolutionaries** (two very different groups it should be noted) weave their own plots to bring down the Illuminati, plotting and murdering in their own brutal way to topple the rulers. Many claim to work for **Queen Alice** herself, and indeed many Royals are said secretly to pay or be part of the Anarchists. Some say the Queen's squabbling **daughters** (she had no sons) use everyone they can to bring about each other's demise, but each shares one fear—what will happen if the Queen's recently named heir apparent, the frightful **Alicia**—the “Little Queen”—gets her hands on the crown.

However, even the Anarchist and rebel groups are fractious; opium-addled artists hold furtive conversations with manufactory overseers and **Lowfolk**, level-headed merchants plant alchemical fire bombs in crowded market places in the hope of killing a single Under-Justice, and poets scream from street corners about the latest innocent victims of the Knockers.

How the aristocrats hate these rebels; how the great families of **Borxia** and **Tredici** and others would love to slowly punish each and everyone one of them and perhaps, just perhaps, prove that their own claim to the Crown is better than that of the family Castorhage.

Beneath, the merchants and traders, guildsmen and artisans earn enough to feed their family, but the taxes and Lodge Tithes, Guild-Dues and bribes make life hard. Making money is not hard in so vast a city; keeping it is.

## THE BLIGHT: RICHARD PETT'S CROOKED CITY



The workers form the lowest acknowledged caste in the city. Toiling at manufactories and sweatshops their lot is a miserable one, toil and food and maybe a night in the sweaty, stench-ridden alehouses in the common-quarters. The workers are slowly coming to the boil however, as their jobs are taken by the **Lowest of the Low**, the Anarchists feed on this fear of hunger and poverty, and many workers raise their fists in anger against a dark future. The Lowest of the Low are not even acknowledged as people—they are the undead, the golems and homuncules and alchymic unliving; workers that toil without food and drink day and night. They are soulless creatures without hopes or fears, but even in death they are exploited by the mill owners and ship captains and merchants who can afford them. This new class is growing, some say growing unnaturally fast, and with the passing of the **Corpse [laying to rest] Act of 1770** only those who can afford the Death Duty can be assured that when they die, they will truly rest in peace.

### Sinister Locals

Others lurk in the shadows of the city—the **Fetch** is the undead population of the city—and whilst they revel in the sight of so many undead walking in the city, they are angered. Many of their brethren are taken in the night and broken, others are burned as an example of the intolerance of the living to the Fetch. Ruled by a great vampire known

as **Beltane**, the Fetch have become remarkably organised of late, and the marked increase in the sale of shutters and bolts and locks has not gone unnoticed. Their own caste is strict; from the cattle-like ghouls to the great vampires and liches, each knows her station in unlife.

Almost as numerous as the Fetch is the **Great Coven**, a group of witches and warlocks who worship and seek to bring the **Devil** to the world. Some say that 1 in every 13 women in the city is a witch, and witch hunting is so profitable that fully 280 witchhunters are registered in the Capitol. The head and hands of a witch command high prices both from golem-stitchers, cabalists and alchemists, and the witchhunters can be assured of a purse of 100 gold shekels if they capture a witch who is subsequently burned alive. Of course profit often pushes justice aside, and occasionally an awkward enemy or a barren or unwanted wife is suddenly found to be “practising witchcraft”—much to the astonishment of their husbands of course.

The **Thieves' Guild** (a.k.a. The Guild) is the largest guild in the city, and in itself it is a splintered wreckage of families and agreements, stand-offs and battles. The tattoos of the guild members are as numerous as blindingcrows on gables, and it seems that every street has its own thieves' guild.

As numbers lessen for these groups, so they become more furtive. A wererat population known as **The Family** is said to rule **Festival**, acres of piers filled with freakshows, corner-doxies and false smiles. Skin-wearing horrors from **Between**—a land between mirrors that touches the Blight in so many places the two sometimes seem one—walk the clubs and marbled corridors of the Capitol, whilst hated **briny**—skum-sired men and women—loiter furtively at the water's edge. The list grows and becomes uncountable, golem-stitchers who seek to create living gods, a guild of clockmakers try to make an iron chariot, an inventor called Gallileus is toiling to make a fire that thinks.

Stories, always more stories.

### The Lay of the Land

The streets have never been counted, although maps of the Capitol and other areas come to light. Many based upon the works of noted dwarf cartographer and geographer Cord Gryme (1187–1501) who devoted his lifetime to mapping the various parts of the city. Some scurrilous individuals have actually suggested that such maps were part of an Illuminati driven plot to find a focal point to bring the Devil into the world, though such was never proven even after Master Gryme was “put to the question” for 8 days by certain unnamed parties. That Gryme did not survive the ordeal is but a footnote in the greater story of the Blight.

The city is bisected by the **Great River Lyme** (a.k.a. **Sister Lyme**) a tortuous, sickly black estuary that is dragged phlegmatically about by the tides. Everything flows into the Lyme; perhaps that is why it is so sick. Boats drag themselves through the waters and under treadmill ferries—suspended iron cages that criss-cross the city. Bodies float to the water's surface occasionally, and despite its filth the river is teeming with life—if life is the correct word for it. Pale things slip momentarily into view, discarded Made occasionally emerge from the deeps and pull themselves onto rusting piers in order to carry out programmed tasks, and other things appear as well but always at night—things wearing different forms and bodies walk the narrow alleys at night. Under the **Gyre and Midden**, things slide through inky waters.

Piers, sometimes the size of towns stab across the waters of the Lyme, **Festival**—the pleasure town—is the greatest of these; a towering hill of iron and timber and joy that hides a frown. **Town Bridge** crosses the Lyme near the **Artists' Quarter** and is a huge bridge of limpet buildings clustered onto buildings—towers spike the air and boats ply the numerous gaps caused by fires and Anarchists' bombs.

The docks run for miles, many little more than jagged timber teeth jutting from the waters, but the **Great Docks** of the Trading Companies Collective are different—sheer brick rising from the river, pierced by iron cranes and ladders and huge doorways giving access to the trade life of the city. Within rise two of the few stable exits into the cornucopian lands of Between; but a boat journey away yet teeming with resources waiting to be harvested.

Sweatshops and manufactories belch caustic fumes that spread along with the stench of broken animals and creatures all across the city, but **Toiltown** and the **Jumble** is where they gather—a place of toil and misery

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that answers to East Ending's Great BlackBell hanging in the WorkClock like a black iron sword plunged through the heart of the city. Beyond this, other smaller districts such as the **Sinks** and the **Hollow and Broken Hills** run, aristocratic places of refuge (or exile) and worship accordingly. Within the Hollow and Broken Hills lurks the city-state within a city-state known as **Sanctuary**, the holiest of holies in Castorhage.

Limping between streets so cramped that only a child could walk upright in them are other parishes and places, becoming lost in a maze of nameless paths and alleys until they begin to rise into the better quarters. **BookTown** and the **Seminary** taste clean air as they stare upwards at the Capitol and are serve as the city's seats of learning.

Finally comes the greatest monument of Castorhage: The **Capitol** is insane; it is a thousand spires and raised walkways, treadmill ferries, churches and domes in one mad place. It is the child of a thousand dreams and the product of endless lives of toil. Its face is pitted with a million windows and ten thousand gargoyles. And it is one building.

The **Royals** and the **Upper Class** call the Capitol home, many never leave the building to walk the streets beyond—they have no need to. Balconies, parks and terraces abound, doorways lead into spiral stairs that rise and fall a thousand feet, corridors echo on for hundreds of feet, pathways cling to the sides of cathedrals and lead to secret gardens. The Capitol is a city unto itself. It has its own rules and etiquettes, carved stone street names lie at every corner and traders ply their wares. From Royal Palace to Fairy Cathedral, from the dreaded Purgatory to the minute Borxia Summer Palace this place has thousands of facets all contained within a single building.

There are places spoken of in quiet corners by those who claim them to be real or are whispered as fairy stories to the young to keep them quiet. **Between**, a land behind mirrors, a place discovered by accident and whose accessibility by certain Illuminati-sponsored mages has, some say, opened up a dangerous way between places that should not be joined. The things of Between are often called the Dark Fey or Between People, but they are not people. They are the essence of all that has passed in their lives in that weird land where everything thinks and sees. Between creatures like **Jack of Iron**, the **Woodwose** and the **Stag King** are things of flesh and thorns and hate that exist beyond and who see the city dwellers as invaders. All acknowledge that serendipity has drawn Castorhage to her subject and that she should exploit her... and what harvests she brings to the city-state, a harvest that brings her greater wealth and power by the hour. Yet one mortal place remains in the city to be described, **Underneath**. Underneath is everything below the city—and it is vast. They say a king who lived a hundred years had an army toiling in the dark and that these men and dwarves never saw day in their lives, working ceaselessly on tunnels, hidden routes, stores and subterranean canals. Beyond paranoia no one quite knows why this king had these tunnels built. Many have fallen into disrepair, some have become lairs for things that like dark places. Others however are still active: The **Grand Tunnel Canal** links Sister Lyme to the countryside some 6 miles away and exiting at **King's Lock** without ever emerging into daylight anywhere along its length; great sunken libraries pierce the depths, brink veins that spiral down hundreds of feet; walkways link the Capitol to streets used by spies and guilds and lodges. Occasionally huge holes open up in the ground, plunging whoever or whatever happens to be above them into the blackness beneath. These holes are unpredictable in size and location but all share some things in common: they are huge and cold and deep.

Just one more story in a place with a million tales...



# Part One: Places, A Cyclopædia of Geography

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being an overview of the places of the Great City of Castorhage

*“Welcome friend. Take the air if you can and walk with me along the cobbled streets of the City of Secrets and Lies, the Deathless City, the City of a Thousand Names, the Blight. The stories I have to tell may alarm you, may frighten you, may entice you — but one thing I will say before we begin — to the local there is but one phrase to remember; ‘trust only yourself,’ for this is the city of deceit and it is built upon a lie ...”*



# A Sum of Her Parts

From the highest spires of the Capitol to the lowest slums of the Lyme River and Toiltown, the Blight teems with life — of all sorts.

Districts form across boundaries of class, race and wealth, and each area is fiercely independent, with its own peculiar rules and rulers, characters and curiosities.

What follows is an overview of every district in the city, together with a list of three seasonal sites, which come and go depending upon the time of year.

## The Capitol

*“True happiness lies in the senses, and virtue gratifies none of them.”*

The Capitol is a towering edifice that is the soul (and many would say fist) of the city. It is a thousand buildings crushed into one, which rises above the city, threatening and belittling all beneath it.

It is a town in a single building.

It dwarfs the Jumble, towers over every warehouse, and imposes itself over the highest gables and steeples. The rest of the city cranes to see its towers, its domes, its cathedrals.

The Capitol is the life's work of hundreds of dreamers and architects, kings and politicians. Ten thousand have died constructing it, and seventeen centuries of labour lie between the footings and the spires.

Yet it is one thing, one abode, one structure.

They say it can rain in one part of the Capitol and be sunny on another, its valleys and summits attracting mist and cloud like a mountain chain. The highest summits rise over a thousand feet above the city streets below and it covers over a hundred acres, yet within the teetering, writhing floors that make up its whole — from the Soul to the Crown — it is beyond measure.

The home of **Queen Alice** and the Royal Family, it is the workplace of all three **Crown Justices** and the thirteen **Justices** who assist them — a motley group of thieves and scoundrels, things in human skins and murderers bound under the iron will of the Illuminati — the true rulers of Castorhage — at least in their own minds. Countless clerks and servants, butlers, blacksmiths, gardeners and caretakers run the Capitol, which has streets between buildings. Many people live out their whole lives without stepping from the Great Door at the foot of the Capitol, and have had their ashes scattered from the upper spires where the true power lies, hidden behind great oak doors in leather and panelled chambers. Here, dramas are acted daily — betrayal and reward, truth, deceit and lies.

Such are the staples of life in the Capitol.

## The Artists' Quarter

The heart of the city, the Artists' Quarter is a hotbed of intrigue and anarchy, plots, blackmail and deceit. It is a swarm of noise and clamour, a potpourri of sin, exploitation and wickedness. It is also a place of hope. Spilling from the foot of the Jumble like an insane cat's cradle, the Artists' Quarter staggers down to the Great River through a shamble of tiny streets cowering beneath leaning, sagging buildings that were once the Banking Quarter before it upped sticks and moved into the Capitol in 962, a day known as *White Freyday* by those who moved into the abandoned buildings and became the new residents. An annual eleven-day party takes place on the anniversary of White Freyday to celebrate the “liberation” of this part of the city from the corrupt and (practically universally) hated bankers.

A curious trio of powerful groups lurk within the quarter. Firstly, the **Fetch**, whose vampire elders find the waking nightlife to their liking, and their slaves are profligate here. Opposing them are the **Triads** of the Xi'en and Gtsang immigrants, who flocked here for mutual protection. Finally, there are the rebels and **anarchists**, drawn by the revolutionary plays and anarchist puppeteers. It is the one place in the city where the word *revolution* is said out loud.

There are a thousand different types of performing and traditional art in the quarter, and everyone has something to say — usually loudly at first, and then quietly, and perhaps a little smugly after fame finds them.

Presently, the most famous artist in the Quarter is **Maximel D'Regiolette**, the greatest painter of all time, whose images are so beautiful that they make people who see them weep. The artist is presently working on the ceiling of the Great Castorhage Cathedral in the Capitol. Maximel, a fallen angel, is involved in the **Cult of the Self-Blinded Angel**, which wallows in physical pleasure and pain.

This district is fractured, with artists gathering by disciplines, so that there are streets of puppet makers, courtyards of paint makers, and alleys of glassblowers. Politics and anarchy seethe here.

## Theatre Town

The *Theatres 'Sinister* is one of many notable districts within the Artists' Quarter. Famed for the outlandish and shocking, these theatres also run the gauntlet of the **Knockers**, occasionally performing risqué plays aimed at highlighting the sins of the Upper Class.

The *Raven Periodical* is the anarchists' mouthpiece. The *Raven* is found lying at the end of bars, pinned to the doors of privies, lying discreetly in the travel bag of gentlemen, and loitering on street corners nailed out for all to read. Although few can read, those who can feel obliged to reveal the details of the *Raven* in almost as much detail as they do the gentleman's rag *The Eye*. The *Raven* is not afraid to shock and detail the true goings on of the Capitol and, particularly, the City of Golems. **Aris Macwell**, the gnome editor, printer and writer of the *Raven*, operates from a dozen dens across a dozen districts. His employees, known affectionately as the “Liars” (after being branded as such by the Crown Justices many years ago) have friends everywhere, and an uncanny knack of turning a titbit of information into a newsworthy event.

## The Barnacles and Great Dock

The Barnacles is a large island town built upon various levels of tunnels that in turn link to the outer buildings (variously known as “nests” or “limpets” to the guards and workers). The Barnacles itself is ruled as an independent district by a group of greedy insular merchants, and who collect taxes from visiting ships, fund the local watch, and arrange shady deals.

The Barnacles is a dizzying tidal-stack rising from the ocean. Clustered in and upon its surface, like limpets on a rock, are hundreds of buildings — variously thrown, tied, nailed and bolted to the precarious cliff faces, gripping for dear life above the jagged rocks below. As you watch, you glimpse tunnels weaving into the rock, streets winding dizzily above the water, and at the summit, a towering crow's nest made of iron. Barnacles is linked to land by a vast array of bridges, which link in turn to a wall of warehouses, buildings, cranes and treadmill ferries that serve the armada of ships docked here. These fingers grope backward to the city, handing through trade and goods in an endless, greedy dance.





## THE BLIGHT: RICHARD PETT'S CROOKED CITY

### The Great Dock

A madhouse of noise and colour and movement and life lurking beyond the Levee, a huge wall designed to keep thieves out. Here, lines of great warehouses consume and excrete the wares of the known world. More than a hundred chain ferries, rope bridges, causeways and bamboo bridges (often held together more by prayer than physics) link the independent state of the Barnacles to the city. So movement never stops, and by night, the stretch of water here is like a living fairyland of lights that becomes a city almost unto itself.

### BookTown

*"It has a unique smell, this place, of old books and ageing parchment, of ink and learning. This place of towers and strange bridges between buildings, this place where the streets are cramped with a curious mixture of all walks of life. The bewigged Urger rubs shoulders with the punkawallah, who in turn flees from the eyes of his cruel master the Overseer, who clutches a fistful of legal papers. A handcart full of heavy tomes is pushed by a reed-thin man wearing a turban, a donkey sags beneath its load of new wet parchment."*

BookTown is a canyon of tall buildings and towers linked by innumerable bridges and gangplanks, rope bridges, and ladders to enable the legalese, professors, and studiers to get between their clients more easily. This is a place that is as much vertical as it is horizontal, and is a town of tall spires and huge echo-filled halls.

BookTown is the repository for tomes and grimoires, maps, arcana and worthy works. Bibliomercants flock here to buy and sell; wizards peruse high shelves of arcane tomes; and hierophants puzzle over ancient holy writings. Above all, it is a repository for secrets.

As the place has gathered books, so space has run out, and the smell of old books and academia has spilled into the streets. As the booksellers have arrived, so too have those seeking knowledge and curiosities, and as such the place now has a huge reputation for the acquisition of antiquaria and the curious, the unusual, the magical, and the alchymic. It has a particular allure for the non-human, and those who wear false skins find that they can easily fit in among the strange locals who dwell here. These strangers take sweet, dark Ashurian cabb'e in the narrow balconies overlooking the plazas of the booksellers, and smoke from long pipes in the shade of the great towers. One may unknowingly meet naga, rakshasas and hags, as well as angels and devils in the dank, musty shops and librairia herein. It is a place where the game of knowledge is played for very high stakes, and where trouble and intrigue are only a page turn away.

### The Seminary

Home to the greatest universities and academies, institutes, and arcanum, the Seminary clings to the foot of the Capitol as a child clings to its mother; it oozes into BookTown and the surrounding area, and devours it.

This is a place of learning, of cobbled streets that rise dizzily to the skirts of the Capitol, where crumbling ivy-clad institutes embrace grand marble universities and where the spirit of learning is palpable.

Behind the façade, the place has an ill reputation for experimentation — the first breach into the Between (see **Part 5**) took place in this district at the Cooper Building, Seminary District Offices of Hetherington Quarrus Mabe on Torresday 11<sup>th</sup> Gray 1637. The first Alchymic Undead was raised here in 1545, and countless other less notable, but equally horrific, experiments have been made here. Some of the failures still walk the streets of the city.

### The City of Golems

*(a.k.a. The Asylum Run By the Inmates, The Butchery, the Stitchery, the City of Flesh and Iron)*

The most hated parish in the city lies in BookTown.

The City of Golems is where the *Cadaver-Surgeons*, *Homuncule Wives* and *Golem-Stitchers* ply their trade. Part mortuary and part surgery, this area of cottage universities and charnel houses, townhouses and watchtowers is a seat of learning second only to the Seminary. Here,

alchemists and physikers are given free rein (and an endless supply of bodies — for those who can afford them, or a beacon to body-snatchers for those who can't) to work "miracles" upon.

In consequence, the Illuminati, the *true* controllers of the city, permanently have one eye upon this area, and the place crawls with their agents: Knockers, Justices, Streetclerks and the City Watch. The area has a hundred *arcane eyes* upon it at any given time, a countless army of familiars and a truly breathtaking number of imps, infernal thralls, homunculi and other spies — all keeping a watch upon developments — engaging in acts of betrayal, bribery or blackmail. It is the black heart of all things of the city, the soul of corruption.

The area itself is filled with ornate — some would say unsettling — buildings, many of which are fortified in case of imminent revolution. These buildings have ramparts and spires, and over-elaborate decoration; gargoyles dance on eaves, and angels sing on gables. The streets wind steeply uphill and, as they do, fortification grows until reaching the Castle Strórd, home of the infamous **Count Strórd**, one of the founding fathers of modern surgeons and alchemists. Rumour has it that Count Strórd is not only an expert with death and undeath, but is actually a lich able to wear human skins.

### Festival and the Great Fayre

Festival is basically a huge timber pier in the Lyme River, built around a squat grey hill. It is a metropolis of wererats, a place of lies, hiding lycanthropy that has become a plague here. This is a place ruled by the **Rat Queen** — a vast creature that dwells in a sunken palace made by the designer of the Royal Palace itself. The Queen is terrible, an abomination in form and deed.

Covering twelve score acres, it rises some two hundred feet through steep streets called the Skew, to the Great Fayre at the summit. The streets rise steeply between shambles of buildings built upon buildings, each bolted to the last, giving the place a spastic look and a feeling of

*The Rat Queen sits  
Upon her throne  
Down deep beneath the street*

*And there she slits  
The young man's throat  
And drinks his blood so sweet*

*They say she has  
Eight sisters dear  
And each is her and they*

*The sisters whereas  
They do fear  
The Queen who is as they*

*Their tails meet  
Their food they share  
But one thing they must know*

*The Queen they greet  
Makes them to swear  
Their lives to bear for Woe*

*So stay away  
From eight and one  
For one is great in size*

*And never play  
Or seek your fun  
Where her deep lair it lies*

— East Ending Nursery Rhyme

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imminent collapse. Timbers groan and creek, bolts occasionally explode, and evidence of shoring up and repair is everywhere.

Whatever you define as pleasure is available here, from simple tumbling clowns to sinister dark places where nightmares are drawn out of madmen and given breath and lust.

**The Family**, wererat children of the Rat Queen, run the Great Fayre and the island it stands upon. The Family regard themselves as brothers and sisters, although even the closest families have their squabbles, particularly amongst the three ruling arms of the Family: the **Frynn**, the **Grasts** and the **Scathels**.

### The Crimson Lantern

The town's prostitution district in itself covers nearly half of Festival. Here, the darker excesses of insectum are enjoyed, and those who find joy in inflicting pain often find comrade spirits in the cloying moist alleyways of the pier town.

### The Great Lyme River

#### (a.k.a. Sister Lyme)

The Great River Sister Lyme cuts through the heart of the city, keeping at bay the districts behind its docks and warehouses, piers, treadmill ferries and boats. Manmade islands dot its surface, the largest being the Gyre (q.v.) and Festival.

The spine of the city, Sister Lyme touches almost every other district and stains it, for many things find the river useful — not only smugglers and murderers, but also those with secrets and those who wish to hide. Many use the river as a friend: the wererats from Festival; the Briny, the hated half-skum who hold their mothers in dreadful thrall; and the Illuminati, who use the Lyme as an ally to cloak their deeds.

The river is infested with false islands, creations of rust and barnacles and rot that jut from the river like rotting teeth. These islands are reached by swaying bridges, badly made treadmill ferries and hope, which sways over the black waters. *The River Act of 1708* forced many of these structures to be at least fifty feet above the waters to allow shipping to pass, and many bridges and links have been destroyed, leaving remote islands that are ideal for piracy and other skulduggery.

Despite appearances, the foul waters are alive with strange life that feeds upon bilge and waste; huge, pale sough-eels and slop-sharks, wallow whales and bog lanterns watch those above hungrily. To fall into the acid maw of a wallow whale is a guarantee of death.

### The Bilges

"The filth must go somewhere," said Crown Justice Moravan in 1392, in answer to the city's burgeoning sewage problem. So the Bilges was born.

A sprawling mass of boardwalks, barges and the screeching of black gulls, the Bilges is about the lowest place a person can find himself in the city. It is the city of stench. Affectionately titled StinkTown and the City of Perfume, it is the place where all unwanted rubbish of the city comes to die. Three huge islands have risen like black boils from the Lyme as a result. These three hills have names — the Midden, the Maw and Mount Misery — each a shanty of rising timber boardwalks, rope bridges and termite-feasted pilings. Then there are the black flies — the Midden-

Angels — that rise in the spring and stay until late autumn. The flies are a torment on hot summer days, and workers wear full-face scarves (known as a *keff*) to keep them at bay. Some people claim the flies occasionally eat children and babies.

Rather like the nearby Sinks, the Bilges is constantly on the move, and whole chunks of the isles occasionally fall away, taking many unfortunate victims with them. Quicksand mires (known locally as bilge-bogs) open up for no apparent reason. Things live beneath the mires themselves. The **Festering Brethren** — a race of intelligent, humanoid cockroaches — lurk in the dark corners of the Bilges and nearby districts. The Brethren are hated and feared in equal measure, but are of use to the **Lords of Rag and Bone** who rule the Bilges. The creatures burrow into the refuse in the hopes of finding treasure, and assist in places where men refuse to go to carry out particularly unpleasant work.

### The Canker

The Canker wreathes the river from autumn to spring, a thick, viscous, green-yellow smog caused by the river mist and choking coal fires of the city. The mist is thick, acrid and persistent — occasionally a Canker rises and stays for a month. The Canker also hides a deadly mist known as Jack's Candle (or the Lyme Lantern, the Ghost Light, or Gandaspati). A thousand fairy stories have been born of its many names. Some say that the mist is a living thing, or many living things, that walk the streets at night and punish men for coming here.



### The Honourable John Quintilius Moravan

Crown Justice Moravan (1325–1401) was a reformist famous for his failed attempts to abolish slavery and the provision of almshouses to the poor. In association to his order for creation of the Bilges, he was also known for breaking the back of the infamously corrupt Sewagers and Ironmongers Guild and replacing it with the city's Office of Sanitation.

### The Ghats

Along the whole river and often teeming with life — and death — particularly at dawn on holy days, are a series of steps that descend into the inky waters and which are used to immolate the dead and cast them into Sister Lyme. Many folk worship river gods and come here to pay their respects. The Ghats are the river cremation sites; they do a brisk trade. It is a common sight to see two sets of feet sticking from funeral pyres — one a legitimate burning, the second a cheap burning paid for by cash to prevent the corpses heading to the City of Golems.

## The Gyre —

### The Town of Flotsam and Jetsam

The Gyre, the spiritual home of the briny, is a well-known landmark that lies in the Great Lyme River. It is a town built upon flotsam, which has formed into a slow whirlpool in the river and which rotates with the slowness of the hour hand upon a clock. That it floats at all is remarkable; that it is a thriving settlement with buildings, boardwalk streets and piers is unbelievable. From the shore, figures can be seen moving gingerly along the boardwalks, as smoke drifts from chimneys, and hundreds of colourful boats bob in the foul waters.

### Hobbington's Lamp

The great sea lantern lies at the farthest point of the Lyme. The huge sea lantern is powered by a broken elder fire elemental (see **Part 5: The Blight Bestiary**), and shines out like a ghastly green gash across the night sky.

### The Windmills

As the river broadens, so the windmills grow. Once there were many vast windmills, which rose across the bay, but fire, neglect, and skulduggery has seen almost all fall back into the river. Many of the remaining windmills are lashed to the rocky islets or manmade islands that jut up like broken teeth from the bay. These islands are very useful for anyone with a need to be hidden.

### The Hollow and Broken Hills

Here, the land splinters and falls into the sea in a thousand spires and hollow hills. Miracles happen here: statues weep, and wells remove malady. This archipelago of tidal stacks, cliffs and islets, as well as being home to countless people, is home to churches. Temples and places of worship rise here, as well as the (now full) Great Blight Cemetery — itself now a huge area of decaying tangled briars and undergrowth, ruins and mausoleums. Many come to Hollow Hills to take the air and listen to the birdsong of the tree-lined avenues and parks in this district. Limestone outcrops abound, and these have been variously turned into grottoes, temples, follies or occasionally more sinister places best avoided. Bridges — both natural and manmade — criss-cross this area of fractured land.

### Sanctuary

The most holy city-state within a city state, Sanctuary is the home of the master of the church in Castorhage. The present ruler, **His Holiness the Father of Castorhage**, balances a precarious thread between enemies, allies, and those who wish to succeed him. The ruthless Borxia family number one of his Holiness's most troubling neighbours; this terrible family has designs upon the throne and crown of Castorhage itself.

## Scrying in the Blight

Paranoia grips the Blight — and for good reason. The city is alive with scrying devices, familiars, arcane eyes, imps and countless spies. The hardest thing to keep here are secrets. Visitors may find the paranoid nature of locals hard to fathom at first, but after a few days, the plethora of spies begins to become obvious. Imps lurk in corners, homunculi watch from behind hidden grills, and the feeling of scrying is almost overpowering.

Every day there is a 5% chance that visitors may be scryed, either deliberately or accidentally. In almost all cases, this scrying is a mere coincidence, a chance view of some wizard of divination out looking for information not connected to the visitors. Such a huge amount of scrying, however, can make one complacent ...

## The Eye

One day there was a church called Saint Cartwell's, which stood proudly near the West Lychgate of the Great Cemetery; the next it was gone, replaced by a vast hole. Locals claim the hole appeared at midnight and that the devil rode out of it on a goat with a man's face. The Eye is deep and cold and menacing. Birds occasionally swoop into its gloom and do not return, and ropes have been lowered down into it and the men on them have not come out again. And recently, similar holes have sprung up across the region. Gas and disappearing explorers have hampered exploration of the Eye and the other holes.

Powerful clerics, bishops, archbishops, and holy fathers rule this area of the city. Behind the smiles and religious paraphernalia seethes a hotbed of intrigue, duplicity, lust, and greed for power as church battles church for supremacy.

## The Jumble

(a.k.a. the Cat's Cradle, the Madness, the Maze, the City of Thieves)

*He was on a narrow balcony barely two feet wide, which led off ahead and rounded a corner over a dizzying drop. Below lay a town. Yet no ordinary town, this town rose in every direction — up over steeples and roofs of thatch and stone and slate, beyond narrow towers and round balconies that hung impossibly over the grey city beneath. Timbers of huge size bolted with iron bars as thick as a horse were its skeleton, its flesh the flotsam and jetsam of the city. It leapt rivers, strangled canals and turned in streets so narrow two children could barely pass.*

*"This ..." said Themris with a smile, "is the Jumble."*

The Jumble is a vast, confusing maze of streets that rise upward and outward — some would say in mockery of the Capitol itself.

It is easy to get lost in the Cradle — streets sink below ground and rise again to rooftop streets, taking a dozen ladders before continuing along a gable that ends at a bare wall, beyond which may lie the garret of a naga artist, a madman or cringing orphans.

The majority live here in cramped confusion to escape something — taxes and enemies, wives, lovers and Knockers. It houses a vast population of ne'er-do-wells and villains, as well as many common folk simply trying to make their lives a little richer. It is, in many ways, the safest place to be a villain; the nickname City of Thieves has long been associated with the Jumble, a place where it is very easy to get lost and come to harm.

Like the Capitol, the Jumble has its own streets, markets and laws. A local vigilante force patrols the streets at night, but foul things still make a home and hide here.

## The Bazaar

Allegedly the greatest market in the world, the Bazaar sits beside and within the Jumble, oozing along its streets like a sickness. It is a thousand streets filled with countless shops, stalls, markets and traders.

## The Sinks

Castorhage — built partly upon clay and silt deposits — is literally dancing upon its own grave: The more weight that comes to bear, the faster the sinking takes place. This is nowhere more apparent than in the Sinks — literally a drowning town.

In 897, Branner, the then king of Castorhage, ordered the creation of a new town for artisans. This would be a place of grand canals and gilt buildings, of towers and cathedrals and art. Branner, always a strong-willed child, decided that it would be wise to use an area of the city known as the Grey Lake, famous for its shallow waters, as the basis for the town.

From the start, the project was doomed. A mysterious number of accidents occurred, workers disappeared, and wages had to treble overnight to keep the work going. Piers vanished in moments, taking those working

## Branner the Brat

King Branner I of Castorhage (891–899) ascended the throne at the age of seven and was often sickly. He was commonly known as Branner the Child for his tender age, but was sometimes cruelly referred to by East Enders as Branner the Spoilt Brat. His reign was largely influenced by his regent and stepmother Loris (a.k.a. Loris the Mad Bitch by East Enders), and died under suspicious circumstances at the age of nine.

on them into the waters, never to be seen below. A curious fog — *Jack's Candle* — seeped up at night and killed with its poisonous kiss. It remains the main reason for the multitude and high cost of canaries across the city, the birds dying as soon as they get a whiff of the marsh gas itself to give their owners precious moments to take precautions. Numerous attempts were made to abandon the project. By this time, however, Branner was sick, and his stepmother Loris insisted that work continue. Even after her child's death, the long-lived (and despised) stepmother insisted that the work be concluded — as a fitting tribute to her dear departed stepson.

Even at its finest, it was obvious that Branner's Folly (as it had become known) was sinking — towers leant, walls ruptured, cathedrals sagged. Yet after a few decades, the sinking suddenly halted, and the town was left as it is today — a twisted wreckage of leaning walls and towers, exhausted battlements and dislocated arched bridges over canals that range between a few feet to bottomless. Visitors find the Sinks curiously unsettling, and are often prone to dizziness. Even the prahu-punters, most famous for the songs they sing as they take their fares from one street to the next, claim that only certain alchemical variations of snuff keep the dizziness at bay as they punt fares between the steep, dying canyons of the city walls — walls that threaten always to collapse.

Now the Sinks is the home to the disowned nobility: bastards, criminals, madmen, those who sicken, those who have wronged, and inbred horrors. These nobles like to think of the Sinks as an elite domain, a decadent aristocracy willing to take life to further extremes than those in the Capitol. In truth they are exiles; their crimes beyond even those considered normal in the Capitol itself.

Vampires infest some of these families, although they are always careful to conceal their gifts. For the rest, they are a disturbing mixture of hopes and fears, abominations and murderers. These nobles pay well, and have infested the Sinks with hangers-on, traders, priests and others mad enough — or greedy enough — to live in the shadows of their masters and mistresses.

Stories persist that sea-devils (or sahaugin) have been seen brazenly walking the streets here by night, and that the worship of their hellish gods goes on behind the gilt doors of this dislocated district.

## The Asylum

(a.k.a. *the Hatch, the Sanatorium, Heaven*)

Occupying more than eleven acres, the Asylum is where the city hides its less-fortunate populace, and occasionally someone conveniently goes missing here.

The Asylum is a walled area of the city occupying several streets and a market square (Bedlam Square), the buildings and walls are secured so that inmates cannot escape; once cast into the Asylum, one never leaves.

The Asylum is a city in itself: It has its own laws and rules, property and even currency. An inmate called the **Judge** rules the Asylum inside, whilst the **Sanatorium Overseers** ensure that no one escapes.

A single huge doorway is the only entry point into the Asylum. The door has the phrase "*Welcome to Heaven*" carved above it.

## Toiltown

(a.k.a. *The East, East Ending, The State of Sweat*)

Everyone hates vast Toiltown, even the overseers and manufactory managers who dole out their cruel forms of justice within. It is a place of endless manufactories and sweatshops, workhouses and underground mills.

One is regarded as a true East Ender only if born within earshot of the Great BlackBell of East Ending. The lowest castes of the city make their homes here, and a vast number of slums have developed over the years. Visitors find a dizzying array of endless unnamed streets awash with dirty children, sullen goodwives and aggressive men on their way to gin houses for an evening's relaxation. An East Ender, however, is a friend for life if you can overcome his reticence.

Washing up on the shores of the Artists' Quarter and Bazaar, the East Ending is a rough place to wander in, but a good place to find information. A coin can buy many services — murder, in some streets — and in a town where the Watch keep their distance, many people find Toiltown a good place to hide. With so many people crammed into the disgusting, filthy place, trouble is never very far away, and many predators find the close proximity and cheap life very useful.

The East Ending has an unenviable reputation and history of murder. Whether this is caused by the harshness of life here, or whether East Enders make easy prey for such killers is open to conjecture, but barely a night passes without a death, or two, or ten ...

An appalling trade in slavery — and worse — lurks just beneath the surface. Many a decent East Ending man looks on in anger at events in his patch, and these men are often stirred into action. This anger is a useful tool to those brave and cunning enough to capitalise upon it.

Beyond, the city does not so much stop as stagger out into the grey and green fenlands around — fens that are dangerous places — filled with bogs and pools. Yet at the same time, a building site is rising here on top of the old places, slowly taming the land with dikes and fill to allow the city to burst its edges. The Wash, another aspect of Toiltown, is one sinking arm of the city that has lapsed into insularity that thrives in the mires of the city.

As the city swells, so to do the original inhabitants of the Fens seethe and grow angry. Many farmers and poachers ply their trade within the trackless Fens, but other things have grown to resent the city folk's arrival — dark things without names and souls, evil things that slip from the Fens and into the city streets at night.



## THE BLIGHT: RICHARD PETT'S CROOKED CITY

### Boattown

Strapped from the East Ending near the Great Docks lurks a fixed group of riverboats, planks and piers known collectively as Boattown. This is a place where swarthy halfling families hold sway, where fishermen rub shoulders openly with briny, and where murder costs a few coins. Boattowns are common across the Blight, but this one is the biggest — and nastiest — in the city-state.

### Lych Fens

Creeping ever outward, the city slowly gorges itself upon the drab bog-ridden countryside beyond with localised areas with pleasant names such as Dead Maiden Sink, Sheep's Coe, and Withered Foot. Those within this place resent the invasion and have been fighting back.

### WorkClock

A huge clock that tolls the hours rests in the heart of Toiltown. Her bells are said to be rung by the Devil, and at her heart hangs the legendary Great BlackBell.

### Town Bridge

The “Bridge with a Town on top,” Town Bridge is a teeming mass of trade and humanity crammed between the Great East Bridge Gate and the Royal West Bridge Gate — a distance of half a mile. Town Bridge has taken advantage of its curious taxation laws that do not recognise the bridge as part of the city. Therefore, lodgings and traders that live on it are exempt from taxes (although a tax is charged to enter the bridge from the east gate). It is thus the home to the most scurrilous, greedy and unpleasant group of rogue landlords ever assembled. A dozen families may share a room; three generations of the same family may find themselves lodging in a shack lashed to the side of a balcony of one of the Great Town Bridge Towers; or a cupboard even may be let as a flat. As a result, the whole town has grown out over the river and sits like a fat timber whale in the Lyme.

Town Bridge has its own language (Bridge-Slang), its own ruler (the aranae **Crown Prince Justice Cornlord**, one of the most prominent of the thirteen Justices in the city), and encompasses one of the most difficult and time-consuming journeys in the city to cross (it is often said it is easier to climb than walk across Town Bridge). Many folk set out from the West Gate armed with rations to ensure a safe crossing.

### Scrimshaw

Town Bridge is more than a bridge linking two parts of land; it also connects the Blight to a place in Between called Scrimshaw, a whaling island port in the Unsea, a churning ocean filled with “whales” that provides an astonishing profit to whichever gang happens to be running the operation at the time.

### The Great Fire of Town Bridge

One of the most terrible of calamities in recent centuries, the Great Fire took place in 1509, and charred stumps and the smell of ash still remain in some parts of the new bridge. Some scholars have speculated that the calamity, and rumours of the discovery of ragefire — a living, hungry flame — are curiously similar in date, and appoint the Great Fire as the first encounter between men and ragefire itself.

### Underneath

The Great Dark beneath the city is vast. It is an endless length of tunnels and canals, natural cysts, and shafts that fall for miles. It is a hollow cocoon above the void, a place liable to collapse at any moment and open up some dark fissure into the light. Most famous amongst these fissures is the Eye, found in the Hollow and Broken Hills district.

The Underneath, they say, touches every part of the city, and every home lies just a god's whim away from being devoured by the dark. There are countless tales of whole streets vanishing, and of caves opening suddenly beneath nurseries to allow faceless monsters to take babies.

Underneath is everything below the city — and it is vast and deep. They say a king who lived a hundred years had an army toiling in the dark, and these men and dwarves never saw daylight in their lives. Countless escape-tunnels, stores, submerged canals, and shafts are the result.

And far, far below, a rumour persists of a creature called the **Body Snatcher**, the thing that once owned the city and whose hive aspects wants it back.

### The Mine

The Mine is cool and endless and dark, a working mine that moves and grows daily. Vast sections of the mine have been abandoned, others flooded, still others fled and occupied with horror. Shafts fall miles into the bowels of the earth, and cages descend into cysts in the world. Waterfalls plummet a thousand, thousand yards.

What work takes place in the Mine is secret now, and why the Illuminati sponsor the ongoing ripping of the earth here is a mystery.





## Seasonal Districts

Three distinct areas of the city rise during particular seasons. These districts occasionally miss a year if the weather is too bad or too good, but they always reappear eventually.

### The Black Ice Fayre

In winter, Sister Lyme always freezes over, particularly around the feet of the piers and harbours. Locals use the ice to their advantage, taking to it on crude whalebone skates, or improvising makeshift sleds. Hot on their heels come the traders and businessmen anxious to make a profit from this levity, and soon a full-size town appears on the ice.

### Carnival

In early summer, the farmers and rural folk come from the fens around the city to sell their produce at the Carnival. The Carnival is a month of feasting and drinking that takes over the whole lower caste portions of the city-state. While not a district per se, the Carnival alters the layout of many districts within the city and creates new markets, floating towns, and shanties.

### The Mudflats

During dry summers, the city becomes unbearable, and the stench is enough to knock visitors off their feet. As the Lyme grows sluggish, it congeals into a black tar-like mud that has a crust upon which the locals venture out upon to get away from the dustbowl of the city itself. Like the Black Ice Fayre, this movement grows, and soon people are building makeshift lodgings and taverns upon the crust — which they hope will not break and deposit them into the filth beneath.

# Whispers of Darker Places

Two final places remain, but these are not within the city, they are more shadows that fall across it at certain times. They are not places that can be described or catalogued easily, but they are within touching distance of the city-state.

## Between

The land beyond mirrors, a place of terrible rumours and dread. The secret of the fixed accesses to Between is a fiercely guarded secret of the Illuminati, who control most of the doors in the city. However, their frequent violations of the land of twisted shadows has led to a dramatic increase in doors opening between the two worlds, as strange dark things drag themselves screaming from ordinary looking-glasses, and many mirrors have been smashed as a result. To break a mirror, they say, gives seven years *good* luck.

Things are occasionally caught or seen — these things are difficult to look upon, and are composed of all the things they have touched, the thoughts they have made, and the company they have kept in their strange lands. Some call these folk the Dread Fey, Twisted Fey or Others.

## The Furnace

A dark part of Hell that has been birthed by the Blight and the association with its true ruler Demoriel the Twice-Exiled Seductress (see *The Tome of Horrors Complete* by **Frog God Games**), this is a land of choking fires, volcanoes and torment on an unimagined scale. Clouds of bats scour the Furnace for escapees, and twisted devil overseers break the workforce throughout eternity.

Too many landscapes of the Furnace can now be viewed in the art collections of the insane for it to be the work of one man's imagination.

The Furnace, they say, is the new kingdom of the Illuminati, and it is growing.

# Media Inspiration for The Blight

A list of films, books and songs that have the distinct feel of the Blight. Those marked in **bold** are particular references used in its creation.

## Books

- Neal Asher — *Spatterjay* novels
- Clark Ashton Smith — most things
- Clive Barker — anything, but especially *The Hellbound Heart* and *Weaveworld*
- **Lewis Carroll** — *Alice's adventures*
- Susanna Clarke — *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell*
- Sir Arthur Conan Doyle — Sherlock Holmes, pretty much anything, but especially *Charles Augustus Milverton* and *The Crooked Man*
- John Connolly — *The Book of Lost Things*
- Mike Dash — *Batavia's Graveyard*
- **Charles Dickens** — **most things**
- Antonia Fraser — *Marie Antoinette: The Journey*

- Neil Gaiman — *Neverwhere*
- Mary Gentle — *1610: A Sundial in a Grave*
- W.W. Jacobs — *The Monkey's Paw*
- Tim Jeal — *Explorers of the Nile*
- H.P. Lovecraft — anything, but especially *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*
- Scott Lynch — *The Lies of Locke Lamora*
- **China Miéville** — ***Perdido Street Station*, *The Scar*, *Iron Council*, *Un Lun Dun***
- Giles Milton — *Nathaniel's Nutmeg*
- George Orwell — *1984*
- Mervyn Peake — *Gormenghast* Trilogy
- Anne Rice — particularly the Vampire novels
- **Mary Shelley** — ***Frankenstein***
- Neal Stephenson — *The Baroque Cycle*
- Jenny Uglow — *The Lunar Men*
- **Jeff VanderMeer** — **everything, but especially the *City of Saints and Madmen***
- Tad Williams — *The War of the Flowers*
- John Wyndham — *The Day of the Triffids*

## Films

- *Alice* — Jan Švankmajer
- *Alien*
- *The Blair Witch Project*
- ***The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari***
- *The Company of Wolves*
- *Cloverfield*
- *Cronos*
- ***The Elephant Man***
- *Frankenstein* (original)
- ***Freaks***
- *From Hell*
- *Golem*
- Hammer Horror Films (especially the *Frankensteins* and *Captain Kronos: Vampire Hunter*)
- *The Haunting*
- *Highlander* (just the first one)
- *The Hills Have Eyes*
- *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*
- *The Maltese Falcon*
- *Night of the Demon*
- *Nosferatu* (either version)
- *Pan's Labyrinth*
- *Quatermass and the Pit*
- Quay Brothers — especially *Street of Crocodiles*
- *Saw*
- *Sleepy Hollow*
- *The Wicker Man* (original)
- *Twelve Monkeys*



- *Carnivale*
- *Children of the Stones*
- *Penny Dreadful*
- *The Quatermass Conclusion*
- *The Stone Tape*
- *The Twilight Zone*
- *Utopia*

## Podcasts

- The Dark Verse
- Pseudopod

## Blight Mood Music

Sometimes, it's fun to work whilst listening to particular mood music. Here's a list of the music I listened to most working on Castorhage. See if you can lay your hands on some of them and play them as mood music:

- Black Sabbath — *Black Sabbath*
- Christopher Gordon — *The Galapagos*
- Clawfinger — *Out to Get Me*
- Edward Elgar and Gustav Holst — *The Planets: Mars, Bringer of War*
- Marilyn Manson — *The Beautiful People*
- Ozzy Osbourne — *No More Tears*
- Krzysztof Penderecki — *Polymorphia*
- Prokofiev — *Dance of the Capulets*
- Rage Against the Machine — *Born of a Broken Man*
- Sex Pistols — *Holidays in the Sun*
- Slipknot — *Duality*
- Therapy? — *Crooked Timber, Living in the Shadow of a Terrible Thing*



# Part Two: Peoples, A Cyclopædia of Character

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being a Who's Who of the Lowfolk, Important Personages,  
Gods, and Things of the Great City-State of Castorhage

*"Here, my friend, the gods walk the streets ..."*



# Meet the Locals ...

The Blight is a sprawling mass of people and things. The place is overcrowded, violent, and filthy, and this festering mass of life (and unlife) is a breeding ground for deceit, violence, selfishness, and, of course, adventure.



## How the City-State of Castorhage Works

The City-State of Castorhage, and by extension the entire Empire of Castorhage, is a hereditary monarchy with an absolute primogeniture order of succession, with the current monarch's eldest child taking over rulership, regardless of gender, after the deaths of both king and queen. However, as the Blight operates functionally as an *absolute* monarchy (despite what the law books and Courts may say), the ruling monarch can decree otherwise. That happened recently in the Blight with **Queen Alice** announcing her youngest child **Princess Alicia** as her heir. Unfortunately, the queen has lapsed into madness, and now craves human flesh, a need only quelled for her short public appearances by powerful magic and insectum.

Some say her madness came when she bore Alicia, a birthing that is never spoken of. A few whisper that Alice lost her wits at that very moment, and that the unnaturally aware Alicia and she are somehow one and the same. It is a silly story whispered by prattling goodwives and courtiers in the Capitol and given no heed by those with wit, except when they awaken troubled in the darkest hours of the night. The queen's other eight daughters thus squabble, plot, and contrive to ensure that when their mother dies, they gain power — by hook or by crook. Each daughter has her own alliances and friends and is paranoid about her own safety. They are united in one thing: their horror about what the city would be like with the spoiled and frightful Alicia as its ruler.

The **Illuminati** — who in truth run the city — are aware of this instability, and take careful steps to ensure that true power rests elsewhere, thus ensuring that however unreasonable or insane any past or future monarch is, the city grows — as does their hope of expanding the empire to rule the world. Ostensibly, the Illuminati control the three **Crown Justices** that run the “mundane” aspects of the city: its trade, its armies, and its colonies, leaving the Royal Family to drink and copulate in their own tight, inbred circles.

Below these heights of power, a series of families vie for influence. These tight clans are so paranoid about befouling their blood that they have inbred to a dangerous point. To cover this, they have taken on new, exotic names to reflect their almost entirely invented history. Below these families are individuals who have risen or are rising through the ranks, often carefully chosen by the Illuminati to keep the status quo. Below this — although allegedly on level footing with the Royals — is the **Church of**

**Mother Grace**, represented by **His Holiness the Father of Castorhage**, who is chosen for life by a secret council, within which fester the groping fingers of the Illuminati.

Somewhere far, far below, are the few decent or greedy folk who wish things to be a little better. These are divided into two broad camps: the **rebels** or **revolutionaries**, who wish to topple the government and replace it; and the **anarchists**, who just want to topple it. Even within this disparate group, the Illuminati grope, and members of the **Thieves Guild** (*The Guild* as it is generally acknowledged to be) pay homage to their masters.

## “Gods” of Castorhage

The “Gods” of Castorhage actually live in the city. They are not generally true gods or divine per se, but rather living legends. Despite the arguments of the scholars of the Seminary and BookTown, people refer to them as gods. They are creatures of myth and great power who wield incredible authority, influence and fear over the Blight.

True gods are also of course worshipped, and no matter how obscure the deity, or how tiny his group of worshippers, some temple, church, or alley-shrine will be found on the streets of the Blight, in particular in the alleys of the Hollow and Broken Hills. The Blight also has its own saints and sinners, devils and angels who are discussed briefly at the end of this section.

The list below is by no means intended to be complete, and occasionally new gods rise or old gods fall, followers are called to arms, or things are born (or made) that become deific in the eyes of local people.

### Anger-Consumed-By-Desire

Rumours abound of an insane satyr in the city, a dark fey that is at once a haughty dandy, an innocent maid, or a violent psychopath. The locals have given this creature a name.

The satyr eats love and lust and beauty, finding ample feasts each night to sate its hunger. After it gorges its appetite, it leaves behind age and weakness and ugliness. Its leavings are worms, foul black things that crawl and fester in the dark and who, too, are drawn by love and lust and spirit to gorge.

### Beltane, God-Emperor of the Fetch

The **Fetch** (see below) are the undead populace of the Blight — a vast and mobile gypsy people who hide by day and walk by night.

Many of the Fetch lead what appear to be quite normal lives — sometimes behind heavily tinted spectacles claiming allergy to the sun or birds, or disliking crowds or simply being eccentric and only being seen by night. Others simply claim to love the night and have little time for the noise and clamour of the day. The Fetch call these members of their race the Deceivers, and afford them great respect, they are the shepherds of their kind, finding safe places to hide, deceiving the people of the city and leading them away from the Great Hives where the Fetch sleep.

Generally, only intelligent undead are truly considered part of the Fetch — ghosts and wraiths and others with active minds. Ghouls, however, are its chattel, its slaves and workers, expendables, and Lowest of the Low. It is the vampires that are the nobility of this race, and Beltane their king. The great vampire-king sits at the centre of an impossibly complex network of informants, underbosses, and enforcers. His spies are everywhere, linked by covert mental means to ensure secrecy. They are expected to “Fall into the Sun” if discovered (walking into sunlight to die), and swear total fealty to the Fetch. Beltane's punishments for transgressions and failures are legendary, and he is called the King of Thorns, Master of Impaling by his subjects. Beltane is known to impale real and imagined foes, and leave these vampires as permanent spectacles to his wrath.

His many brides are his most precious and loyal subjects, queens in their own right who work his most complex plots in person and who have the most contact with the people of the city. Beltane regards his brides as mock princesses; his own royal family and images of the true royal princesses.

The Fetch are fiercely mindful of their caste in unlife, and are governed by strict rules which forbid the creation of other unlife without the approval of the Fetch as a whole. Occasionally, they conduct covert wars

## The Brides of Beltane

Beltane only considers the most beautiful women as potential brides, and even then, only if they have some other gift or purpose. Selene, his first queen, was regarded as the most beautiful woman to live when she reigned a thousand years ago. The tale of Beltane and Selene is an epic of misery, separation and, ultimately, betrayal. It is said that Beltane chose her death over that of the entire Fetch.

The present queens silently do their master's bidding, and are used in the most delicate, profitable, and dangerous tasks, ensuring the shadow of Beltane is present at such momentous moments.

against men to swell their kind, but generally they wish to remain secret, continuing in the dark with their curious unives and goals.

## Crooked Promethean, The

Golems, homuncules, and other constructs are common in the Blight. The numerous Cadaver-Surgeons, Homuncule Wives, and Golem-Stitchers that come here to learn and trade ensure a steady supply of such slaves. However, there are those amongst the constructs who have spent too much time in the company of men and learnt, and begun to think. These constructs have formed a secret grouping: a hidden cant called Cobble, and a covert society called the **Inkling**. They pass messages, and whisper and plot in the name of the Crooked Promethean.

The Crooked Promethean is an abhorrence, an impossibly vile-looking creature made a century ago. It hides in the shadows at night, sleeps under the piers, and cowers from the sun. Given life by its master, the Crooked Promethean is endowed with a most-active brain; it is an artist, a philosopher, and a poet — and it is all too aware of the effect its appearance has on the people of the city. It has suffered a long lifetime of abuse and terror, hunts and screams from the uneducated locals, been chased from a thousand hiding places, and been called every foul name under the sun. It knows that the physikers wish to capture and dissect it, keep it in the dark for all time to study and question.

It knows all these things and forgives — forgives its tormentors for their crimes. Yet in its forgiveness, it is often brutal: It dissects its own enemies whilst quoting poetry; it sings whilst its enemy's minds are stripped apart; and it cries whilst it breaks them. The Promethean wishes to make men see that what they are doing is wrong, and wishes them to stop. Those that do not stop, it stops. Eye for eye, tooth for tooth.

And at night it dreams, and its dreams are shared by others of its kind ...

## Devil, The

Known as the Evil One, Old Scratch, Tom Hobb, and a hundred names, the Devil has minions across the city-state, and his influence is growing. This



self-styled Lucifer has many disguises, many lovers, and many subjects. He also has many enemies, not the least of which is the arch-devil **Lucifer** (see *The Tome of Horrors Complete* by **Frog God Games**), though he apparently lacks the time or wherewithal to deal with such a presumptuous upstart (or secretly enjoys the corruption it fosters). Regardless of his many adversaries, his honeyed tongue ensures that his will is done, and his unknown plans for the Blight and Between move ever on ...

## Green Man, Aspect of the

There is an ancient creature that dwells in the heart of the deepest, darkest Between forest. This thing has led a thousand, thousand lifetimes. It has seen betrayal and murder, corruption, and misery. The Green Man is a thing of thorns and briars and preternature, a being opposed to all normal laws of the known world, a thing whose very existence affronts Nature herself. It is assumed by all that the aspect is part of the true living god brought into the city by his pagan worshippers through human sacrifice.

Drawn initially by the Great Coven to father a child, the Aspect of the Green Man visits the streets of the Blight more frequently these days, the Aspect sometimes walks the streets as a tall, dark stranger in a top hat, sometimes as a breeze stirring up the rubbish, sometimes as a fire erupting in the timbers of a workhouse. He is only rarely seen in his true form of thorny madness.

It is a strange being without understandable motives or goals — it may vanish for a thousand nights to emerge slovenly for a single day and ends it dancing upon the rooftops slaying the scrimshaw gargoyles there. It may then vanish again, only to appear hiding in the body of a puppeteer or priest, a skin it discards like a toy once it has no further use for it. In short, the Aspect of the Green Man may appear anywhere and at any time.

It has grown lonely of late and calls others of its kind into the world; these devil-spawn, twisted fey plague the streets of the city until caught or killed. Some reside in the freak-collections of the wealthy or have learnt to hide from men. Many victims found torn and ravaged by briars are the work of his **thornies** (see *The Tome of Horrors Complete* by **Frog God Games**) summoned forth to plague the city while goodly folk wonder at the true purpose of his visitations.

## Harvester of Cribs, The

The Harvester is nothing so terrible to look upon. It is about the size of a goblin or kobold, and wears a vaguely ludicrous clown's outfits. It carries a short wand, which it talks to and which talks back. But on the wand end is the head of a baby — a living, talking baby with a twisted grin and evil mind.

The Harvester collects children. It takes some away to a special place in Between in a nightmare land of fairy tales and monsters. The others it eats, for it gets so hungry these days ...

## Leper King, The

*"He has no face, the Leper King, his body is broken and his mind has been shredded. He walks here and there in the city, but you will never see him — unless he wishes you to, and that, my friend, will be the last thing you see as his kiss takes your flesh for his own. He will pluck out your eyes and wear them in his own empty rotting sockets; he will take your beauty and wear it like a mask before soon, very soon, it will be rotten again. He will take your memories and claim them as his own, perhaps try to love those you have loved and be a father to your children.*

*"And you will be left as he; a thing without flesh, without succour, without hope, yet very, very much alive ..."*

## Pagan Lord of Lice, The

The Pagan Lord is king of all vermin. He wears a coat of lice that dance upon his flesh in joy, waiting to be freed upon the sick, the poor, the helpless, the old and the young. He walks the streets at night with his insect young at his side. He crouches in the shadows, with only the strange whispers of the movement of his young to soothe him. He takes the flesh from bones and leaves the husk as his calling card.

Some claim to have seen the Pagan Lord of Lice riding a dead horse; others say that he consorts with the great spiders of the city rooftops; and more claim

## Denizens from Between

They have many names: the Echoes, the Nowhere, the Twisted. Between creatures are things with bodies whose forms are made and changed by influences around them. A Between wolf is as much of his pack and the wild, snow-covered lands as he is wolf — he is the essence of all things that he has passed in that strange place and been shaped by it. His hunger is all consuming. This wolf is partly snow and partly frost, his eyes are like gales, and his breath like a storm; he passes unseen in the winter snows of the Between and hunts with the knowledge and cunning of all other wolves and the hunters who have chased them. Yet this wolf has one further secret — it is not just wolf but part man, a lycanthrope who spent its early days in the Great Between Forest. This, then, is a creature as white as snow but with twisted boughs and briar, a creature of teeth and claw and consummate cunning. And all Between creatures are like this to some extent; the more ancient the creature, the more terrible a foe it becomes, for as the centuries have passed, it has grown with — and become part of — its surroundings.

that he carries a great scythe and is the son of Death. But each night he is seen somewhere within the city, taking his harvest and spreading his misery. His progeny are everywhere, clinging to the flesh of babies, sucking the blood of pigs, and cavorting on the emaciated forms of the dying.

### Puppeteer, The

Not all the children of the city are real. Some are the progeny of the Puppeteer. His offspring try to lead others astray to populate his games and shows and become puppets themselves. The Puppeteer wanders the streets with a broad smile upon his face; he plays street-corners and under bridges, in fairgrounds, and at the market. Those who attend his show often find that they themselves become a permanent part of it.

### Madness-of-the-MirrorStorm, The

A kraken from the Between that has been dragged into the seas of men. An accident drawn here by the Illuminati, the Madness lurks in the deeps of the Fetid Sea, yet her tentacles are slowly encroaching within the shallower waters, gripping the piers and footings of the great docklands and Town Bridge and drawing her own kind to her lusts.

A recent immigrant, the Madness is slowly weaving new plots in her strange home, and her influence is reaping a curious change upon the waters: fishermen are trawling the strangest catches, and the sea devils are already hailing her as a living god come to help them drown the city.

She is afraid of only one thing — the Devil — and is careful to keep her eyes beneath the surface of the waters and away from his gaze.

### Other "Gods"

Beware the **Mask Man**, the **Feaster of Flies**, and the **Wolf Wearing Innocent Skins** when you walk the streets of Castorhage. Is that shadow the **Tall Man of Misery** hobbling along on his crooked staff? Is that harlot the **Whore of Weft**, whose lust is sated only by laying her eggs in the paralysed bodies of her lovers, leaving them in high gables wreathed in cocoons? Was that strange noise the **Lyme Troll** out fishing the streets of the city for delicious dwarves? The city is no place to be after dark, and whoever you may meet, mind your language, guard your purse, and pray to your own gods that the ones here leave you be.

## Saints, Sinners and Legends

The city drowns in its past and suffocates on its legends. To the visitor, it seems that every street has its own saint, every alley its own legend, every gable its own curse. Every day is a holy day to some saint — whether that is Saint Mohv, Patron Saint of Ash, or Lucretia, the Martyr of Witches.

In so huge a place, sinners, too, are celebrated, from Armenat, Patron Sinner of Absinthe, to Lady Bess, the Sinner of Nudity who rode a horse naked through the streets of the city and was burnt at the stake for it.

Legends have a habit of springing up and walking in this place; every cellar has its ghost, every church its gargoyle, and every street its black hound or fiery horse.

## Devils and Angels

Devils and n'gathau (see *The Tome of Horrors Complete* by Frog God Games) have taken a peculiar interest in the Blight, perhaps driven by the "closeness" of the terrible Furnace — a part of Hell where machines turn night and day. Lucifer (the self-proclaimed and the true) has taken some interest in the city-state, as have his consorts and followers. Or perhaps the proximity of the Between, with its own devil — the Green Man — has brought them. They are here, and they are abroad in the city tonight.

They take many forms and have many servants and masters, many within the ranks of the dreadful Great Coven, others serving the Illuminati, or perhaps driving it on its strange quests. But whatever their motives and situations, they are here now.

Following their shadows are the angels, who are as profligate as the devils. These angels also walk the streets of men engaged upon terrible quests; they are avenging angels who see only their enemy. They are not creatures to reason with or parley; they are beings of fathomless light here to take away evil — and evil takes many forms, from the foul devil, to those who aid them or accidentally block the angels' paths whether with naked swords or with trivial words. The angels care not; all are condemned or pushed aside in the name of the quest. Only the quest matters.

If they spend too long in the city, even these devils and angels are driven to madness. The noise, the confusion of thoughts, the poison air, and the endless movement drive them to despair. The endless potential opportunities for good and evil are like a torrent to the creatures, and they are driven insane by it. These insane devils and angels are an explosion of the emotions that created them — creatures of heartless good or joyful wickedness.

### Archangels and Arch-Devils

Less numerous, but vastly more obscene and powerful, need has drawn these creatures to the city by their lesser brethren. Often the need is simply to destroy, to find an insane one of their kin and ensure its total destruction. Sometimes there are other quests, or would-be masters drawing them into the city.

## People

*"Cruelty, very far from being a vice, is the first sentiment Nature injects in us all."*

A caste system operates superficially in the Blight. From the Queen to the Invisibles, everyone knows his station in life. In theory, it is not possible to move between these castes — rank being something inborn rather than earned. The Illuminati changed that: They pull all the strings of their puppet queen and her distended family of daughters. It is also possible to rise within the various stations in power and, if one marries a Royal, one becomes Royal, providing one can pass oneself off as Royal in the first place, of course. A person can achieve almost as much power, if not more, in the dark corridors of the Capitol, and those wise and rich enough can even fabricate backgrounds.

Caste is simply control, and those with cunning minds can manipulate and stretch it like a band of rubber. Optional rules for the use of castes are detailed further in **Part 4: The Blight GM Guide**. Following, however, is a simple list and description of the different castes present in the city.

## The Distended Royal Family and the Terrible Daughters

Fractured and lacking any kind of cohesion, the Royals are as varied as their subjects, with loyalists, Illuminati members, fanatics, devil-worshippers and even rebels in their number. Some of the more notable Royals are listed below. A thousand different versions of Royal lineage have been drawn, each supposedly more true than the last, yet each is argued, and none is agreed upon.

**Alexandra, The Unseen Princess:** The rumours of a grotesque abhorrence that was the Queen's first daughter refuse to go away, and tales of a locked room in the highest steeples of the Capitol containing the princess are strangely persistent. That the staff who attend it are blind and deaf is also regarded by almost all as just a rumour.

**Princess Eleanor:** The queen's "public" eldest daughter is not acknowledged as such by her sisters, who contest that she was sired by the Devil. Eleanor is icy, and her greatest — and only — desire is to rule the city-state and its empire. She weaves countless plots to achieve her aims, and worships the Devil. Eleanor despises her husband, **Crown Prince Rorth**, but admits the union is useful for appearance.

**Princess Geneve:** The grotesquely fat Geneve takes countless lovers and has birthed a dozen (known) heirs. Born a matter of seconds after her twin sister Eleanor, she hates her crooked sister(s) with every ounce of her being. Her second passion is poison; her first is manipulating suitors with her poisons.

**Princess Lilly (deceased):** Some say she was murdered, and unfortunately, Lilly knows who did it: her sisters Eleanor and Geneve, in a rare act of cooperation. They didn't expect her to come back to haunt them, but by night she wanders the Capitol, singing and slowly driving her sisters mad with fear.

**Princess Rebecca of Mourney:** The young and beautiful darling of the crowds is the public face of the Royal Family. Rebecca has a thousand would-be suitors and has turned down countless proposals of marriage.

**Princess Mercy:** If ever a child was wrongly named, it's the violent Mercy. Mercy is no sedate Royal who takes a back seat to anyone; she is a figure of action — murderous action. Mercy courts the lords and masters of the army, whispers to them, brags to them. Mercy considers a coup an option for her aspirations of making the city-state a military force to be reckoned with across the world. She hates her sisters, although she has taken a lover in **Elaine of Aldwark** recently.

**Princess Rachel (deceased):** Murdered in her sleep by poison administered by her sister Geneve, Rachel's sobs are still heard in certain parts of the attics of the Royal Palace.

**Princess Sarah (deceased):** Sarah died in childbirth, and some say her child was monstrous and immediately killed and burnt.

**Princess Lenora:** Thought by some to be the youngest surviving mortal daughter of the queen, Lenora regards herself as the most stable. Her lovers are wizards and those who know secrets, and she is often found in a carriage rattling along the cobbles of BookTown on some mission.

**Princess Alicia, "The Little Queen":** The terrible nine-year-old "Little Queen" is one of the newest Royals but has rapidly achieved a high station in life. The queen herself anointed Alicia as her chosen heir just a few years ago. Her mother dotes on her, but most other members of the Royal Family despise her. Spoilt, violent, and sadistic, the girl has a reputation amongst the servants for terrible callousness, her cries of "off with his head" ring through the Capitol when she is angry (which is most of the time), and her orders are carried out by guards too afraid to question her. Her dotage from the Queen ensures that she gets whatever she wants, even if that involves sadism and cruelty. As such, she is Rebecca of Mourney's nemesis, and the removal of the little queen is a priority for her (although Princess Rebecca is careful to hide her true intent to dispose of the horror-child). In the meantime, the terrible child's will is enforced with alarming brutality: little friends arrive and are never seen again; couriers quake at an invitation to her parties; and lesser Royals whisper that "something really must be done."

**Crown Prince Rorth:** Princess Eleanor's husband is the dashing face of the family. In truth, Rorth is only interested in sexual conquest and horseracing, in that order. An absinthe fiend, he frequently goes to the Artists' Quarter in disguise to search for some new vice.

**Clovis, Crown Prince of the Capitol:** Ancient Clovis, the husband of Princess Geneve, has designs upon the throne, and uses his sorcery to

## The Royal Caste

### The Queen — Her Royal Highness Queen Alice

*"The figure staggered into the room spastically, taking great strides with the aid of two sticks, making her look like some four-legged spider in a crooked web. Her face was veiled 'to protect us,' they had said.*

*Her breaths came in sharp rasps, and her voice was like breaking glass, often calling for the beheading of her subjects. But for now, she was happy just to look at us, it seemed. I could not help thinking of the spider once more: Was she watching us and waiting to strike, or was she waiting for us to walk openly into her web?"*

At seventy-nine years of age, demented Queen Alice is the puppet ruler of Castorhage, drowning in the acid advice of her advisors the Crown Justices, who have poisoned many members of her own family against her. Queen Alice is a puppet in every sense of the word, her body kept upright through alchemy, which has long since chased away her wits. Cruelly, her majesty occasionally has lucid moments, but these moments are becoming increasingly rare. Perhaps more cruelly, her majesty has also recently developed a habit of killing and eating flesh; her moniker of "Ghoul" is becoming more appropriate with each passing day. She is no normal ghoul, however, for the Queen is no bestial creature; she is capable of grace, but nowadays she is so drugged that she is little more than a walking corpse that smiles vacuously from behind a black veil, a mourning garment she still wears in public to honour her long-dead husband Marram.

The continuation of the Queen is good for practically everyone, who fear a civil war should she die.

## The Royal Blessing

All the Royal Family (and a great many bastard Royals) have a bone-wasting disease that cripples them. As they age, their limbs contort, and they end up walking like dislocated spiders. Many Royals have to be conveyed in personal carriages, or seek magical or alchemical means to remain mobile. That this sickness reaches a terrible conclusion involving a final *change* is a rumour the Royals dare not allow to become public, nor can they ever allow the Lowfolk to draw any conclusions between the likeness of spiders and the sickness.



## The Road of Impalements

In 1693, the City Watch and Royal Army brutally put down an uprising in the Jumble. It is rumoured that 900 prisoners were taken, none of whom were seen again. To make an example of the rioters, Malice had 500 sharpened stakes arranged on the main thoroughfare of the Capitol and had a rioter impaled on each. Many of these rioters were left to die slowly, and visitors remarked upon the brutality of the act. It was told that Malice took the air each night along the road and conversed with the victims, even ordering his wizards to cast *speak with dead* spells upon them. The road was eventually cleared only at the request of Crown Prince Rorth who "objected to the smell." Stories abound that Malice has the Royal Family under his power — either magically or through simple terror.

aid his efforts. He makes pacts with devils to further his ends, and it is rumoured that he has sold his soul to the Devil.

**Duke Malice:** Ostensibly in charge of the Royal Armies and the City Watch, Malice is an appallingly cruel taskmaster infamous for his use of personal wizards to *dominate* officers and captains in his force. Capable of outrageous acts of cruelty, the stories of Malice are frequently told in taverns and gin houses up and down the city. It was Malice who first used Royal manticorae to pull apart prisoners; he who used live prisoners as catapult ammunition; and he who was responsible for the great Road of Impalements, a tale that still blights the Capitol and Royal Family. Despite the rancour held for him in the city, the Queen's 80-year-old cousin has aged remarkably well. He retains a full head of long, thick black hair (carefully oiled and held in place), and the trim, well-muscled physique of a much younger man. Remarkably, he is not of the alchymic-undying.

**Duke Taim:** The queen's only nephew, Taim believes in order and the sanctity of the Royal Family. He is totally loyal to the queen and her name and, like Malice, capable of extreme violence and cruelty if need be. Taim, however, is more controlled in his fury, and is more likely to see good in people if they give him cause to do so. Taim is madly in love with Princess Rebecca of Mourney, and has proposed no fewer than eleven times. The Master of the Capitol, he is responsible for the security and well-being of the Royal Family and all residents in the Capitol. Taim works covertly against any evil he finds therein, a position that grows more desperate by the day.

## And The Rest

A huge number of other petty Royals — dukes, ladies, earls, counts and knights — hang off the purse strings of the Royal Family. Many of these Royals live across the city, some incognito, some ashamed of the Royals, others involved in various groups encountered across the Blight.

## The Crown Justices

Three Crown Justices are, in essence, the true rulers of Castorhage. The "Illuminati Triad," as they are known by those who serve them (though not in the presence of members of the Xi'en Triads), control all matters, however covertly, and hold (or believe they hold) the Royal Family in thrall. The truth, of course, is much more complex. Though they are not technically a part of the Royal Family, the Crown Justices are nonetheless considered part of the Royal Caste and are generally its most powerful members.

**Grand Scribe of Castorhage His Resplendent Grand Justice Braken:** The dreadful Braken is the Master of Courts responsible for all matters of law within the city. His fingers grope unseen in the dark as his followers seek to advance the Illuminati in influence and terror. Braken wants nothing less than utter conquest — the conquest of Heaven and Hell. This need to rule paradise and enslave the Devil drives everything Braken carries out.

**His Resplendent Grand Justice Korsk, Master of the Sinks:** Like all swyne\*, Korsk lives only for excess — in all forms. He wallows in the feculence of his own corpulence, and his followers, who include beasts and humanoids and devils, scour the hellholes of the city for new vices to ensure that his Grand Justice does not get bored. He is *terrible* when he



grows bored. A close friend and ally of **Crown Prince Rorth**, the pair are often seen in the Grand Justice's iron carriage heading toward the Artists' Quarter, a quartet of lovelies in the carriage with them. As the Master of Trade, he is responsible for all taxes, imports, and exports. He is presently lodging in the Crooked Cathedrals in the Sinks, and specifically in the cathedral of **Alemiam, Sinner of the Flesh**.

\* See **New Races** below

**Her Resplendent Grand Justice the Mistress of Life's Wondrous Varied Forms Ashleia:** Ashleia believes that all life is a riddle, and its form imperfect. She is driven by the desire to create new lives and new forms; her tower is a butchery of filleted flesh and stitches and knives where she works her foul art aided — they say — by magic she found in the ancient libraries of Between. As Mistress of Commons, her mandate is to see to the welfare of all of the commoners of the city. In truth, this just makes it easier for her to bring these wretches under her power. She dwells in **Castle Stränkk**, a teetering pile high in the clouds of the Capitol.

## The Royal Armies and City Watch

Commanded by **Duke Malice**, who is "advised" by **His Resplendent Grand Justice Braken**, the **Royal Army** makes its home in the Capitol, whilst the City Watch generally quarters across the rest of the city. The standing army quartered in the city numbers just over 17,000, though several times that number are abroad across the length and breadth of the city-state's colonial holdings. This number officially includes the Royal Navy within its ranks. The Royal Army uniform is liveried in ivy green tabards worn over studded leather armour, though regiments in the field often supplement this with their own flourishes. Soldiers tend to carry longswords and spears, although cavalry, crossbowmen, siege engineers, and pikemen regiments are to be found in their ranks. Ranks rise from soldier, to corporal, sergeant, sergeant-major, captain, colonel, brigadier and general, with Duke Malice holding the title of captain-general over all of Castorhage's land and sea forces. The general currently presiding in the city is **General Prester Haft**, a puppet of his masters Malice and Braken.

The **City Watch** (officially known as the Office of the Watch) numbers just over 2,000. They wear deep blue padded armour uniforms and are armed with coshes\* or short clubs, though certain parishes or specialized units may vary these somewhat. They carry hefty lanterns, and each also carries a whistle with which to summon help. The Watch is divided between districts, then parishes, wards, and finally Watch Stations. Ranks

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are Constable of the Watch, Sergeant of the Watch, Inspector of the Watch, Parish Officer of the Watch, Parish Commander of the Watch, District Commander of the Watch, and Watch Commander. All serve under the auspices of the Captain-General of the Watch, a position filled by Duke Malice. The present leader is **Watch Commander Kevel Durmast** (NE male doppelganger rogue 7/assassin 5), a member of the Veil. Malice believes Durmast to be solely his creature but knows neither the Watch Commander's true nature nor his true loyalty to Braken and only Braken.

\* See **New Equipment** in *The Blight Player's Handbook*

## The Upper Class Caste

### The Thirteen Justices

Grovelling at the feet of the Crown Justices, ever hoping and plotting to replace them, are the thirteen Justices, who dream of the power of the Illuminati and all the dark gifts that entails. These contemptible bastards are detailed very briefly here. Each has a title that correlates to an assigned duty or lodge within the city over which the Justice serves as chief jurist.

**Justice Weld Shortstone I, Master of Structures** is a covert anarchist who aims to bring down the Illuminati and who is presently working on the **Tower of Heaven** in the Hollow and Broken Hills.

**His Grace the Master of Lanterns, Justice Blackbriar** is an obsessive explorer of the Between and collector of Between animals who dwells high in the Capitol.

**His Magnificence Justice Shank, Lord of the River** is an ally of the Family (see **Festival**) who aims to make the Blight a wererat metropolis. Shank presently lives in the Broken and Hollow Hills.

**Justice Lady Lucrezia Elisabeth Sullage**, a.k.a. the **Grand Seamstress**, lurks in the **Palace of Light and Joy**. Her paper-skin is faded, unlike her wits, which are as sharp as a dagger. She has created a dynasty of art adoration, and her home is flung open to genius, the lost, and the insane. One wing of her mansion is set aside as a prison and surgery, within which her children help her create living art through homunculi-stitching and golem-wifery.

**Its Resplendent Justice the Eyes of Fate, Master of Gables**, a gable-haunting murderer high in the **Thieves' Guild** able to wear the skins of its victims. It usually lurks high within the **Palace of Rain**.

**Her Resplendent Justice Anisse Capprico, Lady of Beverages** is noted for her peacock-feather gowns and lives in the **Capprico Estate** in the Capitol.

**Justice Alfor Quent, the Lord Culmus, Master of Humours** believes himself to be his goddess's living messenger, sent to give release to the poor, the sick, and the humble by eradicating them with his vermin followers. Culmus is the patriarch of the strictly pious Culmus family. Unlike many nobles, Culmus practices what he preaches, and his austere and drab house **Culmus Manse** is so austere that visitors are practically unheard of.

**Lord Justice Mordent Knap, Master of the Royal Mint and Steward of the Capitol** is Cartographer of the Underneath, Master of the Royal Mint, dazzling artist, and Steward of the Capitol. Unsurprisingly, Knap is one of the most influential people in the city and seen as a logical next Crown Justice. Sadly, he wishes to see true justice return and, although he has considerable influence with bankers and merchants, he also has many enemies. Knap has an obsessive desire to see the Underneath tamed and restored as a dwarven kingdom. Many of his peers wish he would lead such an attempt and never be seen again. Knap resides in a sumptuous townhouse at the **Royal Dock**.

**Justice Burr, Lord Protector of the City**, a.k.a. the Collector, is a hoarder of curios and magic who sponsors exploration, protection, and theft across the city. He is presently charged as chief jurist of the Barnacles and Great Docks and often is found in the Barnacles overseeing operations.

**Crown Prince Justice Cornlord, Lord of the Bridge** is the Town Bridge ruler who uses poisons and spiders to aid his advancement. He lives on Town Bridge.

**His "Royal Highness" Duke Scapegrace Wrye, Justice of Alleys, Streets, and Ways**: Scapegrace, a master at finding information, lives in the **House of Wrye** with his nephew and **Anan Wrye**, figurehead of the family.

**Justice Lady Skathen Spalpeen, Mistress of Piers**, is a recent convert to the Cult of the Madness-of-the-MirrorStorm. She seeks to create safe

havens for her kind and hasten the plot to drown the world. Spalpeen lurks in the sodden cellars beneath the **Second Royal Gallery and Museum** with her spiritual sister **Curator Abigail Wasp**.

**Justice Spent Sullyce, Lord of Surgeons**, a.k.a. **The Lord of Leeches**, is a golem-stitcher who seeks to advance science and experimentation through dark clerical paths. He lives in his home high in the Crooked Key levels of the Capitol.

### The Under-Justices

Each Justice has his own staff, from petty clerks to trusted advisors and plotters. Within this hierarchy, the under-justices are the next in authority to the Justices. More often a curse than a blessing, these statutory advisors are often as bad as, if not worse, than their masters. A backstabbing mass of disloyalty, treachery, and selfishness thrives across this group, with countless alliances, extortions, and murders seething amongst the rampant ambitious egotism. Many under-justices fill in as chief jurist when their masters are away or simply don't wish to occupy the bench that day.

### The Least Justices

Technically, anyone who works within the household of the Justices — from cooks to clerks — are afforded the title of Least Justices. The title "Least Justice" is an ongoing joke in the city, used with disdain by the Lowfolk as a well-known Toiltown quip, "What's the difference between a least justice and a pig herder? Just some words." This is sometimes followed by the well-known but rarely spoken quip, "What's the difference between a Crown Justice and the pig? At least the pig admits to what it's burying its nose in," when all present are sure that no listening ears may be nearby.

### Streetclerks

These individuals are responsible for local "justice" and have duties from collecting taxes to keeping the streets clean. They are generally very good at the former, and poor at the latter. They most commonly serve as chief jurist of all the areas that are neglected by or fall between the cracks in the legal oversight of the Justices.

## The Middle Class Caste

The Bondsmen, Guildsmen, and Merchants of the city, these are the men and women who run the city day by day. They are the stuff of daily life who keep the wine, the bread, the salt, and the trade of the city going.





## Lowfolk of the Blight

### Jakob and Jemmynia Wilt — Mr. and Mrs. Average

Jakob is thin, his skin pasty from a lack of good diet. His eyes are sallow, but he has a smile on his face, despite the blotches under his skin. His hair has been shorn very short and he wears practical rather than fashionable clothing. Jakob drinks gin and ale (a cocktail called “Mother’s Ruin”) and likes to go out at the end of the week to the Garlick Alehouse, where he sings with his mates, and together they find joy in their harsh life.

Jemmynia is a peacock compared with her drab husband. She wears a dress of a sensible blue hue. Beneath, she wears petticoats and has buckled shoes that have been frequently repaired. Sometimes she uses colored chalks or charcoal to add depth to her eyes. She also works on the third floor of their weaver’s cottage in the East Ending, where she weaves raw cotton into fine thread. She has six children who are each the apple of her eye, and wishes she had more to give them to eat and more time to spend with them to teach them their letters so they can better themselves.

## The Lowfolk Caste

The most numerous by far, making up some 97% of the population, the Lowfolk are the labourers, dockers, butchers, bakers, and candlestick makers of the city.

## The Invisibles Caste

Freaks, waifs, orphans, and beggars, these poor souls congregate around temples and cathedrals begging for money. Their numbers also include the Untouchables, those who deal with dead flesh in the ghats of the riverside (truly one of the great hypocrisies in a city so reliant upon and incorporating alchemically or magically animated flesh). If they are lucky, they may be given money by some kindly soul. If they are unlucky, they will be rounded up by the Knockers and taken for a golem-stitcher to work on.

## Lowest of the Low Caste

The undead, the golems, the homuncules, and alchymic-unliving\*, these poor creatures are not even acknowledged as life and are treated as objects of less worth than cattle.

\* See *The Tome of Blighted Horrors* by Frog God Games

## Others

Some folk by their very existence defy caste or are difficult to place in any one in particular. Others could simply be of any caste. Examples of these folk who might be of any caste or of none are included below.

## Artists

One of the most influential groups in the city includes the artists, the puppeteers, the painters, the street-performers, the sculptors, the satirists, and the thespians. Many artists pride themselves on being the great reformers, philosophers, and thinkers of the Blight and like to challenge the status quo. There are also many who very much like the status quo, and staunchly wish it to remain in place.

## Anarchists

Some have a romantic ideal that these men, women, and things are freedom fighters out to help the poor. In some cases, this is true; in others,

not so. The persecution of religion, the unprovoked bigoted attacks on property, the fires — these, too, have their roots in anarchy. Anarchists wish to see the Illuminati removed; some also wish the Royal Family gone, believing the city will be better off without any rulers.

## Races

All the common races and many of the ethnicities of Akados and beyond are found in the city. Some have been here for so long that they have formed their own unique identities: from tradelord gnomes\* to shadowlamp half-orcs\*, each has its own identity and unique traits. Others have also made their homes here or have lived here for as long as memory: the swyne\*, a race of pig-blooded humans, and the briny\*, skum-sired horrors that bring a terrible curse on their mothers. Less-common races still are found in the alleyways: the Festering Brethren\*, the lantern folk\*, the night-slugs\*, and the dreadful Tunnel People who hunt in packs and rise through the streets at night to feed. So many things find a home here, so many ...

\* See **New Racial Subtypes** below

## Foreigners

To the locals of the Blight, everyone who looks or sounds slightly different is a “Foreigner.” Foreigner is a catchall group that covers everyone either not of the standard races prevalent in the Blight or those who do not conform to the standard human seen here. Blight locals show no shame when addressing foreigners as such, and usually break into

## A Murderers’ Row

In the Blight, life is cheap and often brutally short. The constables are inefficient, easily bribed, or simply bored, and the myriad threats posed by the various other hazards of the city obscure many crimes from ever being discovered. These factors make life easy for the countless killers, murderers, and cutthroats of the city to ply their trade and, ironically, often live to a ripe old age (old for the Blight, anyway). Herein are detailed some of the more famous killers of the city-state.

*“A killer, my friend, never dies. His legend lives on and, sometimes, in this city, what lives on is more than that legend ...”*

—Inspector Ornamie Hogg\*

## The Hornet Eater

Able to vomit swarms of hornets whose sting caused flesh to swell and burst, the Hornet Eater terrorised the city from 1599 until 1609 when it was (allegedly) slain by **His Beatific Knighthood Gerrant of the Capitol**.

## The Crooked Shadow

A true horror indeed, this serial killer came from Between and was never caught. The Crooked Shadow drew the life from its victims’ madness and made them into Between-spawned things of terror imprisoned in other people’s nightmares. Of late, alienists have begun to notice an alarming increase in mental problems associated with nightmares, and the conjecture is the Crooked Shadow may be abroad again.

## Butcher’s Bride

This madwoman vanished into the night about ten years ago and has remained unseen since. Her speciality was disembowelling her victims and creating undead statuary from them.

\*Ornamie Elias Hogg (1722–?), city’s longest-serving Watch Inspector. Disappeared Chill 17th, 1772, while chasing **Jonas Long-Tongue**, the feared mohrg assassin capable of infecting his victims with his own form.

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exaggerated and frankly embarrassing raising of their voices and slowing of their speeches to accommodate the (in their bigoted view) inevitably dim-witted stranger. This likely has something to do with the equally offensive habit of folk who live in other places referring to Castorhagers as “Blighters.”

### The Great Coven

One in thirteen women in the city is said to be a witch. It's also said that if the Great Coven wants you dead, you'd best hurry and dig your grave.

The Coven wishes — and indeed has succeeded — in bringing the **Aspect of the Green Man** into the world. The Aspect of the Green Man is a creature from the Between that has sired a child and which is still at large in Castorhage's alleyways and gables. The Great Coven is now engaged upon a secret grand plan, an intention to infect a generation of young with devilry, in the hope of bringing a perfect generation of witches and warlocks into the city's future. This “New Heaven” the witches are aiming to create gets closer every day, despite the suspicions of the Illuminati.

Made up primarily of druidic members, the Coven has witches, wizards, and sorcerers amongst its number, as well as a truly impressive number of local thugs, creatures, and Between followers.

### Guilds, Clubs, and Societies

An uncountable number of guilds, lodges, and societies exist in the Blight. These groups have aims as far apart as can be imagined, and vary in strength from a few drunken dreamers sitting around hearths to the insidious **Thieves Guild**, which itself is made up of over 500 different thieves' guilds and alleygangs.

### Alleygangs

The Bell Street Angels, the Green Dock Villains, the Scrutton Street Constables; these gangs form for protection and reputation. Each has its own laws and rules, entry forfeits, and etiquettes. Alleygangs are everywhere; from simple gangs of youths standing at street corners to organised groups controlling crime at the behest of some Justice, Anarchist or Undead.

### Highwaymen

The scourge of the streets, highwaymen rob and then steal away into the night. The best known of these — **Vanishing Jack** — is infamous for his ability to race up walls and gables as though a spider. Highwaymen (and women) variously use the city to their advantage, escaping through mazes of alleys, across rooftops, or under piers. Many of these Highwaymen, like the anarchists, are folk heroes, and tales abound of men robbing from the rich and giving to the poor, strangers refusing to take a poor man's coin, or stories of dashing villains with a hundred ladyloves.

### “Champions of Justice” — The Vigilantes

With so feeble and corruptible a Watch, the poor often come together by streets (sometimes as alleygangs) into vigilante groups and take the law into their own hands. Though well meaning, these groups are hot-blooded and occasionally manipulated ...

### From Between

Too many incursions have taken place to ignore, and now the Between rulers believe that they are being invaded, and are fighting back. They are sending agents into the streets to learn and listen. In time, perhaps these will be backed by a true invasion force.

### Jabbyrwok: A Between Dragon

*“Beware the Jabbyrwok, my son!”*

A dragon is a terrible enough foe, but a dragon from Between is something else entirely. Dragons live practically forever, they say, and

in Between, the more one lives, the more one grows — as memory and experience, surroundings and events become power and flesh.

A Between dragon is the essence of greed and fury and terror of a thousand lifetimes. The Jabbyrwok is but one such creature. It is a thing from and of the forest, a creature as hard and ancient as the mightiest oak, a thing that is the bending tree in the gale, the terrible dark despair of the deepest woods at night, and the ancient wisdom of the untouched land. The Jabbyrwok is seldom seen in Between, but no mortal weapon could slay it or even injure it. There are those in the city — and the Great Coven in particular — who would like to unleash the Jabbyrwok onto an unsuspecting city in the hope of levelling it and beginning a new dark age of paganism in the ruins.

### The Stag Ring: A Lord of Between

Part man, part stag, and part lustful dream, the Stag King walks the streets with the aid of his thousand-hooked staff. The Stag King speaks to the city animals and, as he does, he *awakens* them and makes them question their place in this cruel city ...

### The Stillborn Witch

Mother of changelings, this witch wanders at will from the city to Between, taking children from one and moving them into the other. For all the children, this act is terrible — Between children are like monsters to the city folk, and Between-Lands are nightmares to the city children. These nightmares, of course, become reality in the dreadful lands beyond.

### Travellers

Two groups of locals are so numerous, yet so transient, that they rarely stay in the same spot for long. These two travelling groups are utterly different and yet share a similar resentment from the people they dwell near.

### The Fetch

The undead populace of the city are a loose family of travellers who move about often out of necessity before powerful Illuminati clerics discover their homes and move through them with terrible speed. They move in groups both small and large and are guided by the Deceivers, undead that operate amongst humans and who guide their brethren from safe place to safe place. Deceivers are amongst the highest caste of undead and are looked upon with great respect by other undead; they pride themselves upon their ability to hide amongst the living and have developed a thousand techniques to mask their death, their fetor, and their hungers.

The Illuminati are not the only hunters of these creatures, and bounties are given on some plagues of undead in certain districts. Such torments and genocides have been attempted in the past\*, but as the ancients grew wiser, so they grew more invisible. A notable example of this history of conflict is the Great Cleric Anthony Mackus (1348–1399), most associated in legend and written word with the destruction of undead. He claimed that an unnamed archangel charged him to rid the city of this filthy stain, and he embarked upon a crusade against the Fetch, which ended only with his mysterious disappearance in 1399. Rumour has it that Mackus is now none other than the Gable-Man, a vampire of legend that eats the happiness of old people, and that he was struck down by vampirism by none other than Beltane himself.

Ruled by an ancient vampire known as **Beltane**, the Fetch have become remarkably organised of late, and the marked increase in the sale of shutters and bolts and locks has not gone unnoticed by those looking to exterminate the Fetch. The Fetch are on the offensive just now, and are fighting back in retribution against the witch hunters who seek and slay their populace. The Fetch form uneasy alliances with two groups in the city in particular: the Great Coven, whose witches consort occasionally with them and find the friendship of undead curiously satisfying, and the Illuminati, who use the Fetch for various purposes, particularly the removal of enemies.

That the Illuminati are responsible for the rise in witchhunters and yet have an alliance with the very prey of those they have so fervently backed, is another example of the complexities within the city. This complexity is

epitomised in the old adage, "As honest as a Blight Friend," meaning one who cannot be trusted.

Ghouls form the vast majority of members of the Fetch, along with their more powerful ghastr masters. The ghouls are the cattle of the Fetch, and their lot is a miserable one indeed. Incorporeal undead form another class of Fetch, whilst the elite vampires are advised by ancient lichs and less common undead whose names are only whispered.

The Fetch is a flexible populace, and sections of the "group" may be uncovered by the unwary, or brave adventurers, who so often are innocently duped into being assassins. Once someone is an enemy of the Fetch, he is marked for life and must hope that the Brides of Beltane do not pay him a visit in the night.

### *The Wild Hunt*

There is a dark festival known as Calamity, which fortunately only falls on one night every three years, where the Fetch rise for a single night, dancing on rooftops and taking over the city. On this night, even the Royal Family take to their beds early and hide behind the strongest shutters. No sane man walks the streets on Calamity for fear of being taken to Beltane himself.

### *Boattown*

Boattown is the slang term for a "temporary" settlement of fishermen and dockers, narrow-boatmen and mariners who draw together for protection. Boattown is never still; it is either changing in size or location, moved on by some point of law or simply through fear. The Boaters are not popular, hated for their reputation and their ability to avoid taxes of any kind. These rough folk are fishermen, lobstermen, smugglers, and pirates and have their own pidgin language (River Cant) and their own laws, based upon families, strength of arm, and wealth. Halfings make up the vast proportion of the local population.

# Races and Ethnicities of Castorhage

Virtually every sort of civilised race or cultural group to be found on the face of Lloegyr can be found within the teeming streets of the Blight, but some are more predominant than others. Only natives of the city belong to a caste, but for those ethnicities and races that are born into the city, the most common castes are listed as well. Following is a far-from-exhaustive list of the various peoples and groups that call the City-State of Castorhage home.

## Castorhagers

It is unlikely that the folk of Castorhage — known as Castorhagers in polite society and "Blighters" everywhere else — should be considered to constitute their own ethnicity. Like so many folk ranging from the city-states of Irkaina, to the marches of Reme, and the southern reach of Withy-Strythe, they would more appropriately be considered another of the many groups bearing the label of Foerdewaith, but of all of those areas, they are perhaps the most deserving of such a distinction. Though largely of the same racial stock as what became the Foerdewaith, Castorhage was never more than a protectorate of Foere, and even that in name only. The folk of Castorhage have made their own society on Insula Lymossus for more than 3,500 years and are as distinct a group as can be found among the Foerdewaith of Akados, even showing greater physical deviation than would be expected in such a short time (see the "Blighted" below). Most Castorhagers are of the Lowfolk caste, but they can be of any caste.

## Blighted\*

As much as a third of Castorhage's human population falls within this group and make up what amounts to an entire racial subtype. These folk fall within the Castorhager ethnicity but are perhaps the most drastic example of it. For it is these folk who seem to embody the very concept of living within the Blight. They bear its marks upon their bodies and upon their souls. These Blighted folk show an unusual degree of physical affinity for their position or occupation within the Blight, as if the city has crept into them and become a part of their very being. This supposition may not be far off. In Castorhage, Blighted folk are so ordinary or plentiful in number as to be virtually unnoticeable upon the streets of the city-state. However, on the extremely rare occasion that one of these folk should relocate to points outside Castorhage (and it is exceedingly rare that one of the Blighted leaves the city of his birth, though why this is the case is little understood), it becomes much more evident that they're not quite like everyone else and may just seem to carry a bit of that ill-regarded city. Blighted can be of any caste but are usually Lowfolk or Invisibles.

\* See **New Racial Subtypes** below

## Ashurians

Ashurians found in Castorhage tend to be traders from the Ammuyad Caliphate or the Isthmus of Irkaina, or are in some way connected to the businesses of households of such folk. Few of those lands' native folk come here for anything other than trade. Most have the dark hair, swarthy features, and shorter, more slender build so common in those lands, yet there are sufficient numbers from Antioch City-States or distant Zagros Mountains to bear the entire range of skin tones, heights, and builds that can be found among the folk of northern Libynos. Native Ashurians are usually of the Middle Class.

## Daanite

A true rarity indeed, fewer than a thousand of these insular folk dwell among the masses of Castorhage. All of the Daanites to be found in the



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city are either traders out of Dunkelding or the representatives of Daanite chiefs and their attendant guards and advisors. These petty kings of Ynys Cymragh conduct their trade independently with the vast port city and eye each other as warily as they eye the locals. These folk tend to be well muscled, if a bit shorter than the average, with ruddy or freckled skin, and hair ranging from brown to red. Eyes likewise range from brown to blues and greens.

### Foerdewaith

Even those Foerdewaith not counting themselves among the Castorhagers still dwell in the city-state in large numbers, outnumbering all other groups save the Castorhagers themselves and the Xi'en. These are the folk of western Akados who have long dwelt in the city or upon the island itself but have not quite taken up the same identification with the city-state, perhaps only having arrived from the mainland in recent generations or being only visitors to the Blight. They tend to be the Foerdewaith of western Akados with their fairer skin and more aqualine features, with darker hair colors and eyes of grey, blue, or violet. Like Castorhagers, most Foerdewaith are Lowfolk, though they can be of any caste.

### Gtsang

Only within the Prefecture itself or perhaps among some of the Thousand Rocks of the Nether Sea are there more folk of Gtsang than in Castorhage. Like the folk of neighbouring Xi'en, the people of Gtsang tend to be shorter than those of the rest of Akados, with skin tones ranging from pale to parchment. They have the narrow eyes with epicanthic folds of the Xi'en, as well as their propensity for straight, dark hair and dark eyes. They are generally a bit stockier than the folk of Xi'en, with broader shoulders and heavier frames. They are frequently mistaken for Xi'en by the other folk of Castorhage, which is considered offensive to both parties. They likewise mistrust the Xi'en who tend to treat them poorly, and Xi'en youths often victimize lone Gtsang when they can catch them unawares, robbing them and sometimes beating them as well. Gtsang can be of any caste from Upper Class to Invisibles. A great many are Middle Class.

### Heldring

The great seafaring race of southern Akados, the longships of the Helcynn are not an uncommon sight at the docks of Castorhage. This tall, broad-shouldered people enjoy the hustle and bustle of the busy piers and waterside taverns and brothels, and some even set up establishments to cater to their own people visiting the city. Despite the popularity as a destination, few Heldring live in the city-state long term, considering it to be a cursed place with bad air and water that drains the life of its inhabitants over time. They look at the Blighted in particular as an example of this and as a lesson to those who too willingly embrace the corrupt ways and practices of this sort of civilization.

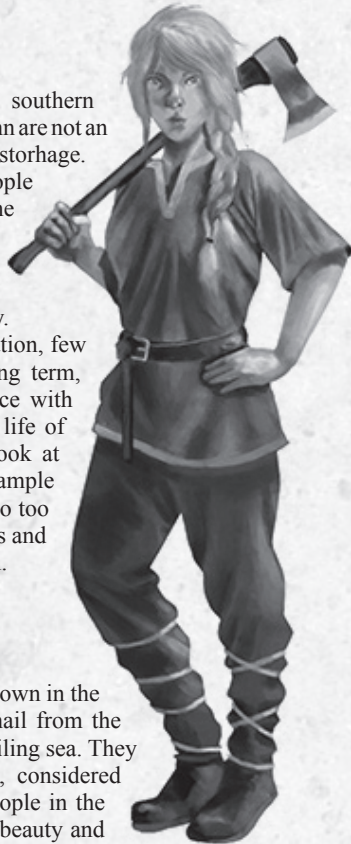
### Jaata

The folk of Far Jaata are little known in the West. These short, swarthy folk hail from the far side of Libynos, beyond the boiling sea. They have dark hair and fine features, considered by many to be the handsomest people in the world, with women of surpassing beauty and men of incomparable elegance. They trade with

Castorhage from ports with strange names such as Shabbis and Elogong, and through this trade bring great riches to the city-state's coffers. Some of the folk of Jaata have come as merchants and experts for the markets of Castorhage, but others have come to escape the strictures of a caste system that prevents any sort of social mobility at home. These folk are some of the few who embrace Castorhage as a place of bright opportunity. Jaata are frequently Invisibles for their work on the ghats, but they otherwise range from Upper Class to Lowfolk.

### Rhemittites

The mysterious Triple Kingdom, a land of living gods and civilizations for longer than humankind has numbered years. The exotic ships of Khemit are welcome in the ports of Akados, and Castorhage is no exception. And though it is an especially long voyage from the Free Main of Libynos to the docks of the city-state, the coin to be made has always made trips in both directions worth the effort. These strange folk are sometimes compared with the Jaata by the unskilled eyes of Akadians, but though both tend to be shorter, slighter, and darker in complexion than the folk of Akados, their cultures bear little resemblance to each other. Whereas the people of Jaata are warm and friendly, embracing their new land, the Khemitites generally keep themselves aloof, distancing themselves from those they see as foreign barbarians — barbarians who were able to conquer their lands in centuries past, but barbarians nonetheless. The folk of Khemit are rarely seen in public, preferring to remain sequestered in their fortified compounds and manses, surrounded by soldiers of their own land and priests of their own religions. When encountered, they usually appear exotic and unearthly in diaphanous tunics and gowns, skilfully crafted adornments of gold and jewels, and kohl-limned eyes.



## Mulstabhins

The folk of distant Mulstabha (see *The Northlands Saga Complete* by **Frog God Games**) make almost all other foreign visitors seem mundane and approachable. Their habit of holding themselves aloof from the local residents makes the Khemitites look warm by comparison, and their rigid system of castes make the Jaata system seem flexible. They are the people of the Land of the Bull from the Sea, and their stranglehold on all trade between the northern seas and the southern seas renders them both too rich and too important to leave out of a trading hub such as Castorhage. The fact that they keep to themselves and share almost nothing of themselves or their home with anyone makes them seem only more exotic and powerful. They are tall and lean, with skin the color of mahogany, and wiry black hair with blue or brown eyes. Descended from a mixture of ancient sea peoples and Libynosi, they are unlike any other known people in the world in appearance or culture.

## Oceanders

Oceanders (see *LL4: Cults of the Sundered Kingdoms* by **Frog God Games**) are another of the Foerdewaith that have declared themselves their own cultural group since their maritime empire calved off from that of Foere three centuries ago. They largely resemble the folk of eastern Akados, prone to easily tanned skin, brown hair and eyes, though if anything as a people largely originating from the Island of Pontos, their skin tends toward more olive tones, and they stand perhaps a bit shorter. As members of their new empire that is both a trade partner and rival of Castorhage, those Oceanders who find themselves in the city-state usually represent either trade interests or military personal sent to protect their trade interests. They keep their hair short, and facial hair is uncommon. An Oceander soldier can usually be picked from a crowd because his back is always ramrod straight and he is seldom seen without his breastplate and short sword. They are peaceful and seem to get along well in the city, but they trust no one.

## Shattered Folk

These plainmen of the Haunted Steppe are perhaps encountered nowhere outside their native lands in greater numbers than in Castorhage. Several tribes of them can be found in Reme and frequently visiting Bard's Gate, but these are technically a separate group called Plainmen who have permanently relocated from the Haunted Steppe to the plains of Reme and have left their old lives behind entirely. Castorhage, on the other hand, conducts active trade and maintains colonial interests on the Elitani Coast of the western steppe, and has formal trade relations with the Elitan-i-Pan Confederation tribes of the Shattered Folk. Thus, few other places exist outside the Haunted Steppe where tribesmen of the Shattered Folk can be encountered who are still truly of the Shattered Folk. As is common among the Shattered Folk, height varies, but they typically have a thin, muscular build. Skin ranges from burnt red to tan to mahogany with straight brown or black hair and little facial hair. Eyes are black, grey, or brown, and some have varying degrees of epicanthic folding, though these are most often seen among the tribes farther north and east on the great stepped plain.

## Uplanders

A bluff and hale people descending from the upper portions of the mountain valley of the River Eamon, these industrious folk have spread far and wide in their pursuit of business and opportunity. They tend to divide themselves along clan lines in their homeland with the Angus of Dun Eamon being the primary chieftain of the premier clan, but their clan rivalries can be found — albeit on a lower scale — even among the Uplanders who inhabit the far places such as Castorhage. Uplanders tend to take a superior view over those who do not hail from their highland home in the Stoneheart Mountains, but those in Castorhage have largely moved past this tendency with their greater exposure to the outside world.

They are known to be hardworking and have a reputation for honestly and fair dealing that sometimes exceeds the reality, but as a whole are an honourable and proud folk whose word is always good to those they count as a friend. They are of average height, with lighter skin tones tending toward freckles, and hair ranging from browns to auburn to shocking shades of red. Eyes range from brown or hazel to grey to blue or green. They are known for wearing kilts with the colours of their clan tartan and have made the garments fashionable even for those not of Uplander descent. Any Uplanders that are residents of the city are likely to be Middle Class.

## Viroeni

These wandering folk can be found virtually anywhere across the whole of Akados and northern Libynos other than the Green Realm and the Haunted Steppe. They are a traveling folk composed of outcasts bereft of a homeland or true allies. Most folk of Akados consider them thieves or worse, and their life of travel is as much for their own protection as for a lack of any land of their own. They do find a home of sorts in Castorhage and tend to gather there in greater numbers and for more extended periods of time than elsewhere. The folk of Castorhage have more serious threats to deal with in their daily lives than the wandering gypsies of the Viroeni, and encampments or even whole neighbourhoods of these transient people barely even raise an eyebrow among the locals. It's not that the locals of Castorhage are any more accepting; it's merely that they harbour a grudge against the Viroeni no greater than that which they harbour for many different peoples. Interestingly, the gypsy-soul halflings of Castorhage have found in the Viroeni a kindred spirit, and in these small folk the Viroeni have actually found a true ally. The Viroeni tend to be tall and willowy, lithe of build, and fair of form. Skin tones range from pale olive to dusky, with hair and eyes as black as midnight, and sharply defined features. Occasionally, fair-haired children are born among the Viroeni from some recessive genetic line, creating a smattering of honey-haired, brown-eyed folk amongst their number. The Viroeni as a whole are known for their unusual grace and musical ability as much as their wandering and reputation (mostly unearned) for thievery, causing many to speculate the existence of elven blood somewhere in their past. Viroeni native to Castorhage are almost always Lowfolk.

## Xi'en

The Xi'en peoples (or Chi'en as they are sometimes known, though this would technically only refer to those from the capital city of Chi'en) are the folk of the great Xi'en Hegemony of western Akados, beyond the imposing massifs of the Impossible Mountains and the hostile and trackless depths of the Green Realm. Despite their relatively close proximity, few Xi'en are found in central or eastern Akados beyond those that dwell in Castorhage. In fact, next to the Castorhagers themselves, the Xi'en are the most numerous of all peoples to dwell within the city-state and even have their own district within the city itself. Most Xi'en of Castorhage are immigrants who simply wish to work hard and make a living beyond the all-powerful local authority of their emperor, but many are envoys or soldiers in the employ of the emperor or are members of powerful criminal organizations called the Triad. This latter group gives the Xi'en of the city an unfavourable reputation among some segments of the population, but as a whole, they are accepted and seen as an otherwise-ordinary part of the city that can be mindboggling to outsiders unaccustomed to such exotic cultures and persons. Because of the vast size of the Xi'en Hegemony and the many lands that it controls, its folk are as diverse in stature and appearance as most Akadians. As whole, their skin tones do tend toward a slightly darker or amber complexion, and many are shorter than the average Akadian; however, the Xi'en of the southern portions of the Hegemony are much taller as a whole than the rest of the continent. Hair tends to be straight with a predominance of black and dark brown, though rust-reds and light browns can also be found. Perhaps the most noticeable feature of these people is their tendency toward narrower eyes with epicanthic folds, though even that demonstrates extensive variation in its presentation. Xi'en range from Upper Class to Invisibles with many Middle class, but most are Lowfolk.

## Briny\* (Half-Skum)

The briny make up a significant — though often overlooked — portion of the city's population. Confined principally to the areas along the docks and river, these folk lead a life of social ostracism by the land-dwelling and sea-dwelling kin alike. Most survive simply by existing undetected among the folk of the city, hoping against hope of someday finding their own place in society. It is a rare briny that is higher than the Lowfolk. Those Castorhagers who are particularly bigoted often consider them to be the Lowest of the Low.

\* See **New Races** below

## Changelings

The existence of changelings is a poorly kept secret at best among the folk of the city-state. With the presence of so many hags in and around the city and the otherworldly influence of Between always hovering nearby, it is no surprise that children are stolen and replaced in households none the wiser for the switch. What would be surprising is the sheer number of changelings that now inhabit Castorhage. In fact, their true numbers remain completely unknown — even to themselves, as many changelings have no idea that is what they are. What greater sinister purpose might exist for seeding this many false sons and daughters within the city remains to be seen, but it is unlikely to have been intended for the good of the city. Changelings blend in and can be of any caste, just as a human can. Statistically, most are Lowfolk, however.

## Coprophagi\* (Roachfolk)

While a known part of the city, its population of coprophagi are a people apart in every sense of the words. They are neither acknowledged nor welcomed by most of the city's denizens, and exist in a sort of shadow reality on the verges of the vast civilization around them where they must scratch and scramble just to find the means to survive. Most assume that the shrouded Festering Brethren are the extent of the presence of this race, entirely unaware of the great numbers that dwell just beyond the edges of sight in the dumping grounds, and alleys, and other hidden places. For their part, the coprophagi seem content to exist in peace, though one shudders to think what would occur if this people were ever to rise up in their true numbers and seek to exert their will upon the city. Coprophagi are of the Invisibles or Lowest of the Low depending on who is asked.

\* See **New Races** below

## Denizens of Leng

Few of the many strange and enigmatic creatures that call the city home are as mysterious as the cowled denizens of Leng. These odd traders arrive in their black-hulled ships and conduct trade amongst the city's seedier elements in exchange for their strange rubies. They are rarely found upon the streets for any other reason. What manner of creatures within their sealed ships cause the thuds and disconcerting bleatings is unknown to the Watch and various longshoremen — and most have no wish to know so long as the black ships leave the docks just as swiftly as they arrived.

## Dhampirs

In a city where the Fetch hold such sway, it is no surprise that a population of dhampirs has sprung into existence. Some choose to follow in the footsteps of their undead forebears and serve as servitors or go-betweens for the Fetch, while others join the ranks of the many vampire hunters who call the city home and seek to bring about an end to the scourge that the Fetch represents.

## Dragons

In a city as cosmopolitan and inhabited by the strange and powerful as Castorhage, it should come as no surprise that an unusually large number of dragons likewise call it home. However, most folk of the city have no

clue as to this fact. The dragons that occupy Blight keep a low profile and either sequester themselves behind secure walls and gates beyond the knowledge of the citizenry or walk about while magically taking the form of the more mundane inhabitants. Many of the more powerful practitioners of magic and/or monstrous inhabitants of the city are aware of the presence of these dragons, but none — not even the dragons themselves — know the true numbers that hide among the populace. The motivations for the presence of these dragons are as varied as the dragons themselves, though many seek knowledge of the strange and mysterious that seems to pervade the very being of the city-state. Many seek merely to keep tabs on others of their kind that likewise call the city home. While no tally exists of all the dragons present, most assuredly there are many metallic, chromatic, and even primal dragon races found within the mix.

## Dwarves

The dwarven race has embraced the City-State of Castorhage in a way not normal for their kind. In part, this can be accounted for by the presence of an older dwarven kingdom and extensive mines that existed in the Underneath, but even this doesn't truly account for the sheer number of dwarves that call the city above home as well. Generation after generation of dwarven families living in, working in, and building upon the city have created the types of dwarves commonly referred to as salts-o'-the-earth\*, SprawlMasons\*, and toilers\* that are largely unlike dwarves found in other human cities.

Dwarves in the city vary little from their normal cousins, still showing the common characteristics of hard work and a strong sense of justice. This leads local dwarves to a powerful sense of community, which some see as insular. However, the dwarves are anything but that, and their feelings of exploitation by the mill owners — particularly those who use the Lowest of the Low — has led many dwarves to engage with Anarchists and to form strong bonds with other workers.

Typically, city dwarves are slightly (but not much) more fashionable than their rural counterparts, and their traditional, simple styles may be dressed with a modest amount of silver filigree work or jewellery, the odd large collar, or the occasional hat. Many dwarves in the city shave their beards as the grime in the city air makes them dirty quickly. Some dwarves take this to an extreme and oil their beards into unusual points or curls, and many have handlebar moustaches. A few dwarves, notably those who toil many hours, let their beards simply grow uncombed and unshaved; such dwarves are known as "dreaded" on account of the rather fierce nature they give their appearance. Most dwarves are Lowfolk, though many are Middle Class. Very few are Upper Class.

\* See **Blight Racial Traits** below

## Hill Dwarves

Any of these dwarves in the city have largely left behind their hill dwarf backgrounds. Many have professions as miners and smiths not far from those that they might hold in other settings but with a decidedly different environment than those that they usually inhabit. Those that stay too long seem to become street dwarves (see below) in just a few generations.

## Street Dwarves

Most of the dwarves found within the city of Castorhage would be what are considered street dwarves in most places, though these street dwarves are somewhat different than those found elsewhere in that, unlike the street dwarves throughout the rest of Akados, these do not descend from the original line from the Domain of Hawkmoon. Rather, these street dwarves seemed to have developed from the many hill dwarves who had for so long inhabited the city-state in a case of parallel evolution. However, other than this change in their lineage, the street dwarves of the Blight conform in all other ways to those found elsewhere (see *LL8: Bard's Gate* by Frog God Games).

## Elves

Few places could be considered less sylvan or arboreal in atmosphere than the crowded, soot-choked, urban mass that is the Blight. And many have left the city, tiring of the endless misery and filth it creates and

## THE BLIGHT: RICHARD PETT'S CROOKED CITY

consumes. Yet nonetheless, many elves make their homes here. Some are drawn by the thirst for knowledge; others by the beauty of the art of decay within the city. These elves tend toward a more cosmopolitan, transient, or forlorn outlook than their traditional kin who are more comfortable in the more natural surroundings. They are well represented by the forsaken\* and travellers\* among their number who embody the very essence of elfdom in the city. However, more traditional elves can be found within the city-state's confines as well. They are just apt to be less comfortable with their surroundings than those previously described. Elves choosing to live in the city are almost always Upper Class or Middle Class.

\* See **Blight Racial Traits** below

### Grey Elves

Rarely seen elsewhere on the continent of Akados are the grey elves. A more grave and ephemeral race of elves than the high elves typically seen elsewhere, the grey elves lack the history of conflict of humankind shared with elves of the continent. Grey elves hail from the distant island kingdom of Sarefein (see *Razor Coast* by **Frog God Games**), legendary for its white trees and peaceful glades as much as active navy. The grey elves of Sarefein first colonized the distant shores of the Razor Sea long ago, and it is through their maritime ventures that they made contact with the city-state. Their white-winged ships ply the waters of the world's oceans and trade peacefully with the black, plated hulls of Castorhage. Very few grey elves are found in the city, and all of those that are represent trade interests or diplomats of their island home. Though called grey elves, these folk are actually of a much paler cast than most elves but have hair ranging in colour from white to silver, with many having a tint of bluish-grey to them. Eyes are bright blue, silver, or completely colourless. The grey elves stand taller than all other elves and are as at home upon the waves as on land. Some think they bear an ancient connection to the royal houses of the Green Realm, but such knowledge is beyond the ken of mankind.

### High Elves

The more typical example of Akadian elves, it is from the ranks of these folk that the forsaken and travellers arise. Even the high elves hold the rare grey elves in some awe. High elves in the Blight who have not taken on the city-state's specific traits are in the city for many reasons from trade, to travel, to family. A great many of the high elves live in mixed families with half-elf children or parents, and find the otherwise dingy and spiritually oppressive environment of the city an unusual harbour for peaceful habitation with no concern regarding racial mixing. The half-elves generally are accepted throughout the regions of old Hyperborea, but perhaps nowhere more than the Blight are they given even less of a second look. They are simply one of the myriad folk who call the city home.

### Primitives\*

For some elves, darker things bring them to the city, for there is beauty, freedom, variety, and self-expression in many things. These elves, known as the Primitives, revel in all forms of expression, but particularly those involving shock and awe. The Primitives believe that they alone have the right to choose their own way, and will not be guided by convention or law; they are the embodiment of anarchy and yet, as anarchy is in itself a convention, they abhor it. Some Primitives are drawn to even darker paths of self-discovery (see sidebar).

Described elsewhere in this book, the primitives are a distinctly Blight sort of elf that can descend from high, grey, or even wood elves, though high elves are by far the most common. These decadent and even indolent elves have abandoned all pretext of their elven traditions to embrace the hedonistic lifestyle of the avant-garde "elite" as they consider themselves.

\* See **New Racial Subtypes** below

### Wood Elves

A true rarity, few believe that there would even be any wood elves (see *LL8: Bard's Gate* by **Frog God Games**) in a place such as the Blight. While a few wooded areas in existence upon the island of Insula Lymossus and elven interests of the mainland sometimes require the presence of a few of these folk, by and large they are a rarity and tend to be highly uncomfortable in the city's unnatural surroundings.

## The One Who Has Seen Beyond and Despaired

This is one such elf who has seen the darker path. This once noted and courted artist vanished from his life of urbane glory and fled to the rooftops of the city, where he attempted to befriend the scrimshaw gargoyles. His artistic expressions began to involve living things, and he created many obscene creatures using his dark arts; some still walk the city nights. These creatures needed "donors" to allow their creation — donors that seldom if ever offered their bodies voluntarily — and for a period of 16 months the elf held the city in its thrall.

Things that should not have walked were given names and tormented the locals. At first, these creatures were thought to have come from Between, and Jack Hookhands, Hag Many Heads and Midnight's Harvester were attributed as invaders. However, the truth soon came to light as the elf was spotted during one of his own donor harvests. When he was finally caught, he bragged that he had given so many creatures life that he had created a new race in the city, and that in time his family would rise again. He was hanged in 1698.

## Fetch, The

Mentioned above, the Fetch is a sizable population of undead that has called the city-state home virtually since its inception. Though its numbers are primarily composed of ghouls that act as servitors and assorted other types of undead also in lesser roles, it is the vampires that truly form the backbone of the Fetch, and their long service to Beltane ensures that they play a major (if mysterious) role within the city. The Fetch are the very definition of the Lowest of the Low.

## Ghazaks

Few in number within the city, these strange humanoids hail from the Isthmus of Irkaina where they are found in greatest numbers among the Mulstabhins of Krivcycek Island (see *The Northlands Saga Complete* by **Frog God Games**). The ghazaks (see *Dunes of Desolation* by **Frog God Games**) are a strange race of pale-skinned astrologers and wanderers with white or silver hair and yellow or pink eyes. Some folk liken them to the grey elves, though there seems to be no true connection beyond a slight superficial resemblance. Others connect them to the Viroeni, which may actually bear some element of truth. In any case, it is unlikely they would be present at all if it were not for the trade between Castorhage and Mulstabha. Yet present they are, and their colourful robes and penchant for mystery and fortune telling make them a favourite source of gossip around the city.

## Gnomes

If there's a race that could truly be said to have thrived within the oppressively urban confines of the Blight, it's the gnomes. Gnomes are the backbone of the city-state. They are the second-largest racial group (if mongrelfolk and ratfolk are discounted), and the wit and wisdom upon which all commerce depends. They are the bankers, the merchants, and the workhouse-owners, inventors, plagiarists, and dandies. If the city were a ship, they would be the air that drives it. Gnomes are everywhere, it seems, in Castorhage — they own the most buildings; they create the best inventions. Their natural penchant for magic and alchemy has found fertile soil within the weird energies that suffuse the place, creating an entire subgroup of alchemists\* and a vast extended family known as Shortstones\*. Likewise, nowhere else are the gnomes' tinkering about in the fields of alchemical innovation and general prankery accepted (or at least tolerated) as they are in Castorhage. The Treadmill Ferry was



## Rock Gnomes

The most common type of gnome encountered in Akados, it is from the rock gnomes that most of the city's gnomish population is drawn, including the alchymysts and Shortstones above, and the tradelord gnomes below.

## Tradelord Gnomes\*

As described elsewhere, these gnomes represent a number of clans that have risen in the fields of banking, law, trade, and business in general throughout the city-state. Their name is synonymous with reliability and practical decision-making, which is about as un-gnomish as can be imagined. Yet they have become a fixture of the city and its holdings abroad nevertheless. The vast majority of Upper Class gnomes belong to this caste.

\* See **New Racial Subtypes** below

## Goblinoids

While not officially counted as a part of the population, goblinoids are actually somewhat common within the bounds of the city. These are usually in the form of mercenaries or bodyguards such as the hobgoblin mameluks of Mulstabha (see *The Northlands Saga Complete* by **Frog God Games**) that protect the diplomats and traders from that realm. Likewise, the Upper Class elite keep a number of goblins as pets as a current fad. These unfortunates are dressed in Small costumes and paraded about on leashes or kept in small pens and given pet names. Many are infuriated at this treatment, and curse and rail against their captors, though this usually brings on gales of laughter from the watchers. Like many pets grown too large though, after goblin pets cause enough property damage or maim a servant or two, they are usually put down or (more commonly) released into the slums to fend for themselves. Entire bands of goblins exist within the city who were former pets and now serve as mercenaries. Some are employed as toughs, or simply exist as cheap labour within the city, though many desert and end up begging on the streets, joining street gangs, or picking through the dumps. Goblins of this background invariably hate Castorhages, and for most it is only a matter of time before snapping and becoming murderers, kidnappers, or other predators within the city. Bugbears are also not unheard of, though they are just as likely to be criminal or serial killers using the city as a stalking ground as mercenaries or guards. Least common are the silids (see *The Tome of Horrors Complete* by **Frog God Games**), who can be found in small numbers in the Underneath.

## Gremfins

Not truly folk of the city, these creatures nonetheless are encountered frequently within its bounds and are universally unwelcome. All sorts of foul-ups and catastrophes are laid at the feet of the gremfins, though in truth, a large portion of them is due more to the carelessness and negligence of various citizens themselves. So bad did this putative blame become that as part of the *Pact of Immaculate Reception* of 1233, it was made illegal to raise the actions of gremfins as a defence in any court case without tangible proof of their involvement. Mites (see *The Tome of Horrors Complete* by **Frog God Games**) are easily the most ubiquitous of the gremfin-kin found within the Blight. They wage constant warfare against the night-slugs for control of the dingy drains and rotting soffits of the city, but virtually every other sort of gremfin imaginable can be found up to no good at some time or other.

## Grippflis

These frogfolk are far from common in the city, but small numbers are native to the surrounding fens and coastal bogs, and some have made their way within the urban areas to make a new home in and among all the hustle and bustle. When encountered outside the city, gripplis are more likely to be primitive tribal members that avoid the city and war with local bogguards, but those within might hold any sort of career or position.

created by Alwin Malachite; the first viable cotton-spinning machine by Truthes Agrate (until the idea was stolen by Joseph Sedge of Toiltown); the Tottering Crame (the first vertical conveyor) by Blessed Crun Wood. Castorhage is perfect for gnomes; it is full of gems, animals abound, and laughter is to be found in every tavern or on every street corner (if you know where to look).

Castorhage gnomes are proud to be gnomes: they shout out their race; they draw attention to themselves; they repeat their family name a thousand times a day. Blight gnomes are therefore unsubtle — in both demeanour and appearance. They are, if anything, “über-gnomes.” Castorhage gnomes spend fortunes coiffuring their crimped beards, and sport the latest fashions. The leather they wear is of the finest quality they can afford; their pockets are full of the latest gnome toys, snuffboxes, pocket watches, and wonder-chymicals. Of all the races, gnomes have the highest number of members in the Upper Class per capita. They also have a great number in the Middle Class. Lowfolk gnomes are actually the minority among their kind.

\* See **Blight Racial Traits** below

## Deep Gnomes (Svirfneblin)

Like most surface settlements, the deep gnomes are relatively rare. However, in the city district known as Underneath, they are much more common. Typically bald, the svirfneblin are known for their large gnomish noses and ears, and skin of deep earth tones.



## Half-elves

A place with as many different sorts of folk living in close proximity is going to undoubtedly have its share of crossbred races, and the half-elves are no exception. Half-elves have been inhabiting the Blight for centuries and far outnumber those of pure elven blood. Most half-elves within the city are likely to be charmwells\*, hidelings\*, or sorrowful\* as described in **Part 3** of this book. Like humans, half-elves run the gamut of castes.

\* See **Blight Racial Traits** below

## Half-orcs

Like half-elves, half-orcs enjoy an unprecedented level of acceptance and general sense of, if not being welcomed, at least not being received with hostility. It is more noticeable, though, to a half-orc population that finds a much more general prejudice than that experienced by half-elves across Akados. However, even here half-orcs are far from a favoured group, and like many inhabitants of the Blight must scrape by on the rough edges of civilization. Many of the half-orcs inhabiting the city, therefore, take the savage\* racial background to reflect this constant struggle for survival. Half-orcs are almost always Lowfolk.

\* See **Blight Racial Traits** below

## Shadowlamp Half-orcs\*

As described below, a type of half-orc unique to the Blight in particular is the shadowlamp half-orcs. These half-orcs have an unusual affinity to the Underneath and the benighted streets, and serve many valuable roles as investigators and enforcers in the darkened corners of the city where few dare to tread.

\* See **New Racial Subtypes** below

## Halflings (boatfolk)

Halflings are no great lovers of an urban place such as the Blight, but Castorhage's close proximity to the traditional Halfling homeland of the Dale and the Low Country ensures that it has its share of the small folk. The majority of halflings to be found here have taken to the river life and count themselves among the boatfolk\*, though plenty of city-dwelling halflings are present as well. Whether on a boat or in a ghetto, the halflings of the Blight find that their small size and elusiveness is especially helpful in escaping the many dangers that stalk the streets of the city. Halflings are primarily Lowfolk, though a good many of their number are Middle Class.

\* See **Blight Racial Traits** below

## Gypsy-souls\*

In addition to the boating and town-dwelling halflings, another type of small folk subgroup — while not constrained to Castorhage — seems to have originated there and tends to loiter in the area. These are the gypsy-souls, halflings who have taken to the wandering life and traditions of the Viroeni. Considered little better than thieves by most folk but generally ignored, the greatest prejudice that the gypsy-souls face is by others of their own kind, not the boatfolk necessarily, but definitely from the more sedentary and established halfling population.

\* See **New Racial Subtypes** below

## Inphidians

Many monstrous races lurk in the shadows and seams of the city, but few are as brazen in their presence as the inphidians (see *The Tome of Horrors Complete* by Frog God Games). These serpent-like folk are few in number within the city, but make no attempt to hide themselves. The inphidians keep to themselves and their own neighbourhoods when not transacting their day-to-day business, but have no qualms about revealing themselves to the city at large. For its part, the city usually mistakes them for serpentfolk and seems to take no real notice other than the occasional raised eyebrow when a serpentine face appears at a location where they

are not normally seen. How such a large (by their standards) population managed to migrate all the way from the Isle of the Blessed Serpent (see *K6: Shades of Gray* by Necromancer Games) is anyone's guess. For their part, the inphidians aren't saying.

## Lantern folk\*

As discussed in **Part 3**, the lantern folk are unusual in that they're a subrace of derro that has come to peacefully inhabit and even find a modicum of acceptance among the dwarves and svirfneblin of the Underneath. These folk seem to have left behind their race's tendency toward insanity, and have become productive and useful in the society of the city below. Lantern folk are largely outside the caste system, but probably would be considered Lowfolk.

\* See **New Racial Subtypes** below

## Mongrelfolk

Mongrelmen (see *The Tome of Horrors Complete* by Frog God Games) are accustomed to existing at the absolute bottom of the social order. But in Castorhage with coprophagi and night-slugs, not to mention the many twisted and deformed victims of long habitation of the Blight, mongrelfolk find that they actually fit in somewhat well. They're not exactly beloved by their neighbours or other races, but they don't seem quite so out of place and are regularly seen on the streets holding down jobs, running errands, and otherwise going about their business. True, the majority still remain poverty stricken and often resort to begging and petty theft, but it is not automatically their lot in life as is so often the case elsewhere. While mongrelfolk (like everyone else) dislike the night-slugs that infest the corners and subfloors of their hovels, they do share a certain amount of amicability with the otherwise shunned coprophagi and share their pidgin language of hoots, grunts, and imitations of speech.

Many folk suppose that the mongrelfolk of Castorhage came into being through the works of the elf primitive The One Who Has Seen Beyond and Despaired (see sidebox above), not the least of which the elf himself. However, mongrelfolk within the city predate the experiments of the depraved elf. It can be said, though, that the elf's work certainly added to the existing population, as those that survived his ministrations with sanity intact were largely able to breed true with their new kindred. Mongrelfolk are always Invisibles.

## Monstrous Races

More so than in any other major city of Akados, Castorhage is thronged with races that civilized folk would normally deem as monsters. And even more astounding, these monstrous races seem to get along reasonably well within the social confines of the city. Most of these monstrous races keep to themselves, remaining behind closed doors or the curtained windows of hansom cabs or even magical disguises, but some parade themselves openly in public without drawing any direct ire from the Watch of citizens. True, getting caught in a dark alley by one of these races still likely results in the death and possible devouring of those unfortunate enough to have done so, but in public, at least they are able to maintain a façade of reasonably civil behaviour. Even they do not wish to draw too much attention from the City Watch or one of the many notorious monster hunters that operates within the city. Most numerous of these monstrous city-dwellers are araneas, lamias, kitsune, nagas, serpentfolk, and sphinxes. In addition, many of them keep servitor creatures on hand such as goblinoids, lizardfolk, orcs, boggards, boarfolk, and gargoyles. Their motivations for being in Castorhage are as varied as their natures, but everyone knows to take care because the face of a harmless old beggar may actually serve as the guise of powerful, sorcerous creatures.

## Night-slugs\*

This disgusting and pestilent race is detailed more thoroughly below, but suffice it to say that of all the non-monstrous races that

## Ratfolk

Almost as numerous as mongrelfolk, the ratfolk inhabit a similar place on the pecking order. For the citizenry's part, they make little distinction between the two races, though the ratfolk of Castorhage seem largely to have originated in Jaati or other areas of far Libynos, and the source of the mongrelfolk remains a mystery to all. In any case, the two races get along well enough and are among the only ones that engage in any sort of social contact with the coprophagi. Like the rest of the city, the ratfolk harbour a special grudge for the disgusting night-slugs. Ratfolk are usually Invisibles.

## Sciurians

Truly a strange and little-known race, the squirrel-like sciurians (see *Tome of Horrors 4* by **Frog God Games**) are rare in the city as well. If one is seen, it is more than likely on the spit of some hill-dwelling orog that has hunted it and is now preparing it as its dinner. No sciurians actually dwell within the bounds of the city, but a population of the rare creatures does exist in the forested highlands upriver on Insula Lymossus. They seek to avoid contact with the inhabitants of the city, for some of the more savage races found there actively hunt them.

## Shae

As mysterious a race as any, a sizable population of the shadow-like shae can be found within Castorhage. They tend to keep to themselves and generally appear in public only at night when they frequent taverns, clubs, and other social events. The reason for their presence in the city remains a riddle to most, but it is not lost on some that shadowy folk such as the shae and wayangs (see below) seem to be drawn to the place.

## Swyne\*

Another of the new races that seem to be distinctly Blight in origin, the swyne mingle with the rest of the population in their lives of hedonistic excess. More information on this race can be found below. Swyne have the highest number of Upper Class per capita. Few swyne would ever allow themselves be anything less than Middle Class

\* See **New Races** below

## Tabaxis

The cat-like tabaxis (see *The Tome of Horrors Complete* by **Frog God Games**) of Castorhage hail from two very different points of origin. Some of the tabaxis of Castorhage hail from the bamboo forests of southern Xi'en in the region known as the Utterends where the highland forests of the Green Realms meet the warm, humid coastal lowlands, and from the distant continent of Libynos. In Libynos, most tabaxis are found in that continent's central jungles, but a significant population of them relocated centuries ago to lower Khemit and the temple-city of Bastus. The Libynosi tabaxis found in the Blight are from that group.

## Tengus

One of the more exotic races to call Castorhage home are the crow-like tengus. Sometimes called kenkoos, these bird-like humanoids can be found across Akados from the east to the west, but those of the city-state tend to be from the tengu clans of central Xi'en. Many of the tengus are heavily involved with the Xi'en Triad gangs, so much so that the form of Thieves' Cant used by these Triads (called Tli'liik, see below) is actually a cant created from the Tengu language. Despite their somewhat shady reputation around the city, tengus remain commonplace enough to invite no special attention from the Watch or other citizens. Tengus are almost universally Invisibles.



inhabit the city, it is the night-slugs that enjoy the lowest spot on the totem pole. Like humanoid vermin, they live to do little more than scavenge food and poke about in places that others don't want them. Unless they have a good reason for being somewhere, most are chased away on sight. Night-slugs are considered Lowest of the Low without exception.

\* See **New Races** below

## Orcs (ores, orogs)

Like the goblinoids of the city, a fairly significant population of orcs serves as mercenaries, guards, and hired muscle. It's not to say that none of them has turned to crime or perhaps taken part in brigandry on the side of their day jobs, but in general, they maintain a fairly peaceful existence within the bowels of the city inasmuch as they avoid drawing the notice of the Watch to any great degree. In addition to the orcs, many of the folk who choose to hire their kind as thugs or toughs want even a bit more muscle and have been known to hire orogs (see *The Tome of Horrors Complete* by **Frog God Games**) to supplement their ranks, bringing a not insubstantial number of that race into the city as well. Orcs are usually considered Invisibles, with occasional Lowfolk.

## Outsiders

Other than humanity itself, perhaps no group in the city is as diverse as the population of outsiders that either make their home there or visit frequently enough so as to be a noticeable presence. No one kind of outsider dominates the city, though in sheer numbers it is hard to compete with the imps that serve as familiars and thralls to countless petty mages and sorcerers. Likewise, a large number of quasits serves in the same capacity. True demons and devils are relatively few and far between, but not unheard of, and an equal number of angels, azatas, and agathions<sup>B2</sup> can be found going about their enigmatic business, careful to keep an eye out for enemies of their race but not generally starting a row with any fiends they encounter without good reason. Rakshasas seem to inhabit the city in relatively high numbers and are known for being prone to keeping boarfolk around as hired muscle. Genies and other elemental creatures can be found with some regularity within the city, though efreet and salamanders seem to be the most common for some reason. Because of the city's close ties with Xi'en, no one is truly surprised to find oni among the outsiders that manifest from time to time, and in a place so prone to violence and death, psychopomps<sup>B4</sup> are to be expected. The one race that is almost conspicuously absent are then aeons<sup>B2</sup>, which seem to be barred from setting foot on Insula Lymossus altogether. The reason for this is not well understood — even by the aeons themselves — but the wise and learned suspect it has something to do with the proximity of Between keeping these paragons of natural order at bay.



## Languages

Many are the languages spoken in the City-State of Castorhage, and just walking down the street can expose the ear to a dozen different tongues. Below are listed the primary languages spoken in the city, as well as their principal speakers.

- **Westerling (Common)** — the common tongue of the city
- **Aklo** — aboleths, Between creatures, denizens of Leng, fey, lantern folk
- **Bridge-Cant** – pidgin of Common and myriad vulgarities spoken primarily by the lower castes of Town Bridge
- **Canto<sup>PC:HD</sup>** — Tunnel People
- **Cobble** – secret cant of the sentient constructs of the Inkleing
- **Darkling (a.k.a. Dark Folk)** — dark creepers, dark dancers, dark stalkers, etc. (except huggermuggers<sup>TOHC</sup> who speak their own gibberish language of Chatter)
- **Dwarven** — dwarves
- **Dreamspeak** — Between creatures, denizens of Leng, night hags
- **Elven** — elves, half-elves
- **Gnome** — gnomes
- **Goblin** — bugbears, goblins, hobgoblins, silids
- **Grus** — boarfolk, swyne
- **Halfling** — halflings
- **Helvaenic** — Heldring
- **Khemitian** — Khemitites, tabaxis
- **Kirkut** — Shattered Folk
- **Meeruwban** — Jaata, rakshasas, vishkanyas
- **Mongrotic** — coprophagi, mongrelfolk, ratfolk
- **Necronomus** — the Fetch
- **Ogham** — Daanites
- **Orc** — half-orcs, orcs, orogs
- **Planar Languages (Abyssal, Celestial, Daemonic, Ignan, Infernal, Shadowtongue, Truespeech)** — angels, daemons, demons, devils, efreet, salamanders, shae, wayangs, etc.
- **Rama** — gypsy-souls, Viroeni
- **River Cant** — boatfolk, some gypsy-souls, and Viroeni
- **Semuric** — Ashurians, ghazaks, Mulstabhins
- **Thieves' Cant** — thieves, mainly
- **Tli'liik** — Xi'en thieves' cant based on Tengu language
- **Undercommon** — lantern folk, silids, Tunnel People, Underneathers, etc.
- **Xaon** — Gtsang, kitsune, vishkanyas, Xi'en

<sup>PC:HD</sup> See *Pathfinder Chronicles: Into the Darklands*

<sup>TOHC</sup> See *The Tome of Horrors Complete* by Frog God Games

## Tunnel People

Heard of by all but seen by few, the infamous Tunnel People haunt the dreams of many a Castorhage child. Those who dwell in the Underneath have a much greater familiarity with these foul denizens, but even in the city above they serve as a sort of bogeyman to scare misbehaving children. Though not truly an organized group of any sort, the Tunnel People share enough characteristics in common to be lumped together in the eyes of the citizenry at large. In truth, they are different groups of savage tunnel dwellers that occupy abandoned sewers, mineshafts, and adits of the Underneath where they scratch out a living always on the verge of starvation and extinction. Typical examples of the Tunnel People include morlocks, chokers, grimlocks, insane ravenous vagrants, and the hated woerms. Unfortunately, on more than one occasion they seem to have spontaneously banded together for raids into the Underneath or even night-time raids into the city above in search of anything edible, including children, winos, or anyone or anything else they can catch. Those taken by the Tunnel People are rarely seen whole again, and more than once the Shadowlampers in service to the Queen have been sent to find and exterminate them with limited success. Once their raids pass, they seem to split up and evaporate into countless deep pits and tunnels beyond the edges of the Underneath to lurk until they decide to pour forth as a horde once again. If considered a caste at all, the Tunnel People would definitely be considered the Lowest of the Low.

## Vishkanyas

The ebony-skinned vishkanyas are a race little recognized among most folk of Castorhage, which is precisely how they want it. However, to the various criminal enterprises and even certain elements of the government, their unsurpassed skill in the crafting of poisons and their lethality as assassins is well appreciated. They keep to themselves and ply their trade, and most folk are none the wiser. The vishkanyas of Castorhage originally came from Far Jaati and therefore tend to avoid other Jaata for fear of being recognized for what they are. For their part, the Jaati consider sighting a vishkanya as bad luck and possibly a sign of impending death, and they usually vehemently deny such an occurrence if confronted. Vishkanyas usually blend into the Middle Class or among the Lowfolk.

## Vodyanoi

Very few of these amphibious folk are found in the Blight, though a significant population of them lives in the nearby Lych Fens. When vodyanoi are encountered, it is usually either on the docks, along the river, or at the outskirts of the city where it meets the bogs and swamplands that hem the city in. On almost all occasions, they are out hunting boggards or chikes that have strayed within the bounds of the city. Whether the vodyanoi see themselves as some sort of protectors of the city or if they just hate the crocfolk and frogfolk that badly is unknown. On the rare occasions when contact is made with vodyanoi, a grippli go-between usually brokers the deal.

## Wayangs

Another of the strange shadowy races that call the Blight home, the wayangs are thought to stem primarily from the proximity of so many gremlins and other fey to the presence of the Between and the many magical and shadow effects constantly at play over the city. Whether this theory holds any water is up for debate, but what is not debatable is that a significant population of these shadowfolk reside in the city for their own hidden purposes.

# Blight Racial Traits

A curious aspect of life in the Blight is that it subtly, over generations, moulds its inhabitants, exaggerating the effects on their physicalities and mentalities of the ways in which they apply themselves within its confines. For example, descendants of labourers are, on average, noticeably more hulking and brutish than their forebears, and descendants of scholars have, on average, wider eyes and larger craniums.

## Dwarves

Coming from a respected dwarven family in the city, a **salt-o'-the-earth** can trace his local ancestry back over several generations to the dwarven kingdom said to have first carved the Underneath. Some dwarves are called **SprawMasons** and have a particularly strong background in all things connected to building. Myriad dwarf families came to Castorhage seeking work, and the reputation of their spirit of toil gained many employment and the nickname of **toilers**.

## Elves

The following Blight racial backgrounds can be obtained when a character takes a specific combination of Blight alternate racial traits. These include additional bonuses that represent their total immersion in the uniquely challenging environment of the city. A character may be of only a single Blight racial background.

**Forsaken:** Old elves come to the city to discover and learn, and these elves are called the **forsaken** by locals. They have a lifetime of memories and experiences, but memories are fickle and what may have been reality might seem like a dream. Some forsaken are bitter that their long lives are slowly coming to an end. **Travellers** are elven folk working as the bright performers of the city who dazzle, amaze, and entertain its citizens.

## Gnomes

Typically found surrounded by bubbling pipes and jars, frothing jugs of vile-smelling ichor, and tubes connecting to tubes connecting to tubes, gnome **alchymysts** are admired throughout the city for their nose for the task and their cunning skills with all manner of exotic substances. However, even better known are the gnomes from the famous (some would say infamous) **Shortstone** family, their reputation precedes them. This huge, extended family is synonymous with Blight gnomes, and gains benefits from the seemingly endless relations that dwell in the city.

## Half-Elves

*There is magic in her eyes, and a slight fey look about her. Her features are narrow, and her eyes purple. Her red hair is drawn into a tight pigtail by a deep blue cheesecloth scarf.*

*Everyone loves Tamarind, her smile, her laugh, her singing — she has broken a hundred hearts they say by refusing the advances of lesser men, claiming she is looking for a wealthy fat lord to live with and spend his money.*

*Behind those eyes, however, works a brain of evil. A black heart beats in her and Tamarind plots and weaves like a great, sick spider. She knows she is beautiful and knows it well, using what the gods have given her to bring her a better life.*

*She kills those who come too close to her web.*

—Tamarind, a charmwell half-elf rogue

**Charmwells** are more elven, and therefore more fey, than other half-elves; some have the stuff of the Old Ones and the dark fey about them. In the crowded city, these half-elves play up to their elven predominance and often become performers. Some say the elves were the first creatures to walk through the mirror but came through from Between. Given this

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fear, some half-elves prefer to emphasise their human ancestry, and mask their elven heritage. These paranoid folk called **hidelings** try to keep a low profile in all they do. Neither one nor the other, a **sorrowful** was brought up by one parent and is missing something crucial in their makeup. After the initial love and lust died, their parents' extreme differences made it impossible for them to live happily ever after. Sorrowful favour the parent they lived with but are cursed either with unnatural long life or fleetingly short life in comparison to their parent.

### Half-Orcs

Their parents came to the city to seek their fortune; half-orcs themselves, they found life hard, and have joined the growing number of half-orcs who live in dark, rusty ghettos and hovels — grouped together for fear of attack. **Savages** — as other city folk call them — are tough, independent, and smart; they have learnt to survive alone in the city.

### Halflings

The river barges are full of halfling **boatfolk** who are fiercely insular and come from tightknit families. They have their own festivals, manners, and River Cant to carry their hidden messages between them when in front of strangers.

### Humans

A **Capitoler** hails from the Capitol, his or her parents mingled with minor gentry or scholars, serving clerks, guards, or any number of other professions and backgrounds. Capitolers can be of the Upper Class or Middle Class. Capitolers may dress more fashionably, have a richer accent, write in a very educated way, and generally have an air of confidence; in other words, they are better educated and slightly more aloof than other locals.

The backbone of the city, the common man or woman is a drinker, a laugher, a dancer and a fighter. She is at home in the gin-halls of the city, toasting the Queen, and then readying herself for work the next day. **Commoners** can be of the Middle Class or the Lowfolk. Her background is born in the streets where the workers toil and earn their bread and butter. Commoners are tougher than the Capitolers; they have had an upbringing in the school of hard knocks and their skills reflect that.

Tramps and beggars, waifs, strays, and crooks are thought of as coming from the underclass of the city and fall generally into the category of **criminals**. The streets are unfriendly to those without a home, and you've been bred hard.

Pity those who have been infested with thoughts of Between — for some it is a daily terror, a fear that, at any moment, she is going to reach out and devour them forever. Others fear that their very thoughts of Between are bound to manifest, and come and get them. The wolf staring into the crib. Some think a war is about to begin, a war that will end everything very, very quickly as Between rises up and devours the grotesque, bloated city of Castorhage.

Known as **crooked** people, these are edgy folk, yet strangely enlightened. They tend to be more artistic, creative, awakened, or elemental, but not always. They may have a peculiar effect upon animals, or upon people, or upon the things they create: cats may yowl and flee when they enter a room; people give them surprised second glances when they first encounter them, having imagined something different, something changed; or they may create things that are not quite right — works of staggering genius that anger people and can never be sold, or objects that defy explanation yet send a subtle twist up the spines of those who view them, and who can't bear to be near them for any great length of time.

Ah Sister Lyme, she slithers — or perhaps more rightly oozes — through the city, her veins reaching upstream to taint and choke. None can escape her. She peculiarly affects these humans; they've spent many generations on her back or in her womb, and it has seeped into their pores. Other humanoid races do not seem to take this patina, this infestation — some have pointed out that it shows her disapproval of those who are not human and base a whole range of bigoted beliefs on this thin veneer of reason. Whatever the true cause, Sister Lyme has a peculiar hold on these **Lyme-blessed** folk, be they from fishing, harbouring, shipwright, or any of a host of other maritime and related backgrounds. Somewhere deep in their family tree, the river changed them. Maybe it was an accident? Perhaps the Canker nearly choked them, or they fell in and saw something? Maybe it was just the more common, visceral nightmares that plague those who live by her flanks? Whatever it was, she has a hold of them.

## New Racial Subtypes

The racial subtypes included here are all more or less unique to the Blight (with the exception of gypsy-souls). Not that they can't be found anywhere else — though that is likely to be rare enough — but rather that wherever they're found, their existence can be traced back to their Blight roots, proving that the Blight is so pervasive — so corrupting — that it changes everything it touches and usually not for the better.

### Derro\*, Lantern Folk

Only in a place as dissolute and depraved as the Blight would a race as sinister as the derro be able to find a home among the surface races. Though even here they are given the name lantern folk rather than go by their more commonly known epithet of derro. At home in the Underneath, these derro have lived long enough in the shadow of the great city-state above to have taken on some of its characteristics, much like the blighted humans (see below). While they remain as sensitive as ever to the light of the sun, their race's own inherent propensity for madness has reacted with the strange energies of proximity to Between and the vaguely life-like quality of the city itself in an unusual way — lantern folk are, for the most part, sane. A stable population such as this is unheard of, and has allowed for a peaceful co-existence within the city's bowels.

**Physical Description:** The lantern folk are physically typical of derro. They have skin ranging from pale blue to stark white, and wild, bushy





hair ranging from stark white to pale blue (hair and skin tone are rarely the same). They wear moustaches and sideburns with regularity, though beards are fairly uncommon. They have the same bulging, pupil-less eyes of the derro and only four fingers on each hand, though their feet retain five toes. They are small and slight of build, but extremely light on their feet and quick.

**Society:** Lantern folk lack the savants and other bizarre demagogues that permeate derro society. They instead dwell among the dwarves of the Underneath and elect delve-chiefs to govern their neighbourhoods in an orderly and peaceful fashion. They typically work as miners, craftsmen, traders, tunnel maintenance workers, or gatherers of resources available only in the Underneath or lower subterranean areas. When encountered on the surface in the night markets or well-shaded establishments during the day they sell their rare Under Realms or negotiate contracts with surface firms for the kinds of specialised work that they can provide. The racial propensity for sadistic experiments and poisoning only rarely emerges among lantern folk individuals.

**Relations:** When the dwarves of the Underneath discovered the lantern folk derro centuries ago, many voices called for their immediate extermination. The depredations of the derro were well known among the dwarves. However, these derro demonstrated peaceful contact and did not show the signs of madness so prevalent among that race. In the end, cooler heads prevailed, and the lantern folk were allowed to peacefully assimilate into the society of the Underneath. A compromise made with the hardliner dwarves, who still distrusted the derro-kin and their inclination for skulduggery in the dark, required them to maintain a light source about themselves at all times when outside their own homes. The derro, wishing to avoid extermination at the hands of the more war-like and numerically superior dwarves, agreed to this request, and it is from this practice that they came to have the name by which they are now known — though most make use of *light* spells rather than lanterns these days.

The lantern folk have now lived in the Underneath for centuries without causing any problems and continue to follow the decree of keeping a *light* spell at all times. However, this decree only applied to when they were

in the Underneath, so when they are abroad above ground or in tunnels that are not a part of the Underneath, they are not in the habit of keeping a *light* spell active. Most folk who interact with the lantern folk are the dwarves of the Underneath, but they get along in general with all of the different population segments. The exception to this are any derro who are not lantern folk and any duergar. For some reason, these two races despise the lantern folk and seek to slay them whenever possible.

**Alignment and Religion:** The lantern folk no longer embrace the evil ways of their derro forebears. They have also shed much of the chaos inherent to the madness of others of their kind. As such, the most common alignment among the lantern folk is neutral with a number of lawful neutral and neutral good as well. The chaos of their old ways slips through in some individuals so that chaotic good and chaotic neutral lantern folk are not unheard of. For the most part, the lantern folk have embraced the religion of the dwarves of the Underneath who sponsored them and hold Vergrimm Earthsblood<sup>MM</sup> or Crugas<sup>MM</sup> in high regard. Some revere Dwerfater<sup>MM</sup> or even Grox<sup>MM</sup>, but these are much fewer and farther between.

**Male Names:** Bariom, Caedimus, Cassius, Filo, Lucilium, Tiberonus

**Female Names:** Andromeda, Caliopa, Gratica, Koryola, Veran, Vesta

\* Duergar in *Swords & Wizardry*. See *The Blight Player's Handbook* for further details.

## Elf, Primitive

Primitives are elves who have found themselves drawn to the strange, almost otherworldly allure that seems to shine just beneath the surface of the Blight for those with the sensitivity to see it. The result of their long exposure to this strange, intangible presence ever tickling at their minds has led them to devote their lives to its expression in art. They are fey — almost elemental — creatures inspired and tortured by wildly vivid dreams to the point of obsession over an act of creation to bring their dream visions to life. They may stand for hours immersed in the light play of sun on the gables, entranced by the reactions of an admixture of venoms, or crafting the perfect expression in musical movements about the unique potpourri of odours produced by a particular alleyway.

**Physical Description:** Primitives tend to stand taller and are more willowy than the typical elf, rarely with an ounce of fat on their bodies as they devote every waking moment and all their energy to the perfection of their art. Some with an epicurean bent lie at the opposite end of the spectrum, representing the shockingly phenomenon of a morbidly obese elf. They share the same almond-shaped eyes of other elves, but their wide irises are always completely black, blending seamlessly with their pupils, and creating the impression of looking into a vast, bottomless well. Their clothing tends toward minimalist ideals and ranges in quality from a few diaphanous veils or scarves to little more than a rough loincloth. They see their bodies as another form of expression of their art and wish to reveal their canvas to as many as can see, regardless of physique, injury, or deformity. Exotic and extravagant tattoos, often covering much of their bodies, are not uncommon. In the cold winters of the Blight, they bundle up in rough, primitive garments of hide and thick fur, channelling the inner nature they sense within the walls of the city. The hygiene of these elves varies wildly, with some taking great pride in their physical aesthetic and others seeing such concerns as mundanely gauche, preferring to revel in a natural state of filth.

**Society:** Primitives take their name from the fact that they see themselves entirely outside society. In fact, to them society is an unnatural aberration that separates them from the enlightened beauty that they forever seek to capture and emulate in their art. As such, primitives with any political leaning at all tend toward the Anarchist camp. Some may even believe the true expression of their inner eye's beauty lies in watching the entire city burn.

**Relations:** Primitives have poor relations with virtually every other race, including other elves. Only other primitives and the most avant-garde of art patrons within the city who share their bohemian outlook find themselves in the social circles of the primitives, and even then these relationships tend to be short, self-absorbed, and one-sided, the primitive moving on to some new companion in their eternal quest to capture their inner eye in art.

**Alignment and Religion:** Primitives have all of the emotional capriciousness of other elves but tend to lack much value for kindness

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or any concept of beauty that lies outside their own personal obsessions. Most primitives are chaotic, but very few of them are good. Primitives are never lawful. Many primitives gravitate toward agnostic or atheistic beliefs as all other matters are subordinated to their personal obsessions. Some do, however, venerate deities that represent certain types of art, freedoms, or simply hedonism in general. Among the primitives who venerate a deity, some of the more common divine patrons are Dame Torren<sup>BG</sup>, Moccavallo<sup>BG</sup>, Bacchus-Dionysus<sup>BG</sup>, the Queen of Spiders<sup>BG</sup>, Pan<sup>BG</sup>, Lurz-Urcia<sup>LCB</sup>, Pelora<sup>DMC</sup>, Eliphaz<sup>DMC</sup>, Arialee<sup>GD</sup>, Sriasha<sup>K2</sup>, Gilyo<sup>K9</sup>, Demogorgon<sup>MM</sup>, Bast<sup>DD</sup>, Tiamat<sup>DD</sup>, Shupnikkurat<sup>DD</sup>, the Church of Marwan<sup>DD</sup>, The Poppy's Chorus<sup>DD</sup>, and one of the largest chapters of the Cult of the Unspeakable<sup>TD</sup> in the Lost Lands. A few even call upon the blessings of The Ash Queen\* or The Horseman\*. Above all, they fear the demon lord Mathrugaunt the Mad<sup>BP</sup>, knowing full well even in their indolence that to fully succumb to madness is to lose their vision entirely. There are rumours, however, of some primitives who have done that very thing and now secretly seek to propagate the spread of the insidious cult among their peers.

In addition, it is not unusual to see a new cult spring up among a group of primitives dedicated to some wholly or partially fabricated deity drawn from an exotic land or a prehistoric past viewed as somehow purer or more visceral. Without the backing of a true deity to provide any sort of evidence of divine inspiration whatsoever, these small cults usually dissolve in a matter of days or months at the most. While they exist, though, some of them can become quite dangerous or vicious in their ideals of physical excess at any cost.

**Male Names:** Primitives eschew the names of their elven heritage and those of the surrounding human culture alike. They prefer to take on monosyllabic mononyms that they feel portray the underlying truth of their being or poetic descriptions that seek to do the same. To most others, their names seem pretentious, nonsensical, or both. Male names include Chak, Durst, Flower-Fire, Pum, Quell-The-Stone, Ran-The-Side-Fall, Son-Of-Nos, Slay-Made-Blue, Tak-tak, Thorn, Tutho, Uch, Willow, and Whole-Wind.

**Female Names:** Females use a similar naming convention as the males, but their names tend more toward the more poetic phrasing or individual words that they feel represent their moment. Such names include Abundance, Encounter-Upon-Green-Radiance-Of-Night, Light-In-Ever-Noise, Perfect, Pain-For-Promise, Rain, Sash, Two-Sides-Through, Under-Lives-Peace, and Willow.

\* See **True Gods of the Blight** below

## Gnome, Tradelord

Tradelord gnomes are a common sight amongst the financial areas of the city; they are cunning and astute, good judges of character and risk, and their talents are in demand — by the legal, financial, and speculative professions, as well as the less-legal arms of those groups. In many ways, their reputation resembles that of the street dwarves in other urban areas throughout Akados, but whereas the street dwarves are known for being hard-working business owners and workers, tradelord gnomes are specifically involved as financiers, bankers, commodity speculators, investors, and trade factors at the highest echelons of local and international trade. And while they are known for their business acumen, they are not especially well-regarded for their scruples. A person always feels more comfortable with a tradelord gnome on his side of a negotiating table but much less comfortable with one on the opposite side.

**Physical Description:** Tradelord gnomes superficially resemble ordinary gnomes in all ways, but all tradelord gnomes are descended from a handful of Castorhage gnome families (no matter how distantly related), and all tend to bear a certain family resemblance. Their hair tends toward muted shades of brown, red, or sometimes green, though grey and silver seem to predominate even at relatively young ages. In addition, there is an unusually high incidence of balding among their numbers. Eyebrows are almost always thick and bushy, with wide, hooked noses, and large, protruding ears. Thick, brushy moustaches and sometimes sideburns are extremely common, though beards are never worn. Their skin also tends to be more pallid compared with their kin and is frequently extremely thin, almost parchment-like, with a spider web of tiny veins visible on the cheeks, chin, nose, and ears. Eyes tend to be bleary and slightly jaundiced,

and myopia is very common, with many tradelord gnomes wearing spectacles before they reach adulthood.

**Society:** Tradelord gnomes are extremely preoccupied with social class and form. They are extremely proud of their Castorhage lineage from a few well-placed families whose involvement in the politics and finances of the city-state date back for centuries. With family names such as Bothelwaite, Curringham, Evendon, and Shipwright, they feel that they are the true cream of the crop within the city-state, with a name that should open doors and get immediate recognition even among the unwashed Lowfolk. The fact that none of their family names is even remotely as well-known as the upstart parlor magician Shortstones and their seemingly endless progeny irks the families of the tradelords to no end, though they will never let on to being disturbed by a notion so far beneath them.

**Relations:** Tradelord gnomes tend to get on well with most other races, if at a comfortable and coolly indifferent arm's length. They hold ordinary gnomes in utter contempt, however. The city's Lowfolk recognize them as true "movers" within the Blight's social strata, and the Upper Class see them as formidable and respectable professionals, if not particularly friendly or suitable for socializing. The tradelord gnomes' natural standoffishness actually serves them well in their relations with others because it makes them seem stuffy and competent while at the same time masking their inclination toward pompousness biting condescension. The few that manage to get close to a tradelord gnome almost always find them rude and unpleasant but worthwhile companions nonetheless for their astute judgment and considerable skills at the bargaining table.

**Alignment and Religion:** Tradelords have a tendency toward law and neutrality, being much more concerned with reaching the means to their ends through skilful manipulation of the existing rules rather than with whether or not the ends themselves might be in any way worthy or moral. Lawful neutral and neutral are their most commonly taken alignments, with some exceptional individual skewing toward lawful good or lawful evil. Neutral good and neutral evil are extremely rare, and chaotic alignments are unheard of among them. Favored religions are Sefagreth<sup>BG</sup>, Thyr<sup>SV</sup>, Dre'uain<sup>BP</sup>, Archeillus<sup>BP</sup>, and Iskardar<sup>MM</sup>, and no doubt more than a few who secretly revere Lord Mammon\*. Noticeably absent among the worship of the tradelord gnomes is the worship of their chaotic racial deity Hammer Mittelschmerz<sup>MM</sup>.

**Male Names:** Bates, Cumberlin, Huffingham, Jomas, Myles, Perrington, Tomorj, Trevor, Willin

**Female Names:** Agathra, Agned, Delorys, Gertrand, Myllicent, Myrtle, Pennifor

\* See **True Gods of the Blight** below

## Half-Orc, Shadowlamp

Shadowlampers, as they are typically called, are half-orcs in the Blight born pale and sickly looking. The light still hurts the enlarged eyes of these half-orcs. Sometimes referred to as vampires, ghouls, or undead by other city folk, they prefer to do their business by night. To many, however, the Shadowlamper is a boon; someone who prefers to work at night can come in very handy, not only for the criminal underclasses, but also amongst more legitimate professions. The Queen's 4th Shadowlampers are a renowned part of the City Watch, with a waiting list of seven years to join and the toughest entry tests in the whole Watch. The Illuminati have made great use of Shadowlampers, and these half-orcs are also ranked amongst some of the most famous spider-hunters in the city's history.

**Physical Description:** Shadowlamp half-orcs are tall like their more common kin, easily exceeding 6 feet in height for both genders, but lack the sheer muscle mass of their cousins. Their bodies are thin and corded with wiry muscle that makes them look more like scarecrows — or cadavers — than a typical half-orc, and their skins tend to run paler than the dusky or greenish hues more frequently found. They have wide eyes with large pupils that are frequently bloodshot and teary in bright lights. Though their lower canines are less prominent than is normal for half-orcs, they are nevertheless somewhat elongated, and the fact that their upper canines are likewise hypertrophied only adds to the comparisons to some sort of blood-drinking undead beast.

**Society:** As products of a wholly urban environment, shadowlampers do not suffer the persecution and ostracization seen by the societies of both of a typical half-orc's parents. This is partially because shadowlamp

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half-orcs are the offspring of mated shadowlamp half-orcs, the initial orc/human crossing having occurred generations in the past. This is also because with so many underclasses in the Blight held with equal disdain by the upper crust of society, it is too much trouble for a lone segment to be singled out for specific prejudice. They receive the hardships and privations of a second-class citizen, but then so do most folk of the Blight, so it seems like no unique burden to shadowlampers.

**Relations:** With no special prejudice levelled against them in the city of their birth and a generations-long dissociation from the separate cultures of their progenitors, shadowlamp half-orcs get along with the other races that inhabit the city just as would any other. No special grudges are harboured, and no great blood feuds recognized. A shadowlamper on the streets of the city would have the same possibility to like or dislike an elf he met on the street as he would an orc. Though some folk are put off by their cadaverous appearance and exhibit a prejudice along those lines, the respect they command for the work they do and the myriad of other racial prejudices that swell within the disparate folk of the Blight causes shadowlampers to not feel singled out as a target of vitriol by any particular group.

**Alignment and Religion:** Shadowlamp half-orcs have no great propensity toward evil nor toward chaos. Likewise, they hold no special fondness for good or law. They are just as likely to be chaotic evil as chaotic good, though only a very few could be considered lawful good. The largest portion of their population falls firmly within the boundaries of neutrality. Most work hard, do their job, support their families, and at the end of the day enjoy a pint and a cigar. They usually hold no great loyalty to the city or its institutions, but take great pride in their own work ethic and expertise in those areas in which they excel. As creatures naturally suited for the dark of night, those few shadowlampers who do observe a formal religion tend to gravitate toward those that favour the shadows such as Mirkeer<sup>CotSK</sup> and Sister Shadow\* or other aspects of the night such as Narrah<sup>SV</sup> or even relating to their occupation such as Vanithu<sup>RCFG</sup>. A shadowlamper worshipping Grotaag<sup>MM</sup> is unheard of, but most pay no attention to any religion in particular.

**Male Names:** Borkil, Daga, Hurk, Kultak, Merrik, Tarik, Yag

**Female Names:** Borlea, Dresa, Morfuda, Shevzu, Tulik, Yada

\* See **True Gods of the Blight** below

## Halfling, Gypsy-Soul

Consummate traders and tricksters, gypsy-souls are halflings who feel a deep and abiding kindred with the Viroeni gypsy-folk of Akados. Though not related to these wandering tribes by blood, the gypsy-souls have associated with them for so many generations that these halfling bloodlines indeed seem more closely akin to the Viroeni than to their own kind. In fact, the gypsy-souls speak the Rama language of the Viroeni and generally keep to their own neighbourhoods, caravans, or encampments rather than mix extensively with others. The exceptions to this are, of course, the Viroeni themselves, who see the gypsy-souls as kindred little brothers and sisters and the halfling boatfolk of Castorhage. Interaction in the city, however, can draw some out of their insular natures, at least for a time. Gypsy-souls support themselves as tinkers, traders, and in the performance of odd jobs whenever possible. Some have small animal herds.

**Physical Description:** Gypsy-souls in general conform to the physical appearance of their halfling kin. They tend to be a little bit taller — some reaching the outlandish height of 3 foot, 6 inches — and a bit leaner, rarely having the paunch from a life of prosperity and good meals that tends to find its way onto many halflings as they reach middle age. They almost always go barefoot, which is not unusual for halflings in general, and their ears are less pointed, in some cases being completely indistinguishable from human ears in shape. Their thick curly hair tends toward dark brown and black, with many wearing thick sideburns and even short beards, though rarely moustaches, and they have a tendency to grey early, with many having thick streaks of white running through their unruly mops at even a relatively young age. Their eyes share dark shades similar to their hair though occasionally a striking ice blue appears. Their skins are a shade darker than the almond coloration of typical halflings, possibly from greater exposure to the sun in their wandering lifestyle. They quickly develop many fine lines and wrinkles from years in the sun and wind and a tendency toward laughter, though this does not make them appear older as much as it makes them seem jollier and more world wise.

**Society:** Like the Viroeni wanderers that they have come to identify with, gypsy-souls spend most of their life traveling upon the roads of Akados in caravans of small wagons. These are frequently included as part of a Viroeni caravan but not always so. When they are with Viroeni, they are treated as one of their own and answer to the tribes reigning matriarch just as do her human kinfolk. This arrangement is very egalitarian in that on many occasions the Viroeni themselves answer to a halfling gypsy-soul matriarch if she is the most senior member of the caravan. On the open road or in an encampment, gypsy-souls are prone to music, dancing, and the telling of elaborate jokes. They do not involve themselves in pranks very frequently because they are accustomed to living on few resources and among hostile peoples so that anything that might damage another's property or dignity is seen as detrimental to their survival. Rather, they confine their internal rivalries to clever jests and barbs for the amusement of all, and a gypsy-soul that knows he has been bested enjoys the roast as much as any onlookers and begins planning his future rejoinder almost immediately. Pranks upon non-gypsy-souls, however, is an entirely different matter, and truly legendary members of their families are those who can pull the most outlandish pranks upon other peoples.

**Relations:** If folk look upon the Viroeni as roving skulks and thieves, they look upon the gypsy-souls who associate with them as little better than an infestation of vermin. Only in municipalities of established relation with gypsy-souls do they find any real welcome. In Castorhage, there are entire barrios occupied by gypsy-souls who have made a more permanent abode for themselves, and here they have become enough of a fixture to avoid constant persecution. It is true that the folk of the Blight look upon all gypsy-souls as cutpurses and pickpockets, but then, most other groups are suspected of the same, so the gypsy-souls find an easier acceptance than in most other places. In places not as accustomed to the presence of gypsy-souls, they are usually confined to isolated encampments away from towns and cities, and allowed entry only on market days when their wares and services might be of use. Gypsy-souls harbour some resentment toward this inherent disregard for them, but their own habit of tricks and pranks does not engender them to these communities.

**Alignment and Religion:** Gypsy-souls are chaotic by nature though rarely truly evil. Many of them, in fact, have a heart of gold that is tempered by their impish ways. Their love of freedom and disdain of rules and the shackles of civilization means that they are never inclined toward lawfulness. Most frequently, they are chaotic good or neutral with some neutral good and chaotic neutral. Only on the rarest occasions are neutral evil or chaotic evil gypsy-souls encountered. Their love of the freedom of the road and the irreverent ways of halflings means a great many favour the halfling deity Mick O'Delving<sup>BP</sup> with Pekko<sup>RCFG</sup> almost equal in popularity. Their inherent wanderlust and love of the many hidden twists and turns of life leads many into reverence of Belon the Wise<sup>BP</sup>, Moccavallo<sup>BG</sup>, Tykee<sup>BG</sup>, or Zors<sup>BG</sup>. Some of the older gypsy-souls are devoted to the traditional Viroeni deities of Mert<sup>DD</sup>, Vionir<sup>BG</sup>, or Lurz-Urcia<sup>LCB</sup>. Very rarely, an evil gypsy-soul might venerate Demogorgon<sup>MM</sup> as the Lord of Fate.

**Male Names:** Gypsy-souls have abandoned the typical naming conventions among halflings in favour of those of the Viroeni. Common male names include Alfonso, Andrej, Baldo, Hanzo, Luca, Marko, Stefan, and Toman.

**Female Names:** Esmara, Eva, Mirella, Nuri, Riva, Tabita, Viola

## Human, Blighted

It is a peculiar facet of the Blight that those who dwell there notice a subtle change over many generations, almost as though their deeds truly become tattooed upon their bodies. This is true in general only for those who have several generations of Castorhage in their kin; those who manage to escape, who throw off the shackles even for a few years, or who by good fortune are somehow immune to this effect are unaffected.

Others are not so lucky, and this kinship manifests in subtle changes within the bodies of those who come from such long lines of locals. For example, those who use their bodies for brute force — the builders, labourers and roofers — can be identified by their peculiarly large hands, or shoulders, or backs. Miners develop wider eyes with larger pupils; chimney sweeps, an unsettling ability to voluntarily dislocate their limbs; nobility may be tainted by generations of envy or lust and have peculiarly



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feral or angered expressions. In general, these changes are not monstrous but are all the more unsettling for their subtlety.

**Physical Description:** Blighted humans are fairly typical of the human folk of western Akados. Their skin tones are usually somewhat pale and range from sallow to ivory to pinkish all the way to the almost pure white of albinism. Whereas most of western Akados tends toward more aquiline features, those of the blighted are usually coarser and somewhat broader. Their hair runs to the same dark browns, auburns, and black of western Akados, and their eyes are a range of blue, grey, blue-grey, bluish-black, dark brown, and pale violet. As noted, their physical features do tend to reflect the sort of occupation their family has held for many generations, though these changes are subtle and fall well within the normal physical morphology found within the population.

**Society:** No single social stratum fits the blighted. They can be from the lowest of the city's gutters to the marbled galleries and halls of the Capitol. In fact, a member of the blighted would not even identify himself as such. Being one of the blighted is not a recognised classification; it is simply a physical reality of those whose families have dwelt in the city-state long enough for physical changes to occur. This is reflected in that the one feature they all truly have in common is their ancestry's long residence within Castorhage.

**Relations:** Like humans elsewhere, the relations of the blighted run the gamut from open integration with other races and cultures to rampant xenophobia and prejudice based on the individual's upbringing and circumstances.

**Alignment and Religion:** The full range of alignment options are commonly found among the blighted. This applies as well to their religious preferences, though they have a higher tendency to follow the religions indigenous to the city of Castorhage as opposed to those of elsewhere in Akados. There are many exceptions to this, however, as the folk of Castorhage includes immigrants from across the world of Lleogyr who have brought their native beliefs with them to their new homes. By far the largest human congregation of any god in Castorhage is that of Mother Grace\*, the city's de facto patroness deity.

**Male Names:** The blighted use the same styles and forms of names as the rest of the citizenry of Castorhage. Their naming conventions do not mark them in any way as different from anyone else.

**Female Names:** Like the males, blighted females share the same naming conventions as the folk of the city around them.

\* See **True Gods of the Blight** below

BG See **LL8: Bard's Gate** by Frog God Games

BP See **LL5: Borderland Provinces** by Frog God Games

CotSK See **LL4: Cults of the Sundered Kingdoms** by Frog God Games

DD See **Dunes of Desolation** by Frog God Games

DMC See **Dead Man's Chest** by Frog God Games/Necromancer Games

GD See **Glades of Death** by Necromancer Games

K2 See **K2: The Diamond Fortress** by Necromancer Games

K9 See **K9: Elemental Moon** by Necromancer Games

LCB See **LL2: The Lost City of Barakus** by Frog God Games

MM See **Mountains of Madness** by Frog God Games

PU See **Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Pathfinder Unchained**

RCFG See **Razor Coast Freebooter's Guide** by Frog God Games

SV See **LL1: Stoneheart Valley** by Frog God Games

TD See **Trouble at Durbenford** by Necromancer Games

UC See **Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Combat**

# New Races

The scourge of the Blight does more than simply twist the essence of those unfortunate enough to live there for generation after generation and create new traits and subtypes of existing races. The Blight also has entirely new races ... or has at least has attracted these otherwise rare races in numbers unknown elsewhere.

## Briny (Half-Skum)

Fishermen spit when they hear the name mentioned — briny, fish-bred — born of a forced union between skum and the wives of men. The humans hate the children that flounder in the streets, children more at home in the cold, dark waters than in the lands of the sun and air. They are children that, they say, have some purpose in being on land; children that remind them of the foul act that created them; children that hate the day, hate the sun, yet are attracted to it, like moths to a flame, their eyes watering painfully as they stare into the glow of the summer orb, praying for someone to turn off the light.

They come from the deep and cold places below, watching the warmth of landmen's wives with greedy eyes, eyes that want to steal. Skum lurk everywhere in this city, and the local strain constantly seek a human mate to take and impregnate. If a skum is not born, the union is cast out — along with the mother — by the skum, who are bound by an ancient ritual not to kill them (some have conjectured that the aboleth expressly forbid such killings to allow their progeny to establish a foothold on land). The women (called “brine mothers” by most folk) often come back — poor, silent creatures that they are, no matter what they were like before. They

always bring back what they have been given, these poor taken wives, but they never tell what they saw, or what happened to them. The given thing is called a briny, and hated although it is, it is well-known amongst the fishermen that to kill the child means to also kill the wife, for many have tried. Many have killed the foul infant in the hope of freeing the wife, only to find her hanged a few days later — always by her own hand.

**Physical Description:** Some are more human than others, but each is deformed in some way, and about a quarter of them slowly change as they age, eventually undergoing a terrible transformation and becoming a skum. However, for a PC, this end can be a long way off, or perhaps it never occurs. They always inherit some aquatic feature: bulging eyes, shreds of wan, scaly skin between fingers or toes, or perhaps an unsettling smell of brine and fish.

**Society:** Briny tend to stick with other briny — it's safer that way, although the more human ones find it fairly easy to blend into society. Some briny even thrive on their appearance and make a living from it in the freakshows and side-stalls of the city.

**Relations:** Many locals are bigoted, and fishermen in particular despise such creatures. This can harden the attitude of a briny, who may become aggressive. They make excellent friends, however, since anyone who overlooks their ancestry is unusual and to be prized. Some people pity the briny, and show them acts of great kindness; many religions in the city happily accept converts to their cause. Briny can procreate with other briny, and do so willingly and regularly in the city, most notably on the Gyre. The resulting offspring is always a briny who does not further transform as it ages and is considered, perhaps, the most blest of the briny by their small society.

**Alignment and Religion:** Although they can have any alignment, briny tend to be neutral, their upbringing making them more self-reliant and less biased toward one school of thought or another. Some briny are unaware of the eventual end fate has in store for them, while others seek to stop the awful



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transformation with devotion and prayer. Communities of briny develop their own religious practices based upon nature or sea, or adopt those of other races to better blend into the societies of which they are a small part. Amongst these, the worship of Brine\* is by far the most common.

**Male Names:** In an effort to blend in, briny often take human names, although those with an inherent favouring of the Aquan language may take a darker name more in keeping with their past.

**Female Names:** Like the males, the less common females also tend to take names from societies in which they find themselves.

\* See **True Gods of the Blight** below

### Coprophagi (Roachfolk)

In a city of social dregs, the coprophagi (or roachfolk as they are more commonly known) are truly the scrapings from the bottom of the barrel. Reviled by all, the roachfolk live almost invisibly within the City-State of Castorhage, restricting their movements and habitats to areas where others wouldn't care to look or to the sheltering darkness of night that hides them from the eyes who might take umbrage at their very existence.

It is thought that roachfolk originally must have hailed from Between or some other vile plane because no records speak of their existence before the rise of the city-state, and they are largely unknown elsewhere on the continent. The fact that they bear a vague resemblance to dwarves, however, speaks of a far closer and more tragic origin, though none amongst the stout folk speaks of such a thing, and they would violently oppose anyone who attempted to lay such a claim. For their part, the coprophagi keep to themselves and avoid contact with others whenever possible for fear or instigating pogroms against their very existence — a circumstance that has occurred more than once in the past. The fact that they continue to survive within the Blight — and in significant numbers — is a testimony to their ruggedness and adaptability.

**Physical Description:** The coprophagi in all ways resemble a humanoid cockroach. They stand erect on two, thick insectile lower legs with two more sets of limbs extending from their torso, a pair of long insect-like arms extending from their flanks midway between waist and shoulder, and a second pair of smaller insectile appendages that extend from their shoulders. Their hide is brown or black and like a carapace in texture and durability, and a larger, thicker carapace extends down their backs from neck to thigh to provide their own natural armour. Their heads are like those of a large roach, with long antennae extending from the front, but they do have an oddly and unexpectedly humanoid shape to them. Some even have feeble beards growing down from their mandibled jaws, giving rise to the rumour of some mysterious dwarven heritage.

**Society:** Roachfolk keep to themselves, their society largely opaque to outsiders. What most do know of them is that they have formed a sort of fraternal order called the Festering Brethren. Of all the roachfolk encountered by other races, it is these who are typically seen and are some of the few who will even go about in the daytime in the view of others. The Festering Brethren largely cover their bodies in rags and winding clothes like lepers, though it does not disguise their insectoid shapes, and many even carry a curved staff with a small bell on the end that rings as they use it to walk. Also like that of a leper, these staves are intended to give the other folk of Castorhage warning that a member of the Festering Brethren approaches so they have the opportunity to relocate elsewhere if they wish to avoid being in the presence of the roachfolk.

**Relations:** Roachfolk are tolerated at best and are unwelcome in most establishments within the city. They lack the stigma of true vermin borne by the night-slugs but nevertheless are treated little better. Outside the city, they are likely to be viewed as a monster and a threat. No law in Castorhage requires the coprophagi to use the bell-staves — though some insist that it is only a matter of time — and the rampant pacifism that the Festering Brethren tend to display certainly helps that situation. Despite their peacefulness, though, the coprophagi are willing to defend themselves, and the Festering Brethren in particular have proven on many occasions to be capable combatants, further discouraging outright acts of violence against their race. Of all races, the mongrelfolk are most sympathetic of the coprophagi, and might perhaps even be distant relations to the roachfolk.

**Alignment and Religion:** Roachfolk are survivors and have little use for religion. They tend toward neutrality, and their actions are typically those necessary to get by each day. That said, few roachfolk are chaotic



because they have learned that to provoke the populace of the Blight with their actions is to invite their own extermination. The Festering Brethren in particular are an order dedicated to Zors<sup>BG</sup>, the Hanged Man, albeit in a much more lawful aspect than that with which that demigod is usually associated. The majority of coprophagi within the city worship either Mother Grace\* or Sister Shadows\*. There is a secretive minority, however, who cling to the prophecies of The Horseman\* as they time when their race will rise above all others.

**Male or Female Names:** The names of the coprophagi are unpronounceable to most humanoid tongues. They, therefore, habitually take simple names borrowed from the predominant cultures around them irrespective of gender or meaning. However, they hold no special connection to these names and frequently take a new name whenever they next must deal with folk who are not of their own kind. Some common names include Abe, Ban, Bell, Bob, Cane, Cob, Dock, Duke, Guv, Jud, Lob, Lord, Mab, Nob, Pod, Prince, Queen, Rose, and Tune.

\* See **True Gods of the Blight** below

### Night-Slug

None is as naturally capable of the fine art of breaking and entering as the night-slug. Fortunately for society, few are also as cowardly. Night-slugs maintain their existence simply by avoiding notice. Sometimes called the Tunnel People by the few folk of Castorhage that run across them in the endless sewer channels beneath the city, these elusive creatures often reside in small crawlspaces or even the hollows between the outer masonry and inner plaster and lathe of a house. They are capable of maneuvering their bodies through seemingly impossible spaces. Those among their number who are not lucky enough to acquire such grand accommodations typically live in places that allow them to avoid notice — the city dump, a gable hanging over a small alleyway, and so forth.

**Physical Description:** Night-slugs have a humanoid structure with blotch-grey skin bearing randomly arranged tufts of muddy-brown hair.

Their arms are thin and elongated, hanging limply at their sides, and they seem to possess little if any muscle tone in general. Their ligaments and tendons are exceptionally elastic, allowing a night-slug to elongate its arms and legs, in the process pulling what muscle it has closer to its frame. In addition, night-slugs have a “collapsible” skeleton; its bones are composed primarily of cartilage, allowing the creature to squeeze into incredibly small areas. A typical night-slug stands around 3-1/2 feet tall and weighs 40 pounds.

**Society:** Night-slugs are true scavengers living on the fringes of the societies of others. They usually prefer densely populated urban areas for the increased number of hiding places and resources from which to scrounge their needs. Most night-slugs are loners because of the limited resources available to them, mated couples rarely staying together beyond the birth of a brood of whimps (as their young are called), and mothers generally abandoning their young as soon as they reach maturity after 3 years.

**Relations:** While most humanoid despise night-slugs and find their presence loathsome, few actually fear the creatures. More than one urban goodwife has walked into a room of her house at night to find a night-slug crouched in the corner chewing on a lace table runner and staining the rug with its noxious skin secretions. While the typical reaction certainly includes a scream, rather than flight it just as often concludes with her grabbing a broom and chasing the creature until it manages to squeeze back through a crack in the baseboards to the safety of the inner walls. In some cities plagued by these creatures, there is an entire industry for exterminators hired to enter homes and buildings to clear out night-slug infestations. The only race that could truly be said to hold empathy for the night-slugs are the wretched mongrelfolk on the rare occasions when the two peoples cross paths.

**Alignment and Religion:** Night-slugs are not particularly intelligent and typically exist at a subsistence level with little drive or idea of improving themselves. As such, their alignment is almost always neutral though exceptions do exist, of course. In general night-slugs are not religious and devote little time or energy in contemplation of the gods. As such, there is no religion that could be said to be typical of night-slugs, and most follow no religion at all.

**Names:** As loners and outcasts, most night-slugs don't bother with names at all. Their lack of interaction with most others prevents any sort of need for one. A night-slug identifies everyone as either “self” or “other/danger.” Of the few that do take names, they are usually a single word — bereft of context — borrowed from another language or a monosyllabic name that sounds pleasing to a particular night-slug's ear. They make no distinction between male or female names. Examples include Bloo, Fancy, Glugh, Plop, Spoon, and Tater.

## Swyne

*“Lord, why can't I get a decent tailor these days? Adjust my cravat, idiot; can't you see it's crooked? How can I go to the lodge dressed like a human? I hope they have those succulent kidneys tonight, the ones that they serve just lightly toasted with sugar. They have fine food at the lodge — not that you'd know about the finer things in life. We'll drink the finest Crava from crystal and eat our fill before talking business over cabb'e and hookahs filled with the finest tobacco and insectum money can buy. We'll trade millions tonight, you know? Millions! Can you imagine a million? I thought not. That's the trouble with humans — no imagination, and little appreciation for the finer things in life — little appreciation of anything, in fact.”*

Pleasure, pleasure, and pleasure: the three “P's” of swyne philosophy. A swyne lives to enjoy, to eat the finest food, to romance the most beautiful people, to plunder the greatest treasures. A swyne is a voyeur, a pleasure-seeker, a lothario. They do anything and everything to ensure that they get the most out of life.

In essence a humanoid pig, the swyne is usually fat, sallow-eyed, and hungover from excess. Dressed in the best he can buy, a swyne gets what he can out of life — as often and as plentifully as possible. Roughly human in size and shape — and with all the foibles and interests that accompanies — the swyne are often mistaken for fat humans from a distance, until their snouts and piggy eyes come closer into view. Swyne tend to stick together, and refer to each other as brother or sister hog.



**Physical Description:** Some swyne can pass for human; so subtle are their porcine features. Others resemble humanoid pigs, with hoggish features, clumsy hands, and squealing laughter. They all tend to be fat (a result of enjoying as much fine food as they can, as often as they can), and prone to being clumsy; their porcine ancestry runs deep, and occasionally shows itself in their eating habits.

**Society:** Swyne stick together. A swyne almost always helps another swyne in trouble, often with the benefit of a considerable lecture on the error of their ways and how the suffering swyne in question should follow the path of his benefactor, whatever that path may be. Swyne live for excess, and have developed many guilds of their own to band together to ensure mutual benefit — providing, of course, that the benefit is primarily their own. The swyne have developed thousands of clubs related to excess and pleasure, the most famous of which are the Hedonists, a group perpetually related to dark rumours of excess, torture, and cruelty over enormously excessive luncheons.

**Relations:** Everyone has his uses, and a swyne judges life by the number of associates he has. Their selfish natures tend to make true friendships rare but incredibly close; a swyne friend is one for life, but a swyne associate cannot be trusted. Swyne deeply admire the banking gnomes of the city, and many close associations have and do take place across the city. They consider elves to be flighty and unpredictable, dwarves miserable, and half-orcs repulsive. They like a halfling's appetite and admire the human capacity for vice. They take great offence at being likened to pigs, and often refer to other humanoid races as monkeys as a riposte if so insulted.

**Alignment and Religion:** Swyne religions are based around acquisition: be it monetary, rare objects, land, property, or any other such avarice. Porfask\*, the Swyne God of Wine-cellars is one; Hork\*, Goddess of Musk, another. Of course, Mammon\* has the greatest share of worshippers among the race and has been adopted into the swyne pantheon — whether he is aware of it or not. To many races, the swyne gods seem trivial in their focus; to a swyne, they are divine in their singular greed.

**Male Names:** Boarbrand, Bogslob, Grund, Gork, Hobb, Hogwell, Hoglard, Pikskin

**Female Names:** Asparagus, Cauliflower, Cupling, Ladywell, Lettuce, Pigmella, Porcinia, Porflower, Sugary, Winscent, Winseed.

\* See **True Gods of the Blight** below

# True Gods of the Blight

While the “gods” of the Blight are a constant presence in the minds of many Castorhagers and even occasionally walk the street, there are still countless other older deities whose names are invoked on a daily — sometimes momentary — basis. These gods have their own local names, but as with any icons, scholars have surmised that many are only local aspects of more widely named or quoted gods. The more commonly revered gods of the Blight are listed here, but in a city so large, it seems that whatever god, saint, or angel one worships, there is bound to be a shrine to them somewhere.

Many of the main deities presented below appear in other areas of the Lost Lands as well. However, their complete description covering those other representations is not included. Rather, the list here details them in a shortened version based on their relevance to the Blight itself.

## Baphomet (Greater God [Demon Lord])

### The Rage Storm; Demon Lord of Anarchy, Beasts, and Anger

While revered in a more urbane and civilized manner in some other lands, in the Blight this demon lord is a god of fire, of the raging storm and the thunder and lightning who destroys. Even his more civilized followers who meet in secret cabals for their carefully hidden dark rituals revel in the destruction he promises to bring to the world. Hymns to Baphomet speak of the End of Days, the coming Apocalypse, or the ruin of the world through anarchy. Of late, rumours among Baphomet's faithful speak of a new weapon wielded by the Royal Navy, a powerful new advancement that has seen limited use only in the far colonial corners of the empire. When they whisper of this tantalizing new development, they use only one word: ragefire.

Baphomet previously appeared in *LL4: Cults of the Sundered Kingdoms* by Frog God Games.

## Brine (Greater God)

### Ocean's Anger; Fish-Brother; God of Sea and Unsea

One day, Brine's worshippers say, the world will be swallowed by a vast tidal wave that will wipe it clean and create it anew as has happened many times before. Until such time, those who worship and work the sea give offerings to the god and the creatures that live from it seeking their favour. To the briny race in particular, Brine is held as patron and a sort of protective older brother that sees to their needs and promises them a new life of justice and equality once the wicked world that they live in finally passes away.

## Father Canker (Lesser God)

### Brother Choke; The Silent Assassin; God of Poison, Silence and Smog

He is at your window, he swallows the breath of your children as he chokes them, sobbing as he does. Father Canker seems to be a god wholly of Casterhagi origin. He represents the ever-present danger to be found in the noxious fumes of the Canker and the choking smog of the city. Jack's

Candle is said to be his manifestation. Father Canker is not so much revered as placated, and many beggars and those forced to live in the lowest parts of the city along the banks of Sister Lyme where the mists rise highest and the sea breezes are at their weakest live in constant fear of the choking miasma that can come without warning and leave all it encounters dead where they lay. Parents of young children who die of crib death, the Canker's suffocating fumes, or virtually any other cause often see Father Canker as the protector of their lost child's soul and make votive offerings into the Great Lyme River during their grieving period, a time that can sometimes last years or decades. The authorities sometimes have to keep a careful watch for these activities on days when there is a high fire danger on the river.

There is a local rumour — or fairy tale — that floats around Castorhage. Some people say that Brother Choke has a weakness, that he is afraid of birdsong. Whether there is any truth in that, many locals keep a canary in their homes hopefully to ward him away. They have come to know that when the bird stops singing, he is at hand, and it is time leave quickly.

## Geryon (Arch-Devil)

### The Liar; The Great Serpent; Lord of the Fifth; Patron of Betrayal and Deceit

The arch-devil Geryon is the Great Serpent and master of the Fifth Circle of Hell where he rules from a great iron fortress. He commands many followers in the city who seek his favour through lying in his name and to further his cause. Many of Geryon's faithful are casual followers who seek his blessing only to cover their dishonest dealings and have determined that such efforts made to his glory are less likely to be discovered for the falsehoods they are. For his part, Geryon does not care whether his followers are formal worshippers or mortal fools who inadvertently bring him power. The majority of his formal worshippers in the city are mongrelfolk (those with reptilian heritage are considered particularly blessed) who seek to curry his favour and use their natural aptitude for deception and obfuscation to further his cause.

Geryon's formal worshippers revere serpents of all kinds, and lizardfolk are found throughout the city who serve his cause. The inphidians of the



city who worship Hassith-Kaa seek out the reptilian peoples who venerate the Liar and seek to exterminate them at any cost. Geryon's most devout followers are called Serpent Masters and must sign a pact of evil with him to obtain greater power.

Geryon previously appeared in *The Tome of Horrors Complete* by Frog God Games.

## Jubilex (Demon Lord)

### The Faceless Lord; Lord of Corruption and Decay; Demon Lord of Slimes and Oozes

The Faceless Lord is a powerful demon lord, sometimes worshipped as a deity, though it does not generally behave as such. It is considered by its worshippers to be chaos personified and a return to a simpler, purer state of existence. Jubilex is said to sow chaos and discord throughout the planes, though it is possible these are simply the instinctive actions of a mindless monstrosity rather than a calculated stratagem. It is doubtful that Jubilex even recognizes that it has worshippers, or cares.

Disliked even by other demons lords, Jubilex is often depicted as an enormous amorphous blob with eyes in random locations that spews forth foul and deadly slimes of many varieties. During a dispute with the dwarven god Dwerfater thousands of years ago, Jubilex was imprisoned in some hidden location rumoured to be on the Material Plane and the world of Lloegy. His physical absence has not seemed to affect his few deranged cultists over this time, and if his name has been forgotten to the point of being little more than a whispered rumour in the world, then it likely has only helped his cult to remain hidden from the powers that would otherwise seek to destroy it.

The Faceless Lord is the ruler of slimes and oozes, things that slip beneath the streets of the Blight and find an ideal setting for birthing and growing his kin and progeny. He is also the Lord of Decay and is said to slither the streets of the Blight at night by his mad faithful. His followers are called Masters (or Mistresses) of the Ooze, and they often sacrifice a limb to green slime to gain their lord's favours. They are feared by even the vilest things in the city for their cruelty.

Jubilex previously appeared in *LL4: Cults of the Sundered Kingdoms*, *The Tome of Horrors Complete*, and *Marshes of Malice* by Frog God Games, and *G5: Chaos Rising* by Necromancer Games.

## Lord Shingles (Lesser God)

### The Shadow on the Rooftop; Sovereign of the Heights; God of Builders, Gables, Rooftops, and the Sky

No city has a skyline like Castorhage, so it is no surprise that the city's unique rooftop culture with its ubiquitous features and threats should spawn an awe in the people who live and work upon it. It is possible that Lord Shingles was originally just an obscure sky deity or perhaps some lesser builder deity associated with Dre'uain the Lame, but whatever the case, something about the Blight's urban sprawl and ever-more precarious skyward expansion called out for a God of the Heights, and one appeared. He is sometimes glimpsed at dusk and dawn, and there are many gablemaesters and spider-hunters who have claimed to have spent time with the god, though none can remember any details with which to describe him, other than that he feared no precipice or drop and somehow made them feel strangely calm and safe as well. Oddly, many thieves pay him heed and make offerings on rooftops for luck in their second-story endeavours, flowers, coins, and personal possessions, and the gables and spires of the Blight are festooned with his shrines.

## Lucifer (Greater God Arch-Devil)

### Prince of Darkness; Prince of Lies; The Adversary; The Prince of Light; Lord of Infernus; The Falling Tower; Satan

The Prince of Darkness is worshiped by countless in the city, and many good people have been tempted by lust or greed or hunger into serving him. In fact, his worship is so insidious that there's no way to determine what their true numbers might be. However, the astute and very observant are aware that many symbols of other divinities (deities and arch-devils alike) are usurped and used in worship to the Prince of Lies, and doubtless many prayers so intended for other powers fall pleasingly upon his ears in Infernus instead. Though not much is known about any organized cult of Lucifer, his most devout followers, the Dark Cardinals, bear marks of the touch of their master. Sometimes this mark may be a simple blemish, other times it is a change of body into something monstrous, bestial and lustful.

Lucifer previously appeared in *The Tome of Horrors Complete* by Frog God Games.

## Mammon (Arch-Devil)

### Lord of Avarice; Lord of the Third

Perhaps the most commonly invoked god of Castorhage, Mammon is said to be interested only in the spreading of his own name and that even his name is a lie. It is said Mammon's name is pronounced in the clink of every coin and the cry of every slave. If there is something that generates income, directly or indirectly, Mammon has a hand in it at some level. Mammon is invoked by those who wish for good luck and fortune, as well as those in power or those who have nothing. His touch caresses priest and pauper, queen and whore alike and brings to all dreams of limitless wealth and power. Worship of Mammon is somewhat unique in that there are relatively few followers of Mammon who revere him as their primary deity but a great many who invoke him on the side in order to achieve success in some financial endeavour. Even the good-aligned followers of gods of good are not immune to the temptation to beseech Mammon's blessing from time to time. As a relatively shadowy figure, even in the politics of Hell where he is lord of an entire Circle, Mammon seems to prefer this pseudo-anonymity.

## Mithras (Greater God)

### Lord Storm; The Battle; The Soldier-God; Mithrae Invicto; God of War, Battles, and Soldiers

The great Cult of Mithraism is one of the most widespread religions in the world. The universal appeal as the god of all soldiers and roots that predate even the Legions of Hyperborea when his worship was first spread far and wide make Mithras perhaps the most commonly revered god in the Lost Lands. He brings luck in battle, he is the parting mist, the coming storm, the changing wind; he aids those who trust to him. That he is principally a god of soldiers — and soldiers only — is probably all that prevents the cult from becoming the dominant religion in the world.

Founded in the early days of Hyperborea, the soldiery of Castorhage is no exception to the god's wide appeal. However, his cult takes on a slightly different edge, perhaps, in the naturally blighted surrounds of the city-state. In Castorhage, Mithras is revered more as the unstoppable victor in battle as opposed to the honourable warrior. He is often referred to as Old Iron Hand or Lord Storm among the Royal Army, and his worship within the city's military is encouraged and in some cases compulsory. The Cult of Mithraism outside Castorhage has looked askance at that city's branch for some time and often see it as a tainted form of worship. Every few years there is always talk of excommunicating the Castorhage sect, though the Heliodromus of Mithras has quashed such talk on every

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occasion so far. However, troubling rumours coming out of the Libynosi colonies of high-grade Casterhager cult members siding with followers of the barbaric war god Thursis in battle may at least be the straw that breaks the back of the Soldier-Gods cult in the Blight. Whether this is true or not remains to be seen, but many Paters and Coraces of Mithras across Akados wait expectantly to see what sort of decree may come down from the Heliodromus.

Mithras previously appeared in *LL3: Sword of Air* by Frog God Games.

### Mother Grace (Greater God)

*The Holy Mother; Mother of All;  
Goddess of Family, Order, and Tradition*

The most widely worshipped god in the City-State of Castorhage, the shrines, churches and cathedrals outnumber those of other gods by a dozen to one and are unequalled in their magnificence. Mother Grace is the goddess of the Royal Family and the official religion of the State. Other gods, saints, and religious figures are tolerated, and yet even this tolerance is occasionally tested with persecutions launched by the religious leaders of Mother Grace's church with the backing of the Crown. Crusades on foreign shores — especially in and around Castorhage's many overseas colonies — are regular and by no means driven by goodness, with many similar activities occurring on a smaller scale locally. Pillaging Between in her name, burning witches to her glory, and assorted murder and mayhem under the auspices of divine authority are her all-too-regular consorts. Throughout all of it, only one thing matters: order.

Outside of Castorhage and its colonial possessions, Mother Grace is a very intriguing goddess. For despite her clear and present power as a major divinity and her near monopoly on religious influence throughout Castorhage's empire, she is virtually unknown beyond its boundaries. Nowhere else can be found organized congregations or temples in the name of Mother Grace, and no known culture or ethnicity lays claim to her origins. Her religion seems to have appeared as if from nothing at some point early in the creation of Castorhage, and went on to obtain and keep a position of religious supremacy. Some learned scholars hypothesize that her church in Castorhage may represent some organized remnant of the prehistoric deity once revered almost universally among early humans and known usually as only The Goddess. But even that is base speculation derived from little more than her apparent affinity for humans and a vague resemblance between the shape of the head of her distaff in religious depictions and the ancient imagery of the Tesseract long associated with worship of The Goddess. What truth may lie in this connection has yet to be definitively determined.

### Papyri (Demigod)

*The Archivist; The Quiet One;  
The Lost Apprentice; The Thoughtful  
Silence; Goddess of the Written Word*

The quiet Papyri is seldom depicted in religious art, but when she is, it is always as a studious, unassuming woman hunched over a scribe's lectern. Her true name is unknown, and she is now named for the earliest medium associated with her worship. The church of Papyri claims that Papyri was originally apprenticed to Yenomesh, the ancient God of Glyphs and Writing. Papyri doctrine states that she served Yenomesh since the beginning of his creation of writing but either ran away or was banished by him for unknown reasons after discovering something among his writings. For their part, the followers of Yenomesh deny any such association.

She is invoked by those who hunger for knowledge at any cost, and the greatest tenets of her church is that all knowledge is neutral (no matter how much harm could be caused by those who misuse it) and that all knowledge should be preserved by the constant creation of new copies. Throughout history this has been accomplished by virtual

armies of painstaking scribes, though with the modern innovation of the printing press in Castorhage this tedious practice has been largely relegated to the typesetters who need only assemble a book's words once. Despite her seemingly benign focus on scholarship and education, Papyri's support of unregulated knowledge acquisition can often lead her adherents onto paths that culminate in exposure to dark truths and darker gods. For those with a greater understanding of the Quiet One, they know her consorts are gods of madness, things without names, and fey gods of old that have been imprisoned and should never again see the light of sun. The liturgy of her faithful, however, is that the knowledge of Papyri is a shield for those who would use it, and those who would use the knowledge are likewise a shield for its preservation. It is whispered that many of the highest-placed members of the almost-mythological Fraternal Order of the Secret Flame.

### Sister Shadows (Demigod)

*The Unseen; Goddess of Alleys, Streets,  
Piers, and Pathways*

In a city contorted by countless pathways and alleys, this goddess's name is said almost as widely as Mother Grace's. Her name is uttered by those who walk the broadest streets to those who dwell beneath the rankiest piers closest to the Kiss of the Lyme and who have to "dance daily with Sister Lyme," an old Blight phrase meaning to fall into the Great Lyme River, an act that is often a person's last.

Largely unknown outside the Blight, some suppose Sister Shadow to be an aspect or divine servant of the shadow goddess Mirkeer. However, despite The Unseen's similar affinity to the dark corners of the world, their similarity ends there. Sister Shadow is not a deity of the night and nefarious dealings in shadow, she represents the endless shadows, nooks, and crannies and the endless possibilities they represent for survival, success, and even satisfaction. She is a goddess of not only those innumerable hordes that dwell within the corners of the city, but the potential that the city represents for those same people she embraces. Many folk see her simply as a goddess of thieves and street gangs, but those who truly revere her see her as protector and inspiration for their lives and the chance — however slight it may be — to better them.

### The Ash Queen (Greater God [Outer God])

*Queen of Whores; The Hunger;  
Goddess of Lust, Nature, and Witchcraft*

The Queen of Whores and the eldest god, The Ash Queen's name is screamed by hunters as they take their prey and courtesans as they take their lovers. She is all things lust and like all hungers, can be a force of good — of the creation of life — but also of evil — betrayal, lies, and perversions. And sometimes there is less than a knife blade's thickness of difference between the two. The Ash Queen is savagery and the wanton celebration of Nature at its most brutal and unrestrained. Her rites are usually performed at night under a new moon and starlit skies and involve orgiastic feasts accompanied by wild music and ecstatic dancing. The priests and priestesses, who are said to be unusually fanatical, are naked but for smears of thick marsh mud, clotted blood, and the placental blood and tissues of recently birthed animals or even humanoids when available. For those who follow the Queen of Whores and are sane enough to realize it, her worship and religion are merely a thinly veiled front for the mad cult of the goddess and Outer God, Shupnikkurat

Shupnikkurat previously appeared in *Dunes of Desolation* and *Marshes of Malice* by Frog God Games and *Ancient Kingdoms: Mesopotamia* by Necromancer Games.

## The Horseman (Greater God [Daemon Lord])

*End of Days; Lord of Disease;  
Supreme of Daemons; The  
Oinodaemon*

“The end is nigh!” proclaim his followers. The End of Days is here, and soon the Horseman shall ride down upon the city to reap his harvest. He will turn his four faces upon all, laying the city low with his disease, burning its ruins to ashes, and starving the handful that have the ill fortune to survive. His name is Death and his only promise is ruin and destruction. Outside the city of Castorhage, The Horseman goes by his more commonly known name: the Oinodaemon. His ultimate goal is to bring ruin upon all mortals, and he is patient in his efforts. Though only the insane favour The Horseman’s worship, all peoples fear his inevitable arrival.

The Oinodaemon previously appeared in *The Tome of Horrors Complete* by Frog God Games and *K2: The Doom of Listonshire* and *H1: The Bonegarden* by Necromancer Games.

## The Gods of the Swyne

It is difficult to categorize the gods worshipped among the race known as the swyne\* as a true pantheon, just as it is difficult to categorize them as even true gods. Nevertheless, these deities find veneration among the swyne population and seem to be capable of granting spells to clerics who worship them, so they are included here in abbreviated format. In truth, they seem less like an actual pantheon and seem more like lesser godlings or powerful outsiders that managed to find a home for their extremely specific and limited areas of influence and simply latched onto whatever veneration they could. Commonly recognized swyne gods include Hork, Goddess of Musk, and Porfask, God of Wine Cellars.

\* See **New Races** above





# The Blight

## Player's Guide Appendix

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### A Blight Lexicon

Many terms and phrases are commonly used in the Blight that may be less well known beyond its crowded streets. A sampling of some of these terms is provided below that you can use to sprinkle throughout your game to add a measure of local flavour to the NPCs.

**Æ** – abbreviation of ævum, meaning “Age at Time of Death” (High Boros)

**Ancients, The** — giant and monstrous creatures of prehistory sometimes found in fossilised remains in the vicinity of Castorhage; more proper term is “Leviathans”

**Astromancer** — magical practitioner who combines astrology with the physical laws of astronomy (common term outside of Castorhage as well)

**Bibliomerchant** — BookTown bookseller

**Blight, The** — city of Castorhage, usually disparaging

**Blighter** — resident of Castorhage, always disparaging

**Boater** — water-gypsy boatman, usually Viroeni or halfling

**Burke** — to smother

**Canker, The** — thick fogs that arise off the river and envelop parts of the city that have a reputation for choking the life from the sleeping, the weak and the helpless

**Coolie** — a servant/labourer (usually indentured)

**Corner-Doxy** — a street prostitute; a harlot (usually cheap)

**Costermonger** — also hawker or screecher; a street vendor

**Deadbook, The** — death, usually by murder or other violence; to be “put in the Deadbook” is to be killed

**Esquire** — common title of gentry, barristers, and the well-to-do; often shortened to Squire

**Fetch, The** — secret undead inhabitants of the city serving the vampire-god Beltane

**Fireman** — a labourer employed to stoke the furnaces of manufactories or seagoing vessels with steam-driven paddle wheels

**Flagonfist** — a tavern server (common term outside of Castorhage as well)

**Gablemaester** — folk employed to patrol the rooftops of the city and keep the worst of the vermin and riffraff under control

**Ghat** — river temple composed of stone steps, of Jaata origin

**Gill** — a quarter pint

**Gong** — night soil wastes thrown into the gutter

**Gong Farmer** — a night soil collector who pushes a cart along the street each morning

**Great Dark** — unexplored subterranean realms below the Underneath

**Hege** — adjectival demonym for something of Xi'en manufacture or tradition, short for Xi'en Hegemony (usually used in Castorhage for items of Gtsang origin as well)

**Insectum** — addictive insect-based drugs used by many in Castorhage

**Jack's Candle** — a rumoured part of the Canker thought to be intelligent and responsible for burking many of its victims

**Knackers-Yard** — also knackery; a slaughterhouse for horses and other animals that have been retired due to age or infirmity and are intended for rendering rather than consumption

**Knight of the City (K.C.)** — a minor and relatively obscure noble title occasionally bestowed by the Queen or Crown Justices

**Legalese** — also turnees; the minor legal clerks employed by the courts and barristers for the endless paperwork and procedure of the Courts and particularly BookTown

**Little Sis** — also sis; a gold shekel (1 gp)

**Lowfolk** — primary commoner caste of the city

**Lych Field** — cemetery

**Made, The** — commonly encountered forms of lesser undead and constructs cheaply made and used for mindless labour

**Milliner** — a maker of women's boots

**Mortimata** — also mortomata; simple automata made of flesh and bone and muscle preserved and animated by alchemy and/or necromancy

**Navy** — a labourer employed in construction of a road or canal

**Old Ones** — semi-mythical ancient peoples thought responsible for leaving stone circles and cave paintings behind, often conflated with Ancient Ones/Andøvan culture

**Physiker** — a physician, a doctor; a professor employed as a private tutor (common term outside of Castorhage as well)

**Pil** — a silver pilaster (1 sp)

**Prahu-Punter** — also punter; narrowboat pilots of the Lyme and the Sinks hired to ferry passengers and renowned for their singing ability

**Punkahwallah** — a servant employed to manually operate a punkah ceiling fan; a practice originally imported from Far Jaati

**Punter** — also prahu-punter (see above); a patron of prostitutes (derogatory)

**Queen's Men** — officers of the City Watch

**Sadhu** — a holy man, likely of Jaata origin

**Savant** — high-ranking university professor position

**Steeplejack** — a worker specialised in constructing or repairing steeples and other precarious roof features

**Tanner** — a copper common (1 cp)

**Triad** — a Xi'en criminal organization or thieves' guild

**Tongawallah** — driver of rickshaws and handcarts

**Tout** — a street seller who pesters and cajoles passers-by

**UnderMaester** — local ward political position appointed by parish watch commanders

**Urger** — a person who sells horseracing tips on the street

**Waggoner** — a book of nautical charts and notes

**Wynds** — winding, often steep alleys of the city

**Yīshī** — honorary Xaon title for the mistress of an apothecary

## Common Names of The Blight

After determining the types of friends above, names should be selected for these friends. Lists of names are provided below for males, females, and surnames. These are examples of typical human names found within the Blight. There are many more names to found within the city, but these can serve as a guide for capturing the feel of the average names spoken on the streets and in the gin houses of the city.

### Male Names

Barbel	Joshua	Sorrel
Bathsedomil	Kale	Spurge
Bedomile	Kotlin	Sturgeon
Borage	Loam	Tanner
Breck	Longhorn	Toadflax
Carbuncle	Luther	Tog
Carder	Natter	Tomlin
Cleg	Mab	Turnip
Cole	Mox	Turnstone
Crig	Oscar	Tussock
Droll	Padge	Uriah
Ekrin	Pleasant	Weald
Flax	Quarrel	Weld
Gideon	Qogg	Welt
Grund	Rudge	Woad
Henbit	Seth	Wrack
Jacob	Silas	Wryneck

### Female Names

Ancona	Elisa	Mercy
Bernice	Elisabeth	Murnifell
Blackberry	Ettie	Nan
Briney	Fogou	Nightscent
Broom	Grace	Poppy
Brudella	Happiness	Primrose
Bunting	Hazel	Rull
Buttercup	Hemp	Shanny
Catkin	Hempy	Shanny
Celeress	Hope	Sheepsbit
Chastity	Hornet	Tansy
Chen	Humriller	Teasel
Constance	Ivy	Thenna
Curlew	Juniper	Uneria
Dandelion	Katkin	Vellia
Dulse	Lettuce	Weft
Ella	Mallow	Zydora

### Surnames

Alderfly	Grindylow	Pumple
Bedstraw	Gutter	Rake
Blackfly	Hartwill	Rast
Blackhemp	Hogweed	Rowgate
Bladderwort	Humpless	Sedge
Botfly	Kumblecramps	Slyne
Brompton	Kumblekumble	Sough
Butterly	Linton	Stoat
Catchpenny	Lucksikard	Stotter
Cornuwell	Mine	Tangle
Cotter	Mowthorpe	Thornholme
Crump	Mumblechump	Tredge
Crush	Mumpsy	Troff
Dogerell	Pedimine	Turnkey
Flixton	Podge	Wodge
Frim	Pollard	Wold
Grindalythe	Porter	Zander



# The Blight

Richard Pett's Crooked City

## Player's Guide

The Blight Player's Guide provides system neutral information for players about the city known as the Blight, its environs, its various districts, its peoples and personages.

This book is entirely player friendly and provides an easy way for players to play characters from the city or visitors who have taken the time to get to know the place without the GM having to read page after page of exposition text. The perfect accessory for GMs to give to their players to launch them into a Blight campaign. The book includes the city poster map stripped of GM tags so that it is safe for players to peruse at their leisure as they make their way through the crooked city of the Blight.

Crack open the pages of this player's guide and dive right in,  
because you've such entered the wrong side of town . . .

### Warning!

This product contains materials that may not be suitable for all audiences.  
It is recommended for use by individuals age 13 and older.



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