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Strained Allegiance

The Witches are not the unified front that their victims and foes often believe. Each has her own agenda and pursues it—directly or through her minions—even at the expense of her peers. Regardless of any Witch's particular goal, Morden's citizens are inevitably the ones who suffer the most through their pursuit. When Witches come into conflict with one another, the potential for destruction becomes far greater. As they unleash their darkest powers, the earth trembles and transforms, leaving a wake of destruction.

In an unusual turn of events, the Gorgon has chosen to enlist mortal agents in her feud with the Dark Queen. The full reasons for her request remain a mystery, but the information she shares is earnest and her offer to cooperate is sincere. Melusine wishes to see Hecate removed from Morden. She is willing to make concessions to the region's mortal inhabitants—including Accursed belonging to the Order of the Penitent—if they assist her. This alliance of convenience could lead to a tremendous opportunity for the Order, but it is not without risk.

Campaign Integration

This adventure assumes that the characters have been fighting the Witches for some time. It is recommended that the Witchmarked be at least Veteran level before attempting the scenario.

Strained Allegiances can have a significant impact on Morden's politics and demographics. It may play out best as an adventure set after the events of *A New Compact* (see *Accursed* p. 140).

Dark Queen's Gambit concludes with a chest that may contain a book implicating Melusine in the Djinn's disappearance. If the heroes have previously played this adventure and the GM selected that outcome, the fallout from the revelation could further enhance the Gorgon's desire for vengeance against Hecate.

If the heroes have previously played through *Fall of the Tower*, it may be necessary to substitute a different character for the leader of the Order of the Penitent or to hold the meeting somewhere other than Massif Helsenn. In this case, the Gorgon's agent might approach the heroes directly. St. Stephen's Basilica in Palmyria could be a good alternative site for the meeting.

Adventure Summary

The scenario opens when the Gorgon sends an envoy to meet with the Order of the Penitent. Melusine's loathing of the Dark Queen has prompted her to take action to remove her from Morden. To insure success, she is now willing to work with the Order. The envoy—an echidna bane, named Leda—reveals that the Oubliette is more than just Hecate's fortress, it also binds her and her Witchline to Morden. Further, she explains that the fortress's connection to the physical world is fragile. A series of five curses with physical and mystical links hold it in place. If three of those links can be disrupted, the Oubliette would crumble, and Hecate would be banished from Morden. The Gorgon is willing to take responsibility for severing one of the links if the Order assumes responsibility for the other two.

The second act presents the procedures involved in sundering several of the previously described links. The heroes and the Order are presumed to divide the task, so that the player characters only confront one of these. Each poses its own set of challenges.

The final act occurs after three links have been severed. The heroes confront a shard of Hecate as she attempts to restore the broken link. If they can stop her, Morden is cleansed of her influence. However, if they fail, the Witch turns her full attention to those who have sought to defeat her.

Adventure Background

The Dark Queen and the Gorgon were rivals long before the dawn of the Bane War. Throughout the invasion of Morden, the two refused to cooperate with one another. This rivalry extended to their banes and the Accursed under their command. At times, their animosity even erupted into open conflict. To mitigate this, their forces seldom battled within the same fronts, as the Crone had no patience for such distractions.

After the Grand Coven was sundered, Hecate grew in importance among her peers. Her role of facilitator between the different Witches carried a degree of prestige. In contrast, the Gorgon's cautious nature and tendency to act from secrecy left her isolated. Through the years, Melusine's resentment of Hecate grew to an all consuming rage.

The Gorgon has reached her breaking point. She pursues a path to remove Hecate from Morden. By all appearances, she cares little for the consequences this might have for herself or for the other Witches and banes that inhabit the region. This could present a tremendous opportunity for the Order of the Penitent—or it could be an indication that there are hidden factors at play.

Act I: Unlikely Allies

The adventure opens with the heroes undertaking a meeting with Melusine's representative (Leda, an echidna) at Massif Helsenn. Victor Von Drake is also present to negotiate upon behalf of the Order of the Penitent. The heroes are in attendance to protect the Order's commander and to offer their input on the meeting. To open the adventure, read or paraphrase the following:

Planning this meeting took weeks of slow and contentious negotiations, but the time has finally arrived. You are meeting with Victor Von Drake—Commander of the Order of the Penitent—and Leda, an echidna who is believed to be one of the Gorgon's senior banes. The meeting is intended to discuss the potential for a temporary alliance between these two factions. The very notion seems absurd, but if it is possible, it could grant the Order a significant edge in future conflicts. One that might even lead to freedom from the Witches or the removal of a curse.

In the lead up to the meeting, Von Drake made it clear that he values your input. While he is more than capable of making his own decisions, he acknowledges that you have spent more time in the field in recent years. He wants this meeting to go well, but he expects the Gorgon to have her own agendas, which are certain to conflict with the Order's goals.

By all appearances, Leda has travelled to the meeting alone. The heroes represent Von Drake's only concessions to security. The Order's other defenses have granted the bane free passage into the fortress for the duration of the meeting. In spite of everyone's best intentions, all of the attendees remain armed.

After exchanging basic pleasantries, Leda opens discussions by explaining that her mistress seeks to prevent Hecate from having any further influence upon Morden. She is open that she has no compassion for the Order or its goals, but she believes that eliminating the Dark Queen is in the best interests

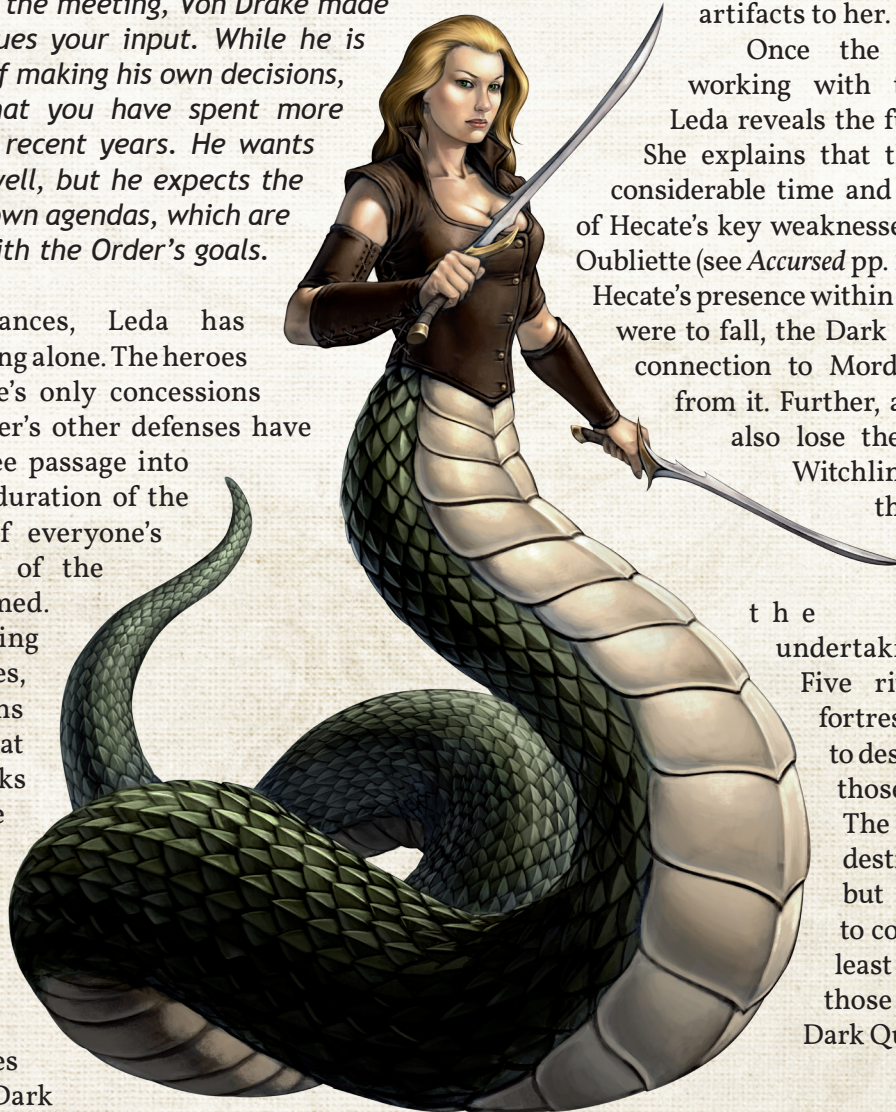
of both parties. To achieve this, she is willing to enter an alliance of convenience until the task is completed.

For the duration of their cooperation, the Gorgon and her banes will cease hostilities toward the Order and Morden's mortal inhabitants. Further, she will share as much information as she can about Hecate and her vulnerabilities. The Gorgon's agents will offer what assistance they can throughout this mission, and will continue to maintain a state of parley for thirty days after the mission is completed. Before revealing the full complexities of the plan, the bane needs Von Drake to commit the Order to it. Von Drake asks the heroes for their input and feelings on these terms. Leda has limited authority to negotiate further. The GM should use his best judgment—allowing for persuasion rolls on both sides—in adjusting the initial terms. If the heroes are particularly successful, Leda might be willing to have the Gorgon's agents eliminate a few of Sanguinara's banes from Palmyria or similarly peripheral concessions. Alternatively, if they roll particularly poorly, she might demand that the Order release prisoners or return captured artifacts to her.

Once the heroes commit to working with the Gorgon's agents, Leda reveals the full details of her plan.

She explains that the Gorgon has spent considerable time and effort to identify one of Hecate's key weaknesses. She shares that the Oubliette (see *Accursed* pp. 147–148) is the basis for Hecate's presence within Morden. If the fortress were to fall, the Dark Queen would lose her connection to Morden, and be banished from it. Further, all of her banes would also lose their connection to the Witchline. Leda believes that this would shatter the curse for all Shades.

Eliminating the Oubliette requires undertaking a series of steps. Five ritual links bind the fortress to Morden. In order to destroy it, at least three of those links must be broken. The Gorgon can commit to destroying one of them, but she needs the Order to commit to destroying at least two more. Only once those have fallen can the Dark Queen be truly defeated.



Leda explains that each link has a physical component that provides the mystical link. If the physical component is destroyed, then the mystical link is also shattered. An important caveat is that Hecate is capable of recreating each of these links if given adequate time. Further, because her powers are so tightly integrated with her fortress, the Witch will instantly recognize if any links are broken. In order for the plan to work, the Order would need to destroy the links swiftly. This should destabilize the fortress, triggering its collapse. Accomplishing this feat requires strong communication and careful planning.

The Five Links

The first link is a massive flock of mourning doves. It numbers in the thousands and migrates regularly with little pattern. Leda believes the flock currently dwells within the southern part of Valkenholm's dense forest, not far from Massif Helsenn. As long as at least one bird in the flock lives, the bond continues to protect the Oubliette. Eliminating all of these birds requires a coordinated attack and a tremendous amount of persistence and precision.

A valley located within the confines of the fallen Outland nation of Deepshadow houses a massive boulder that represents the second link. In order to sever the link, the heroes must bathe the huge rock in sunlight and then destroy it while illuminated. However, that valley never sees the sun, and a contingent of shadow riders remain in place to defend it.

In the fallen outland nation of Riverspring, a tomb houses a gemstone pried from the depths of the Darkwall Peaks. The Gnostic Tomb was once a facility where Enochian splinter groups revered the blessed remains and writings of their greatest scholars. Now, the crypts have been desecrated and the writings burned. The only surviving object of interest is the gemstone, which must be shattered to sever this link. However, the tomb is both hidden and defended by Hecate's banes. Identifying its location and overcoming its defenders remains a challenge.

Hecate and the Morrigan have a kinship. With her permission, the Dark Queen hid a link deep in the heart of Shieldhaven Castle, within the fallen capital of Cairn Kainen. Melusine believes that as long as cauldron-born hold that fortification, the link remains intact. In the event the castle were cleansed of its undead inhabitants, the link would be immediately broken. Of course, cleansing that massive structure of the Morrigan's influence would take an army.

The source of the Scythe River is located deep within the Darkwall Peaks. Its initial flow comes from a series of hot springs—supplemented by runoff from the mountains. Hecate has placed an

incantation upon these springs that diverts a portion of its energy to keep her tower stable. A few of the Gorgon's banes are uniquely capable of travelling through subterranean rivers to reach their hot spring sources to disrupt the link.

THE GORGON'S COMMITMENT

The Gorgon commits her forces to destroying the Scythe River link. She does not, however, have agents to assist the heroes in eliminating any of the other four. Leda restates that only three of these five locations need to be destroyed to destabilize the Oubliette. Leda does not need to know which sites the Order intends to target, but she does need to know when they will execute their plans.

In order for this plan to succeed, all three sites must be attacked in short order, immediately before undertaking an attack upon the Oubliette. This is necessary to insure that Hecate does not have time to recreate these links before the allies strike. Further, if the Dark Queen is given ample warning, she is likely to improve her security at the Oubliette, making any assault upon the fortress even harder to complete.

VON DRAKE'S INPUT

Victor wants to discuss this mission with the heroes before agreeing with Leda to proceed. He solicits their opinions both about the feasibility of each target and their willingness to proceed. He is also curious if they have any thoughts about how to coordinate each attack as well as how they might be able to move the heroes and their armies hundreds of miles from each of these strike sites to the Oubliette quickly—or if this is even possible.

Unreasonable Target

The Order lacks the resources to remove all cauldron-born from Shieldhaven Castle. That fortification is the heart of the Morrigan's power. A strike would require tens of thousands of troops just to reach the site. Further, because the Morrigan has cauldron-born loaned to so many of her peers, the other Witches might be willing to come to her assistance. Von Drake recognizes this difficulty and refuses to target this location.

If the heroes decide that they absolutely must target it and somehow manage to persuade Von Drake, refer to *Bone and Barrow* for more information about the city and the castle.

When the heroes agree to undertake the missions, Leda departs to report on the meeting to the Gorgon. Preparing for the missions may take weeks or even months. During this time, Leda continues to provide an interface between the Order of the Penitent and the Gorgon.

Leda

Leda is an echidna. These banes of the Gorgon have the upper torso of a beautiful human woman, but from the waist down, their body is a massive snake. While they are masters of deception, echidna are also bloodthirsty warriors. They must regularly consume raw meat to survive, and they have a strong preference for human flesh.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit: d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d10, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Stealth d8, Subterfuge d10

Charisma: +4; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7;

Toughness: 10 (2)

Hindrances: Arrogant, Unwitting Tool

Edges: Ambidextrous, First Strike, Quick, Two-Fisted

Gear: Two Short Swords (Str+d6).

Special Abilities

Alluring Presence: An echidna receives +4 Charisma.

Armor (+2): An echidna has a thickly scaled lower body.

Bite: Str+d8

Cold-Blooded: Due to their serpentine nature, echidna suffer a -2 penalty to any actions in freezing temperatures.

Hardy: An echidna does not suffer a wound from being Shaken twice.

Poison (-2): The bite of an echidna contains a Lethal poison.

Size (+2): The echidna's lower body is massive.

Witchline (Gorgon): Banes of the Gorgon can be sensed by Ophidian Accursed within 25 feet.

Victor Von Drake

Von Drake is the bold and capable leader of the Order of the Penitent. He is driven to free Morden from the Witches, regardless of the personal cost. He works ceaselessly to try to improve the order, diverting every resource he can and recruiting Accursed and mortals into the Order's service. While he does not make unnecessary sacrifices lightly, he accepts the costs that are necessary for victory.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d4, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Tactics) d6, Knowledge (Witches) d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Shooting d6, Taunt d6

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7;

Toughness: 9 (2)

Witchbreed: Revenant

Hindrances: Heroic, Vow (Order of the Penitent)

Edges: Command, Great Luck, Natural Leader, Quick, Strong Willed

Gear: de Acosta Model IV Rifle (24/48/96, 2d8, AP 1, RoF 1), Fixed bayonet (Str +d6, +1 Parry, +1 Reach), brigandine.

Act II: Severing Links

This section presents three of the prospective targets that the heroes could assault to sever the links of the Oubliette from Morden. Remember that the Accursed need to only destroy two of these links, and they may decide which two to target. The player characters might use their allies to defeat one of the locations while they destroy another. This is of particular concern, as the locations must all be struck at roughly the same time.

The issue of coordinating timing is left as an exercise for the heroes to resolve. The GM should use discretion in deciding just how narrow of a window they might have to strike. For purposes of the adventure, as long as all three attacks take place on the same day, it is adequate to overwhelm Hecate. However, if the heroes believe that a greater degree of coordination is required, they may invest a significant amount of effort into that task. Let them work as hard as seems appropriate.

Note that two of the targets are not listed in this section. The Gorgon's agents are eliminating the Scythe River target, so the heroes are not involved in this objective. The Shieldhaven target is intended to be insurmountable, so that is also unlisted. If the heroes somehow decide to handle either of those sites directly, the GM must choose how best to resolve those sites. As the other targets should be presented as far more achievable, both of these encounters should be extremely challenging.

This section presumes that the heroes work together at a single site. Von Drake or another experienced member of the Order leads an attack upon a second site at the same time as the player characters undertake their mission. This should save the necessity of running multiple encounters simultaneously. If the GM prefers to run this as a longer adventure, all three encounters could be pursued sequentially, relenting upon the timing requirement. After the heroes sever their link (or final link), the adventure immediately proceeds to Act III.

Finding the Flock

By all appearances, the mourning doves are simply an enormous flock of mundane birds. Numbering well into the thousands, people take swift note whenever the huge population arrives. While the birds are not predatory or aggressive individually, the sheer numbers are enough to damage minor buildings, fell lesser trees and bushes, devour any stores of seed, and thoroughly coat an area in their waste.

The heroes may be able to track down the birds by simple investigation and communication with distant allies. This is time consuming, but a few weeks of effort can be completed within a few weeks. The birds do not move quickly and they do leave a clear path in their wake. A zeppelin from Manreia could provide a more direct means of scouring Valkenholm. White witches or a flying Shade could also detect the flock or its noumenon guardians.

The mourning doves are not aggressive—even as an enormous flock. If any birds are attacked, the survivors flee. Severing the link requires the heroes to eliminate all members of the flock. This might be best accomplished with a combination of area effect weapons, selective use of poison, spells, and a range of predatory animals. Some discretion is required in deciding what plans have the potential to succeed. Keep in mind that the birds are likely to scatter in the face of serious threats, which can further delay the process of eliminating all of them.

The two noumenons (see *Accursed* p. 126) guarding the flock also present an important challenge. In addition to confronting the heroes, these banes could conceal birds or chase them from imminent threats. The shadow entities recognize the danger to their mistress and are intelligent beings capable of deciding between confronting the heroes or protecting their charges.

Midnight Vale

Travelling to Midnight Vale is a relatively straightforward journey into the Outlands. Its location is well documented. Anyone with a reasonably current map or a member of the Order's library at Massif Helsenn can provide adequate directions.

There are two challenges to overcome in directing sunlight into the vale. The first is finding a source of the Sunlight. The massive Darkwall Peaks leave much of the Outland nation of Deepshadow in extended darkness. While most places receive at least a few hours of sunlight, its geography leaves the large vale in a state of perpetual gloom. Even on a cloudless summer day, Midnight Vale remains always cloaked in the deepest of shadows.

For the heroes to illuminate the boulder, they need a mechanism to redirect a significant quantity of sunlight from several miles away. The light of flames, alchemy, or Witchcraft fails to sever the link. Only natural sunlight is adequate to illuminate the boulder. Consequently, the heroes need to devise a means of redirecting the light from several miles away. The most likely solution involves a large and high quality reflective surface used in conjunction with a lens. Pursuing this approach takes a base of 2 hours, which is just barely enough time if the heroes arrive when the light clears the mountains a few miles away in the late afternoon. Success on an appropriate Knowledge roll cuts the time to 1 hour, and a raise reduces it to 30 minutes. Essentially, focusing the lens and coordinating it with the mirror, while sustaining the beam of light onto the boulder is a tricky process and requires a sustained effort.

A unit of 10 shadow riders (see page 8) guards Midnight Vale for Hecate. As creatures of darkness, they immediately recognize when sunlight intrudes upon the valley. While they are certainly capable of directly attacking the heroes, they are smart enough to shield the link from the intruding sunlight. Before they engage the heroes, they construct an improvised screen made from an ancient banner to conceal the boulder. Two shadow riders guard the screen while the remainder engages the heroes.

Destroying the boulder, once it has been illuminated, is straightforward. Cannon, explosives, or an appropriate power can all shatter it. Of course, if the attack lacks range the heroes must first overcome the banes protecting it.

The Gnostic Tomb

The fallen Outlands nation of Riverspring is home to undead banes whom the Witches of the Grand Coven spawned. These bloodthirsty get of the Morrigan, the Blood Witch, and the Dark Queen—among others—dwell in the wasteland, preying upon any living targets and constantly fighting for dominance. This lawless domain hosts countless ruins, including one where Hecate has hidden a link for the Oulbiette.

Even before the Bane War, the Gnostic Tomb was a hidden facility. Enochian faithful had attempted to find and eliminate the heretical information held within the tomb over the course of decades. As a consequence, it was well defended and securely hidden.

While those original contents are long since destroyed, there remain few—particularly among those loyal to the Order—who know its location. Ideally, the GM should re-use a minor NPC *Accursed* as a survivor of Riverspring to be the one person who knows of it. If no such NPC is available, then the

heroes may uncover the location by reviewing ancient Enochian texts. Specifically, records of battles fought in the Outlands against the Gnostic heresy contain maps to the tomb. Searching the libraries for these esoteric records is time consuming. They could be in Massif Helsenn or another Enochian facility depending upon the GM's needs.

Travelling through Riverspring is a necessarily treacherous journey. Roving bands of cauldron-born (see *Accursed* p. 135) dominate the region, some numbering in the hundreds of members. More powerful undead banes—including vampires (see *Accursed* p. 118), grave knights (see *Accursed* p. 135), and noumenon (see *Accursed* p. 126)—typically lead the larger groups. In some cases, a sacrifice or bribe may grant a party safe passage through a region. More often, the bloodthirsty monsters are more interested in devouring prey than negotiations. The heroes must bypass or overcome two undead bands before they reach the tomb.

When the heroes arrive at the tomb, they find that it has become a ruin. The entrance is partly collapsed, requiring excavation or crawling. The subterranean tomb is a single level, but it is labyrinthine—with twists and turns extending for nearly a mile. The tomb is set up as a series of study rooms that once contained shelves, tables, and chairs. Narrow skylights provided some lighting, but each room still contains wall sconces for torches as well. The crypts that contained the remains of deceased scholars were attached to the study rooms and libraries devoted to their work. In many cases, a scholar and his closest students were buried together, so that each study room would be devoted to a particular school of thought.

The Bane War thoroughly disrupted the tomb. Its interior walls are crumbling, and the halls throughout are disrupted or collapsed. Many of the crypts show signs of robberies. Some bodies are missing, others are torn apart. Ashes and a few scraps of paper are all that remain of the archives. The once detailed artwork on the walls has suffered from vandalism and decay. Some crypts host groups of savage and near mindless cauldron-born.

Only one section of the tomb remains secure and maintained. This houses a head-sized, heavily faceted, gemstone of smoky grey quartz. A noumenon leads a group of twelve cauldron-born who protect the gem at all costs. Keep in mind that adjoining chambers are only a few meters away. Particularly loud noises may draw cauldron-born from those rooms to join a conflict here. However, each chamber does have multiple entrances and exits. Collapsing tunnels could be an effective means to delay their advance, while permitting escape.

Shattering the gem is straightforward once it is secured. A single strike with any weapon is adequate to destroy it and the Oubliette's link. In fact, if the heroes can get a clean shot at the gem when they first find the room where it is stored, they may choose to destroy it and avoid a prolonged fight with Hecate's banes.

Act III: Against the Dark Queen

Unfortunately for the heroes, Hecate has trapped her empowered objects. When an object is destroyed, it triggers a large area effect spell that instantly transports all sapient beings within its effect radius to the prisons below the Oubliette. This includes any of her surviving banes as well as the heroes. If the *Accursed* have a large entourage, it is up to the GM's discretion as to whether or not they were in the area of effect. Ultimately, this is a spell powered by the full primal abilities of the Dark Queen. The heroes cannot resist it. When the scene opens, read or paraphrase the following:

As you destroy the link, you suddenly feel the world go black around you. The sound of cackling laughter erupts in your ears, and you can feel a



sense of spinning and nausea. In mere moments your senses return, but you find that you are in a very different place.

Without explanation, you and your compatriots are in a cold and narrow passage, presumably beneath the earth. The walls bear the marks from years of digging. There is no natural light, but torches gutter in sconces every few yards. The tunnel proceeds in both directions, with branches coming off. A quick survey of your surroundings reveals labyrinthine twists and turns, but no doors.

Abruptly, you feel a dull rumble through the ground beneath you. Dust and loose gravel fall from the ceiling and the walls. If that is a sign of an impending earthquake, you must escape the tunnels before everything collapses.

Any Shade immediately senses the presence of the Dark Queen's banes in the region and knows that the heroes are in the labyrinth beneath the Oubliette. Without its mystic links, the tower has been destabilized and is nearing collapse. The heroes must act quickly to escape or die (or be buried for undead and golems) beneath its fallen structure.

Treat escaping the labyrinth as a Dramatic Task (see *Savage Worlds Core Rules*) using Tracking and a -2 difficulty. The characters have nine rounds to earn five successes. On a complication—even with a success—a shadow tendril (see page 9) tries to grab a random hero, in an attempt to prevent them from moving forward. If a hero is grabbed, the others cannot count that round's dramatic task as a success unless they immediately free their companion or abandon them. As these banes can phase, they have little concern for a tunnel collapse. On a failed complication check, the Oubliette collapses atop the heroes in catastrophic fashion.

If the Accursed manage to escape before the tower collapses, they emerge into the dimly lit area surrounding the Oubliette only to find that a Shard of Hecate (see page 10) is currently attempting to reestablish a link to stabilize the tower and prevent its collapse. Six shadow riders (see adjacent) protect her. Emerging from the labyrinth initiates a new Dramatic Task, this time with Hecate using Witchcraft at -2 to restore a link. She has five rounds to succeed. If the heroes prevent her from succeeding, the Oubliette collapses. The Dark Queen is banished from Morden. All of her banes disappear from the realm, and all Shades are considered to have reached the Final Stage of Defiance (see *Accursed* p. 108). If she succeeds, the Oubliette is stably restored and Hecate's shard unleashes her full fury upon the heroes.

Aftermath

If the Dark Queen is defeated, the Accursed have struck a substantial blow against the Witches. This grants them heroic standing, but it also makes them a target for the remaining Witches. Depending upon other recent events in the campaign, one or more of the surviving Witches might depart Morden with her forces, leaving the Order in a position of even greater power. (If the heroes destroyed Turris Atra in Fall of the Tower, the Blood Witch would be the most likely to depart.) At the GM's discretion, the Gorgon's agents may choose to turn upon the heroes at this time, recognizing that she could very well become their next target.

If the Dark Queen survived this onslaught, then she turns her ire toward those who dared to assault the Oubliette. She assembles a new coven with the Crone, the Morrigan, the Blood Witch, and Baba Yaga to reignite hostilities in Morden. The group reignites the war by first eliminating the Gorgon and her agents and then focusing upon the Order of the Penitent.

Shadow Riders

Once the elite defenders of Deepshadow, the Dark Queen used a roiling fog to transform shadow riders into her ethereal undead servants. Each of these undead knights bears the horrific wounds they suffered before joining her service. They ride spectral steeds made of pure darkness to carry them into battle against Hecate's foes.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d10, Notice d6, Riding d10, Tracking d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 11 (3)

Gear: Cavalry carbine (Range: 5/10/20, Damage 2d8, RoF: 1, 2 actions to reload), cavalry saber (Str+d6), lance (Str+d8; AP 2 when charging, Reach 2), plate corselet

Special Abilities

Darkvision: Shadow riders can see in complete darkness; all lighting penalties are halved.

Immunities: Shadow riders are immune to necromantic damage and effects.

Improved Charge: Shadow riders ignore the standard multi-action penalty for Running when making a fighting attack. They may also initiate an attack at the end of an All Out Move (see Setting Rules in *Accursed*). If the Shadow Rider moves at least one inch past its normal Pace, it gains +2 to damage.

Phasing: Due to their partially insubstantial nature, shadow riders gain a form of Burrowing called Phasing. While Phased, the bane can pass through solid

structures and may sink into the ground and travel up to its Pace as an action. It may strike by materializing and taking its opponent by surprise, making an opposed Subterfuge roll versus the target's Notice. If the bane wins, it gains +2 to attack and damage that round, or +4 if it gets a raise. The bane must become fully corporeal to make an attack. If the victim wins and was on Hold, he may try to interrupt the bane's attack as usual. The bane cannot be attacked physically while Phased unless the attacker uses salt, magical items, magical weapons, or supernatural powers. The bane may not spend more than one consecutive round Phased into or through an object.

Shroud of Fog: Shadow riders are surrounded by a swirling cloak of dark fog that imposes a -2 penalty on all sight-based attacks against them. This fog emanates outward from the Shadow Rider to the size of a Small Burst Template.

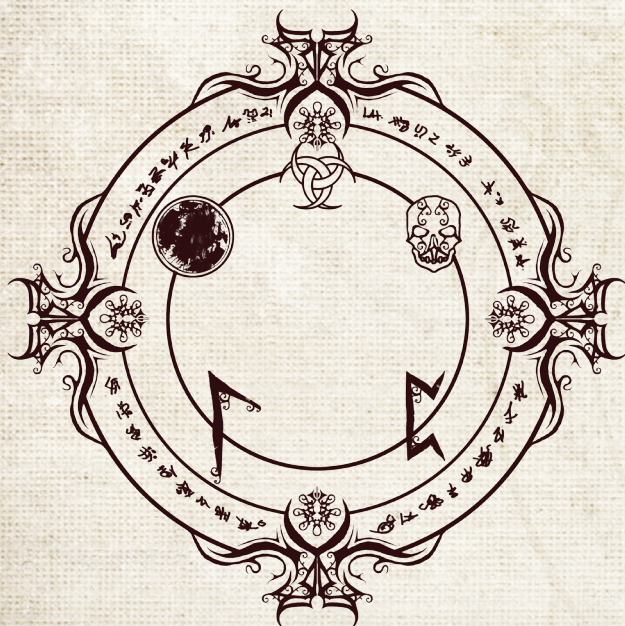
Spectral Steed: Shadow riders can command the dark fog that suffuses them to manifest as a smoky black horse. This unnatural steed has the same statistics as a war horse but vanishes when the Shadow Rider dismounts or is Incapacitated. It can phase with the rider.

Steady Hands: As the Edge

Undead: +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; called shots do no extra damage; immune to disease and poison.

Vulnerability (Salt): When in the presence of salt or salt water, shadow riders suffer a -1 penalty to all Trait tests. Any damage causing powers with a salt Trapping or weapons coated in salt cause +2 additional damage. Shadow riders cannot cross salt water, nor can they cross an unbroken line of salt under their own power.

Witchline (Hecate): Banes of the Dark Queen can be sensed by Shade Accursed within 25 feet.



Shadow Tendrils

Hecate has filled the labyrinth beneath the Oubliette with shadow tendrils. These banes appear to be nothing more than tentacles made of pure darkness that extend from the labyrinth's walls. When they overcome their prey, they draw them back into the walls, consuming the remains.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d10, Notice d6, Subterfuge d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 6

Special Abilities

Darksense: Shadow tendrils are unimpeded by complete darkness; all lighting penalties are eliminated.

Immunities: Shadow tendrils are immune to necromantic damage and effects.

Phasing: Due to their insubstantial nature, shadow tendrils gain a form of Burrowing called Phasing. While Phased, the bane can pass through solid structures and may sink into the ground and travel up to its Pace as an action. It may strike by materializing and taking its opponent by surprise, making an opposed Subterfuge roll versus the target's Notice. If the bane wins, it gains +2 to attack and damage that round, or +4 if it gets a raise. The bane must become fully corporeal to make an attack. If the victim wins and was on Hold, he may try to interrupt the bane's attack as usual. The bane cannot be attacked physically while Phased unless the attacker uses salt, magical items, magical weapons, or supernatural powers. The bane may not spend more than one consecutive round Phased into or through an object.

Tendrill: Each round, a shadow tendril emerges from a solid surface to attack its prey. Tendrils always select the Grappling attack action. Once a foe is entangled, the shadow tendril attempts to incapacitate its prey. Only after they have stopped resisting is the prey dragged into a solid surface and consumed by the shadow, leaving no remains behind.

Undead: +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; called shots do no extra damage; immune to disease and poison.

Vulnerability (Salt): When in the presence of salt or salt water, shadow tendrils suffer a -1 penalty to all Trait tests. Any damage causing powers with a salt Trapping or weapons coated in salt cause +2 additional damage. Shadow tendrils cannot cross salt water, nor can they cross an unbroken line of salt under their own power.

Witchline (Hecate): Banes of the Dark Queen can be sensed by Shade Accursed within 25 feet.

Shard of Hecate

The Witches rarely take action in person, but when they do, they are immense and terrifying opponents. However, each Witch is also more than simply a physical body; she has great power that only partially resides inside her material form. This state is known as a "Shard." Under many circumstances, a Witch can survive the destruction of her shard given enough time. Witches are not indestructible, merely extremely difficult to kill.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d12, Strength d8, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d12, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Subterfuge d10, Throwing d8, Witchcraft d12

Charisma: +2 **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 10

Edges: Brawny, Block, Combat Reflexes, Improved Counter Attack, Improved First Strike, Improved Frenzy, Improved Level Headed, Quick

Special Abilities

Fear (-2): Anyone seeing the creature must make a Fear test at -2

Magic: Hecate has unlimited Power Points, knows all Witchcraft spells, and favors the following powers: *blast* (a sphere of shadows), *fly*, *intangibility*, *quickness*, and *steal wounds*.

Phasing: Due to her partially insubstantial nature, the Shard of Hecate gains a form of Burrowing called Phasing. While Phased, the Witch can pass through solid structures and may sink into the ground and travel up to her Pace as an action. She may strike by materializing and taking its opponent by surprise, making an opposed Subterfuge roll versus the target's Notice. If she wins, she gains +2 to attack and damage that round, or +4 on a raise. The Witch must become fully corporeal to make an attack. If the victim wins and was on Hold, he may try to interrupt the attack as usual. The Witch cannot be attacked physically while Phased unless the attacker uses salt, magical items, magical weapons, or supernatural powers.

Size +2: Hecate stands over 10' tall.

Talons: Hecate's fingernails are razor sharp and deal Str+d8.

Vulnerability (Salt): Any damage causing powers with a salt Trapping or weapons coated in salt cause +2 additional damage.

